



Love in a Box

Share Joy! 2016

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What is Love in a Box?

Love in a Box is a Paris-wide school and community charity project that prepares gifts for children for the holiday season. Gifts are made from empty shoeboxes and include a set list of practical and fun items for children of all ages. Each box contains a toy/gift, something to write with (a pen, coloured pencils, or markers), a book, a tube of toothpaste, a toothbrush, a bar of soap, something warm (a pair of gloves and a hat or scarf), and candy. The gifts are delivered to children in need through fifteen different charities in the Paris region, the Alsace region, and to orphanages in Bulgaria.

Why Love in a Box?

We prepare these "love-boxes" and "love-backpacks" for children that we do not know in our community. We decide to share a bit of our joy with them and treat them as our own for a small instant at this time of year because we remember what it was like to receive a gift as a child. We see the joy on our own children's faces, and we know how contagious a smile can be. We remember the anticipation and excitement when looking at a beautifully-wrapped gift and wondering "What is inside?" or "Is that one for me?"

We enjoy preparing these gifts together with family and friends. It reminds all of us the value of giving and of sharing what we have with others in need, and how much fun it can be to create a gift. For many of us, this small act of giving is now an ingrained family tradition and our own children now ask us "When are we going to start preparing our box?" We make gifts for children and we receive much more.

But the giving is not limited to those with children - **anyone** can make a box! You do not need to be a member of any group, and you do not have to be a child or to have children helping you to make one. We invite parents, grandparents, step-parents, those without

children, those with grown-up children, aunts, uncles, young adults – all are welcome to join in the joy of giving with us.

One of our partner charities has the motto "*Chaque geste compte*" or "Every action counts." Your love-box matters. You bring joy and you show hospitality to a child in your community. This act of kindness spreads warmth and joy directly to a child and their family.

Who is behind Love in a Box?

We started out as a small group of people in 2001 who wanted to help out friends in the UK that could not send 100 gifts to needy children outside of their country due to restrictions following the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak. This first Paris group had so much fun making and delivering the gifts, that they decided to start again in 2002. We are now in our 16th year of giving and last year over 3200 boxes reached our grateful charities. The space at The American Cathedral in Paris is used to receive and process the boxes out to their final destinations. The project is 100% volunteer run and 100% of boxes, backpacks and extras that are donated are delivered to charities in December each year. While the Cathedral hosts the project, the program is non-religious and non-sectarian.

The following schools and community groups made boxes in 2015:

- The American Cathedral of Paris
- The American Church in Paris
- The American Women's Group (AWG)
- The American School of Paris (ASP) Middle School
- Amour en Boîte de Chevreuse et environs
- Association of American Wives of Europeans (AAWE)
- AUP Cares
- The Boy Scouts
- Bilingual International School of Paris (BISP)
- Bilingual Montessori School of Paris (3 locations)
- The Bridge International Church Paris

- The British School of Paris
- The Cub scouts
- Ecole Jeannine Manuel (EJM) - Dupleix, Suffren, and Théâtre sites
- Ecole Montessori Bilingue de Rueil-Malmaison
- Ecole Internationale Bilingue (EIB)-The Victor Hugo School
- Ecole Internationale Bilingue (EIB) Lamartine
- Emmanuel International Church (EIC) Rueil-Malmaison
- Ermitage International School of France
- Ecole Normale Catholique - Collège Blomet
- The Girl Scouts Overseas in Paris
- Giving Matters
- International School of Paris (ISP)
- Kingsworth School
- Lennen Bilingual School - Preschool, Toddler and Primary schools
- Lycée International St-Germain-en-Laye
- Malherbe International School Le Vesinet
- Marymount Paris
- Murex (software company)
- Sections Internationales de Sèvres (SIS) - primary and middle schools
- United Nations Nursery School
- United States Ambassador to France and Monaco
- Yoga Group of Pauline Howat

If your group or school is not on this list and you would like to participate, please write to Caroline (schools) or Toni (other groups) at liab.france@gmail.com

How do I prepare a Love-box or a Love-backpack?

You can download all of the basic instruction sheets for regular boxes and baby boxes in English and French at <http://amcathparis.com/love-in-a-box/>

Reminders:

- Wrap the lid of the shoebox separately from the bottom of the shoebox
- Place a rubber-band around your shoebox, please do not close it with tape
- Be sure that your label for gender/age is clear and on both sides of the shoebox if possible
- Do not include any toys that represent any kind of arms or violent games
- Do not include any electronic devices or toys that require batteries
- Please place your candy in a small plastic/Ziploc bag if it is not individually wrapped
- Please no liquid soaps - bar soaps individually wrapped are best.
- Please include only **new** items except for books, which we kindly request to be in very good condition.
- If you have a new toothbrush that is not individually wrapped, please wrap it in plastic
- All books and magazines should be in French please.
- Please be sensitive to age when choosing toys and books.
- Please do include a small handwritten note from your child (in French is best) if you prepare the box together - our charities tell us that this is highly appreciated by the receiving children
- Please do decorate your love-box or love-backpack

I don't have a shoebox, do you have extras?

Yes, we do have extra wrapped empty shoeboxes for individuals, lovingly prepared by volunteer groups and children's "*centre des loisirs*." Wrapped boxes will be available for pick-up at the Cathedral starting November 13th.

You can also use a backpack or a messenger bag instead of a box. These make great gifts for an older child - please don't forget to decorate it with ribbon or stickers to make it look festive.

Which age groups do you need the most?

All age groups are needed. However, if you don't know which group to choose, based on the charity requirements vs. boxes delivered in 2015, we need more of the following boxes this year:

- Baby boxes (0-2 years old)
- Boys aged 2-4 years
- Boy boxes - all ages
- Boxes/backpacks for older children (11-13 years old and 14-18 years old)

If I don't have time to make a box, can I buy some extras to help?

Yes! We **always** need extra gloves, hats and scarves for all ages and genders. We always need extra candy. We always need extra baby items (onesies, soft toys, baby socks, etc.) and toys for all ages, but especially for teens (things like UNO® card games, dominoes, brain teaser games, etc.). We always need extra toothpaste, many people forget to put this in their box. Also, if you have some nice travel-size cosmetics or toiletry items (unopened), these are nice to offer the newborn mothers and the older/teenage girls and boys.

How else may I help?

We need volunteers to collect empty shoeboxes from local shoe stores in October, to help wrap these boxes in early November. Then, we will need groups of 8-15 volunteers every day for three weeks starting November 21st to help check boxes. This activity usually takes place Monday through Saturday, 10am to 4pm. Advance sign-up is requested via liab.france@gmail.com so that we

can confirm with you exact time and dates during this period. The Cathedral space is shared with many other activities, so we are working around their scheduled events.

We also take donations to purchase extra supplies and gifts when items are missing from boxes. Checks or cash can be given to The American Cathedral in Paris, 23 Ave. George V, 75008 Paris, France. Please mark "Love in a Box" on your donation. All funds are used directly for Love in a Box purchases.

When and Where do I deliver my completed gift?

If you are making your love-box with your school, please check with your local school LIAB coordinator. You will bring your box to school on the designated date and volunteers will deliver your box on to the American Cathedral for processing and delivery to charities. If you are making your love-box together with a community group, please see with your group LIAB coordinator. They will communicate the drop-off date and location. **All boxes made by schools or community groups (more than 10 boxes) should be delivered to the Cathedral no later than Friday, December 2nd, 5pm.**

If you are making a box individually, please bring your box or backpack to The American Cathedral in Paris, 23 Ave. George V, starting from Monday, the 14th of November to Friday, the 2nd of December. **All boxes made by individuals are due no later than Sunday, December 4th, 10h30am.**

Please note that the church is open from 9am to 5pm Monday-Friday, and from 10am-10h45am on Sundays (between services) for box delivery. If you are delivering more than 10 boxes, please drop us a line at liab.france@gmail.com so that we can set up a convenient time for your delivery, meet and greet you to say 'thank you', and provide you with help carrying your boxes inside. The church has many activities such as weddings and special services

during the week, so we need to plan all large deliveries. We will provide you with the telephone number of someone to call when you arrive at the front gate.

What happens after I drop my box off?

When your box arrives at the Cathedral, a group of volunteer LIAB "elves" open and double-check each box to ensure they contain every item on the list. The boxes are then stacked and separated by age, to be prepared for each charity. Labels with the receiving child's name and age are added to the box and boxes are packed in bags of 5 to 7 boxes with the charity's name on the outside of the bag. Charities pick their group of boxes up starting Sunday, November 27th, so the earlier you can bring your box, the better!

Who receives my box?

Each charity comes to pick up their boxes in early December. Each charity organises beautiful, festive events for the children where your boxes are given with love and received with much excitement!

We cannot tell you exactly where your individual box will go, but we guarantee it goes to a child whose family is being taken care of by one of the following generous charities.

- Action Quartiers / L'Armée du Salut - Alsace
- Association d'Entraide aux Minorités d'Orient (A.E.M.O.) - Paris /Île-de-France
- L'Armée du Salut - Paris / Île-de-France
- Avec Elles - Vincennes / Île-de-France
- Bonne Mine - Bulgaria
- Centre d'Accueil pour Demandeurs d'Asile (CADA) - Paris /Île-de-France
- Coordination de l'accueil des familles demandeuses d'asile (CAFDA) - Paris /Île-de-France
- Fédération des Yézidis de France (FYF) - Soissons, Laon and Forbach

- Helping Hands of the Junior Guild - Paris /Île-de-France
- Hiligaynon - Paris /Île-de-France
- Hébergement Orientation Médiation Ecoute (H.O.M.E.) - Paris /Île-de-France
- Paris Tout P'tits / SAMU - Paris /Île-de-France
- Relais Habitat- Paris /Île-de-France
- Les Restos du Coeur - Paris /Île-de-France
- Secours Populaire/Copains du Monde - Calais, Dunkerque / Nord-Pas-de-Calais
- La Table Ouverte - Paris

If you would like to suggest a charity to receive love-boxes, please write to liab.france@gmail.com

Where can I sign up to volunteer with box wrapping or box checking?

Box wrapping will happen during the weeks of 7th and 14th of November. Box checking will start on November 21st and run for three weeks through Saturday, December 10th. Please contact Laurel or Toni at liab.france@gmail.com to sign up.

Can I knit a scarf/hat/gloves/baby boots for a Love-box?

Yes! There is a very happy group of Love in a Box knitters called "*Les Tricoteuses*". Please contact Sigun or Jane at liab.france@gmail.com if you would like more information.

Can I go to one of the parties where kids receive love-boxes?

Yes! Please contact us at liab.france@gmail.com. Most of the parties happen in December, but some do spill over into January. Some include a trip to the circus! This is a great way to see smiling children when they receive your box.

Do you have information in French?

The packing sheet is available in French [here](#), but we recognize there is room for improvement! Most of the kickoff meetings in the schools will be held in French, and some in multiple languages. We would love to translate these FAQs into French, both the content and the cultural context – if you know someone who might enjoy volunteering their translation talents please let us know at liab.france@gmail.com. One of our partner organizations *Amour en boîte Haute Vallée de Chevreuse* has detailed instructions and a video in French on their website [here](#) (please note that the drop-off dates communicated on their site only apply to their group).

Where can I ask other questions?

You guessed it: liab.france@gmail.com. We also post all information on the LIAB section of the American Cathedral website [here](#). And please do not forget to follow us on Facebook [here](#), where you will see all of the different people involved in bringing joy and hospitality to so many children. If you would prefer to talk on the phone to someone, please mention this in your email and we would be happy to call you.