

## Operation Christmas Child brings 'Hope' to children in need

Written by News Desk

Friday, 08 November 2013 15:29 - Last Updated Monday, 18 November 2013 15:10

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**Today Anya Johnson (pictured) is a happy person who finds comfort in the love of God. But that was not always the case. As a 9 year-old girl in a Russian orphanage Anya was bitter about life. Statistically she did not have much to look forward to and she turned away from God.**

**By BRIAN HODGE**

When Anya Johnson first heard about Operation Christmas Child she literally saw it as a God-send. Someone many thousands of miles away gave selflessly and Anya was the recipient. The box, like more than 100 million sent through the program since 1993 contained hard candy, personal toiletries and other such items, things not easy to come by in a Russian orphanage. The box also contained a small doll, a toy, that was now Anya's property to do with as she liked. The doll, which she named Hope, was symbolic to the young girl of God's love and kindness.

This relatively small gift changed Anya's life. Years later Anya now lives in Millbrook and is collecting boxes for the OCC program herself.

"This was a turning point in my life. I turned back to God, because I felt someone who does not

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know me loves me and wants me to know God," Anya said.

Operation Christmas Child is a ministry of Samaritan's Purse, an evangelical humanitarian organization. The boxes are collected then distributed as Christmas gifts, accompanied by Christian literature. According to Samaritan's Purse, from 1993 through 2012, some 100 million gift boxes have been handed out in more than 130 countries.

The National Collection Week for OCC shoeboxes is November 18- November 25. If you would like to pack a shoebox or send a monetary donation to OCC you can contact Johnson directly at 334-207-4841. Johnson will be collecting boxes at Wellspring Community Church in Millbrook. For complete instructions on packing a Shoebox please contact Johnson at the number above or visit: <http://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/>

### Gift Suggestions

**Toys:** Include items that children will immediately embrace such as dolls, toy trucks, stuffed animals, kazoos, harmonicas, yo-yos, jump ropes, balls, toys that light up and make noise (with extra batteries), etc.

**School Supplies:** Pens, pencils and sharpeners, crayons or markers, stamps and ink pad sets, writing pads or paper, solar calculators, coloring and picture books, etc.

- **Hygiene Items:** Toothbrush, mild bar soap (in a plastic bag), comb, washcloth, etc.
- **Accessories:** T-shirts, socks, ball caps, sunglasses, hair clips, toy jewelry, watches, flashlights (with extra batteries).
- **A Personal Note:** You may enclose a note to the child and a photo of yourself or your family. If you include your name and address, the child may write back.

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- Do Not Include: Used or damaged items; war-related items such as toy guns, knives or military figures; items with U.S. flags; chocolate or food; out-of-date candy; liquids or lotions; medications or vitamins; breakable items such as snow globes or glass containers; aerosol cans.