

MAILBOX CLUB

EXPANDS OUTREACH THROUGH CHURCHES, VBS

by **Jim Dailey**

Renee Winkler will never forget the blessings she got as a 7-year-old girl through her correspondence with The Mailbox Club. One of her Sunday school teachers recommended the club to her parents.

“It was exciting as a little girl to receive each lesson in our mailbox,” she said. “I loved reading the Bible stories and answering the questions. When I returned the answer sheet, someone would grade it, attach the star sticker to the page and return it with the next lesson.”

Through such a simple interaction, the Lord spoke to her heart. “I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior when I was in third grade,” said Renee, who has gone on to a career of service at the international Christian relief organization Samaritan’s Purse. “I am thankful for Christian parents, Sunday school teachers and volunteers with The Mailbox Club who invested in me for all those many years by helping people like me learn more about Jesus.”

Renee is among 1.3 million Americans whose faith has been shaped

by The Mailbox Club. The club began as a follow-up ministry to disciple children who had responded to the Gospel through the preaching of George Eager, a traveling evangelist from Valdosta, Georgia. Eager (1921-

2012) was a Navy veteran of World War II who served as an anti-aircraft officer on the cruiser USS Portland, which survived a crippling attack in the 1942 Battle of Guadalcanal. In 1953, he and his wife, Laura, came to faith in Christ as they grieved the tragic death of their oldest son, Brucie. They began a half-century of ministry in rural schools across Georgia, Florida and Alabama, sharing the Gospel with a thousand children per week.

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club has become a worldwide ministry, with 11 million students in 90 countries and materials translated into more than 100 languages.

Even as the international programs continue to bear fruit, The Mailbox Club is renewing its stateside focus under the leadership of executive director John Mark Eager, 63.

“We’ve been pushing so hard internationally,” he said, “but what about our own country—which is just falling apart?” Wherever children live around the world, “the spiritual needs are the same,” he said.

This summer, The Mailbox Club is offering free Bible lessons through churches and Vacation Bible Schools. The club’s newest lessons are in age tiers, starting with children who are just beginning to read. As they grow, children can move up to more advanced lessons, spanning years of discipleship. In a step beyond the paper lessons that Renee received in the mail, children now can fill out their

answers online.

“Each age group has two courses,” Eager said. “The first course in each series is evangelism. So if a 5-year-old enrolls, they’re going to get a clear presentation of the Gospel first. If a 12-year-old enrolls, they’re going to get an age-specific presentation of the Gospel. And the second course is discipleship.”

As children send in their lessons, the staff of The Mailbox Club grade their answers, pray for each student and respond with an encouraging note and the materials for the next lesson. In countries that lack good mail service, most of the discipleship is done locally by trained mentors working in schools, clubs and churches.

It’s gratifying for Eager’s team to hear testimonies of how the Lord has used The Mailbox Club to guide people into ministry. Matt Cottrell, who serves as director of field ministry and discipleship for Operation Christmas Child, got involved in The Mailbox

Club at age 13 and remembers how the Lord used Scripture memorization to strengthen his faith. “It was one of the first times I connected with my faith outside my family,” he said. “I remember feeling grown up and responsible at that young age to walk through Scripture and lessons on my own. And it was fun to mail off my work and then get responses for the next lesson.”

TMC’s new initiative is designed to serve parents and churches across America. Parents will have tools for daily devotionals with their children. Churches will have Christ-centered follow-up for children after VBS, especially for the unchurched. Churches will be able to receive monthly reports on the progress of their children through TMC lessons. Each generation has the responsibility to tell the next generation about our Lord Jesus Christ! If you are excited to get your church or children involved, visit tmc4kids.org or MailboxClub.org. ■ ©2024 BGEA