



# Young ShelterBox USA Program

An Interdisciplinary Educational Program

## Youth Program Mission

*To develop young people's understanding of the causes of natural and manmade disasters and the effects on communities worldwide; to promote awareness of the common needs of all people and the need for humanitarian action following disasters; to empower youth to be prepared for disasters that may affect their own communities; and to inspire them to become global citizens through education and action on the local level.*



Students at St. Martha's School (Sarasota, Florida) studied disasters, geography and world cultures and learned about disaster preparedness through hands-on activities, using an actual ShelterBox kit and in conjunction with their school's service-learning project.

## ShelterBox Mission & Background

*Mission: To provide humanitarian aid in the form of shelter, warmth and dignity to people displaced by natural and other disasters worldwide.*



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Since its inception in 2000, ShelterBox has firmly established itself at the forefront of international disaster relief providing shelter and dignity following over 100 disasters in more than 70 countries. The organization has international affiliates in Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. ShelterBox instantly responds to earthquake, volcano, flood, hurricane, cyclone, tsunami or conflict by delivering boxes of aid. This includes aid to over 10,000 survivors of Hurricane Katrina, more than 120,000 survivors of the Southeast Asian tsunami, over 20,000 survivors of the Myanmar (Burma) cyclone, and over 200,000 survivors of the earthquake in Haiti.

Each box supplies an extended family with a tent and lifesaving equipment to use while they are displaced or homeless. The contents are tailored depending on the nature and location of the disaster, with great care taken sourcing every item to ensure it is robust enough to be of lasting value. Highly trained ShelterBox Response Teams distribute boxes on the ground, working closely with local organizations, international aid agencies and Rotary clubs worldwide.

ShelterBox's vision is to provide shelter, warmth and dignity to at least 500,000 disaster survivors annually.

## Youth Program Background

We often hear from individuals after a disaster strikes a remote region of the world that they don't know how to help. And when hurricanes, floods and other disasters strike our home communities, we often learn that many of the people affected hadn't adequately prepared to cope with the aftermath. Disasters can occur anywhere and affect anyone.

On the domestic front, tens of thousands of Americans are affected by disaster annually. In 2008, American communities were affected by over 85 disasters and emergencies that were so severe that FEMA made federal declarations; these disasters included severe storms, wildfires, flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes and landslides. ShelterBox USA (SBUSA) is in a unique position to assist survivors after disaster strikes and to give Americans a unique way to help—through its international network of volunteers and partnering Rotary clubs.

In addition to its life-saving international aid program, ShelterBox USA is developing a disaster education and preparedness program for American youth called "Young ShelterBox USA." SBUSA volunteers consistently find that, when they share the ShelterBox story with their communities, children are one of the most eager and enthusiastic audiences—and teachers, some of the most ardent advocates. Teachers around the world have already utilized ShelterBox as a tool to teach about disasters. Our hope is to enhance the program for U.S. schools by integrating activities that enhance science, social studies, language arts and math curriculum while also helping students understand how to prepare for a disaster. These activities have also served to promote youths' understanding of geography, the environment, and develop global awareness and an appreciation of others cultures and of global issues such as the role of humanitarian action in developing countries and the plight of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) around the world.

ShelterBox USA seeks to formally adapt and enhance existing lessons into a set of standards-based activities that can be used by teachers and youth leaders, as well as ShelterBox and Rotary club volunteers across the country. This will provide meaningful hands-on activities that support elementary science, social studies, language arts, and math curricula.



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Nearly one hundred classrooms and youth groups throughout the country have already utilized ShelterBox as a learning and service project to date. SBUSA launched a pilot program with 10 participating schools, including St. Martha Catholic School and Gene Witt Elementary School (where students were supplied educational materials, lesson plans, demonstration ShelterBoxes to facilitate hands-on activities, and a Young ShelterBox coordinator to help oversee and maximize learning) at its national headquarters in the Sarasota-Manatee area in early 2010. SBUSA plans to further develop Phase I of the program (for elementary school students) during 2010-2011 with the goal of reaching students in 10,000 schools across the nation. (Phase II = middle school students; Phase III = high school students)

## Youth Program Purpose

The Young ShelterBox USA program aims to emerge as a national leader in disaster preparedness and global awareness education. Young ShelterBox USA's lessons about global disasters will serve to promote global awareness education among American youth.

Studies show that American students are becoming less and less globally-aware and culturally-sensitive at a time when the nation's economy and society is becoming more and more globalized and dependent on a globally-savvy citizenry and workforce. In 2006, a National Geographic-Roper survey concluded that young Americans are largely geographically illiterate. It found that:

- Nine in 10 (90%) 18-24 year old Americans cannot locate Afghanistan on a map of Asia.
- Seventy percent (70%) cannot locate Iran or Israel on a map.
- Three-quarters (75%) of respondents failed to find Indonesia on a map—the nation worst affected by the 2005 Boxing Day Tsunami. Furthermore, three-quarters (75%) were unaware that a majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, making it the largest Muslim country in the world.
- Fifty-four percent (54%) were unaware that Sudan is a country in Africa.

Additionally, at a time when the nation and the world becomes more diverse and interconnected, less than 22 percent (22%) of all Americans hold a passport and less than nine percent (9%) of American university students study a foreign language. As the Committee for Economic Development in Washington, D.C. points out:

"Today's America is, and will continue to be, characterized by ethnic and linguistic diversity. In many urban, suburban and even rural school systems, student populations are becoming more diverse. Workplaces and customers also increasingly reflect our multicultural nation, and cultural knowledge has become critical to American businesses. We must educate all of our students about the world; or suffer diminished communication among our citizens and a weaker civic culture."

Young ShelterBox USA utilizes disasters and disaster relief as a vehicle to teach students about their world. ShelterBox, having responded to disasters in areas as diverse as the Philippines, the Congo, Bangladesh, Italy, Australia, Swaziland, Pakistan, Burkina Faso and the United States, is uniquely poised to help educators develop their students' understanding of the world and pressing global issues in an innovative and engaging way.



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## **Curriculum Focus:**

Young ShelterBox USA is an interdisciplinary educational program focusing on:

a.) Disaster education and global awareness: This component of the program integrates science, social studies, mathematics, and language arts to teach youth about natural and manmade disasters and their impact on human communities, locally and throughout the world. In addition to promoting scientific, environmental, and geographic knowledge, students will gain global awareness, an appreciation for significant issues affecting human populations, and a familiarity with other countries and cultures. Furthermore, the lessons develop youths' appreciation of more complex global issues such as the role of humanitarian action in developing countries and the plight of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) around the world.

b.) Disaster preparedness: This applied learning module empowers students to prepare their own families for disasters specific to their communities. Using a ShelterBox kit as an example, students explore materials that should be included in their own families' preparedness kits and learn how to design a family disaster preparedness plan.

c.) Character building: This optional program component encourages students to explore possibilities for helping disaster survivors locally and abroad through volunteerism and philanthropy.

## **Program Outcome**

### **American youth participating in the Young ShelterBox USA program will be able to:**

- Identify the types of natural disasters that occur around the world using correct geographical terms, foster awareness of the impact of disasters on human communities, and investigate the sociological causes of manmade disasters throughout the world, including the historical and social contexts of conflict;
- Analyze how natural and manmade disasters affect human life in their own communities and design a disaster preparedness plan for their own families;
- Analyze human needs versus wants and understand that humanity has common needs and rights to shelter, warmth and dignity;
- Discuss global connections and interdependence, and define and investigate humanitarian action and how it impacts families around the world; and
- Become leaders within their own peer groups by serving as examples of service-minded global citizens and optionally, take opportunities to create and engage in meaningful and results-focused volunteer and philanthropic activities in their local communities with the goal of impacting families that are survivors of disasters globally.



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## Program Testimonials

“The ShelterBox project has brought a new sense of global awareness to our school. Our students have learned about other countries and people who have experienced natural and manmade disasters. ShelterBox has provided a way for us to help and feel some responsibility for others in our world. Additionally, through the project, our students have come to appreciate and be grateful that they live in the United States.”

*--Sister Cathy Bonfield, SSND*

*Teacher (Grades K-8)*

*St. Martha School, Sarasota, Florida*

“When choosing a project for Nolan Middle School's National Junior Honor Society, I knew I wanted to help an organization that provided shelter. ShelterBox USA exceeded my standards, and gave the students at Nolan an opportunity to reach out and help people around the globe. I could not have been more impressed with the presentations that we had at our school. ShelterBox helped to show the students how fortunate they were, and that they were capable of lending a hand. ShelterBox USA provides an amazing service to people worldwide, and I would recommend supporting this group to anyone. This is, by far, the most worthy cause I have ever had the pleasure of supporting.”

*--Mackenzie, 8th Grade Student*

*Nolan Middle School, Bradenton, Florida*

“Initially, I introduced ShelterBox to my students for the purpose of exposing them to an agency that provided help on a worldwide scale. The ShelterBox experiences were real, timely and unique. My students were actively engaged in purposeful learning activities, touching all areas of our fourth grade curriculum—from language arts to math to social studies to science and writing. The ShelterBox experience exceeded my expectations and created memories that my fourth graders will never forget... all because of a big green box!”

*--Jamie Reagan*

*Nationally Board Certified Teacher*

*Gene Witt Elementary School, Bradenton, Florida*

“After learning about ShelterBox, the students were suddenly motivated to learn about the areas where devastations have occurred, the people who live there, the geography, what natural disasters occur in each area, history of the affected continents, and how ShelterBox provided safety for the families there. Viewing people from all over the world working together to preserve life with ShelterBox was a powerful learning moment for these teens. Now I love watching them become enthralled with our planet every day.”

*--Reese Mates*

*Interact Club Advisor (Grades 9-12)*

*Barrington Hills, Illinois*