

Operation Christmas Child Comes To Holy Spirit Church

By Henry M. Holden

In recent years, Holy Spirit Church in Pequannock has organized "special collections." In addition to its annual coat collection, the angel trees, the baby items collections, and the ShopRite gift cards, this year, Kim Rizzo introduced "Operation Christmas Child" as a special project.

Operation Christmas Child is a program in which individuals, families, churches, schools, and other groups collect shoeboxes and fill them with school supplies, hygiene items, fun toys, and notes of love and encouragement. The shoeboxes are delivered to one of 4,500 drop off locations in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. The organization "Samaritan's Purse" collects the gift-filled shoeboxes, and delivers them to children in need around the world to show God's love in a tangible way.

"When I was a Girl Scout leader, the township did this on a small scale," said Rizzo. "I did a collection within our own scout troop. I read things online about testimonials from these kids, who were living in an orphanage in Romania, and who are now adults living in this country. They talked about what a pivotal experience it was to receive one of those boxes. These kids were struggling with barely just enough to eat. Then suddenly they get something that is so over-the-top in their experience- their first gift ever."

Rizzo's experience with this in the Girl Scouts made her think this would be a nice thing to bring to her Parish.

"Holy Spirit is not a wealthy parish but it's generous in its outreach and giving to others,"

she said. "Operation Christmas Child is one of those projects I think that brings us together and reaches out and helps others."

"We look for projects to do with minimum costs," she added. "Things that would enable us to build community within the Parish. I think we thrive on being able to help other people and we get a good feeling from that. You work on something such as gathering school supplies as a parish, and it brings everyone closer together."

The parish collection period began on Oct. 14 and lasts through Oct. 31.

"When shopping, think small," said Rizzo "Everything

you send must fit in a shoebox. It ends up being a collection of small items. For example, somebody can put in a tennis ball that they got at the Dollar Store, or a beanie baby into the box. They tell us that each box should contain a "WOW" item so when the kid opens it they see a little stuffed cat, or a T-shirt with sparkles on it. That gets their attention. Everything else can be toothbrush or a bar soap or something like that."

She said, "If 400 parishioners gave even one item, many of which could cost \$1-2, we would have enough small gifts to fill 25 shoe boxes! Samaritan Purse recommends a small charge-per box for shipping," said Rizzo. "You don't have to spend that money, but if you do, it enables you to see exactly where the box will be delivered."

