

History Highlights



The Greatest Gift

From the beginnings of Pastor Von's ministry in Mexico, Christmas and toys have gone together. Each year Von matched his youth with kids at the orphanage, and the youth purchased gifts for the kids. When Spectrum began to work in neighborhoods, the kids there were able to choose from the smorgasbord of gifts that generous people in the States brought or shipped to us. One year when the supply of gifts was low late in December, a donor was able to secure 10,000 Power Rangers for Spectrum. We spread them out over several years. For a few years we partnered with Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child to distribute shoeboxes in our neighborhoods. Over the years, however, individuals have donated most of the toys, whether physically or more recently by donating funds which Spectrum uses to buy toys at wholesale prices.

Each year, the closer it is to Christmas, the more kids come, with attendance on the actual day of the distribution doubling or even tripling. The families know that Spectrum gives gifts every year, and they don't want to miss out. Prioritizing the kids who come regularly during the year has been an ongoing challenge, and we have tried several solutions over the years.

When Spectrum acquired the Cool Bus (an old school bus) in 2002, it transformed the way toys were distributed. Shelves were built to go inside the bus to hold the toys, and the

toys could be stocked at the dorm. The kids didn't have to wait until after the activity was done but could go straight from washing to pick their toys. Previously we didn't have a building available just for toys, so we either had to make do outside with a circle of vans and staff surrounding the distribution area or wait until one of the buildings was free. We also play Christmas music now for a more festive atmosphere.

Through all these years of giving gifts in the neighborhoods, the purple thumbs have remained constant. All kids who receive gifts also have their thumbs marked with gentian violet, a mild antiseptic which also contains a dye. This prevents the kids from circling back around for another gift.

Every year, even during the pandemic, we have been able to show that we care for the people we serve by giving gifts to the kids and blankets and tarps to the adults. In the process we hope to share about the greatest gift – that of Jesus – and prepare people to follow Him.

