



Alternative Gifts

INTERNATIONAL

2019 FALL/WINTER NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends,

The next couple of months are usually the most hectic at AGI! This is the time of year that churches, schools and businesses contact us to plan their annual Gift Markets—which help us raise money for the causes in our catalog. This is also the time of year when most families honor loved ones with gifts that truly inspire change.

By the end of the busy season, we hope to have about 130 markets, and here's how you can be a part of making that happen! **We are looking for individuals to start a market in their communities.** A market can be as simple as placing our catalogs on a table in your church or business, and encouraging your patrons to take one and order directly through AGI. Or, perhaps you belong to a group and want to put on a holiday market, where “shoppers” attend your event to support multiple causes from the catalog! It's not too late. If you contact us today, we will ship you a **“Gift Market Packet”** which will guide you through each step of the process. Perhaps the easiest of all, is a Crowdfund Market, which is an online fundraiser created through our website. Simply select the cause(s) you'd like to support and in a few minutes you can set up a personalized fundraiser page to share via social media or email.

The best part is, if you host a market or connect us with someone who then creates one of these types of markets, you can nominate a local pantry or shelter program to receive a grant from us in May 2020.

Thank you for helping us change lives through alternative gifts.

Peace,

Surinder Moore

Executive Director
Alternative Gifts International

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The **Marion Alternative Gift Market** started with an inspired group of women in 2011. Since then, the community in Marion has raised over **\$34,000** to support programs around the world that give long-term solutions to help alleviate poverty globally and domestically. Through the simple act of gift giving last year, the Marion AGM was able to provide:

- 881** pieces of fruit for students in rural Kenya
- 21** textbooks & weekly lunches for impoverished students in Cambodia
- 12** nights of shelter for the homeless in USA
- 14** families received vegetable seeds and soil in The Philippines
- 37** Books sent to kids in Ethiopia
- 6** Syrian refugee children were able to participate in sports & art activities
- 6** trained teachers placed in a classroom in impoverished countries
- 7** shares of a Solar Suitcase for tribal classrooms in the USA
- 5** at-risk youth in Egypt received study materials & tools for job skills training
- 8** Guatemalan women got access to weaving classes
- 6** Kenyan girls received a year's supply of feminine products
- 2** girls in Chiapas, Mexico received a year of education support
- 6** sex trafficking survivors received trauma counseling in SE Asia and Caribbean
- 14** villages in India received hygiene training
- 2** bikes sent to Africa for improved mobility for doctors, students and teachers
- 12** children received health check-ups at the US/Mexico border
- 26** people in rural Haiti received medical treatment
- 10,842** doses of medicine for refugees in Burma
- 5** wheelchair maintenance toolkits sent to developing countries
- 10** fruit & vegetable seeds for Bolivian farm families
- 3** fish & frog ponds and materials for families in Thailand
- 66** fruit/hardwood trees planted in Central America
- 6** water pumps to install fresh water wells in South Sudan
- 2** shares to conserve grasslands & wildlife in Mongolia
- 5** Nanny Goats for Haitian families
- 1** share of a micro-loan for entrepreneurs in developing countries
- 5** shares of a bee colony & hives
- 1** home restored in hurricane-affected areas in LA & TX, USA
- 6** shares to boost underfunded causes

Are you interested in making a difference? Click this link to register your church or organization for an alternative gift market: <https://alternativegifts.org/giving/gift-markets/register>



Q&A

WITH CYNTHIA SHRIVER, MARKET COORDINATOR FOR AMES AGM



AGI: Why do you volunteer to host a market each year? What does it mean to you?

CS: The market was started as a way to celebrate the season in a meaningful way. There are so many people in the world who need material help and our society needs help diminishing the consumerism that is rampant during the holidays. Alternative gifts are unique and you and your gift recipients may feel better participating in the season in a significant way. Long after the holiday music stops and the decorations are put away, alternative gifts continue to work and spread joy. It is inspiring and hopeful to work with people (shoppers and committee members) who are willing to help others in need of assistance. Every year participating in the market puts a smile on my face.

AGI: How long have you led the Gift Market?

CS: This is the sixth year that Ingrid Anderson and I have co-chaired the market. However, it has been in existence in various forms and with many committee chairs for 29 years.

AGI: How early in advance do you start planning?

CS: We start in October. Catalogs are ordered early enough to be available at the first committee meeting.

AGI: What advice can you offer for someone who has never hosted a market before?

CS: We are a coalition of eight faith groups and each one holds markets at their respective places of worship for one to three weekends in December. We also host a community market at a local grocery cooperative on two Saturdays in December. Our advice, involve as many organizations as possible with the idea of each of the groups reaching out to their specific audiences.

AGI: What are a few things that you have/do to have a successful market?

CS: You definitely need committed committee members. We get as much publicity as we can. The faith groups put the dates of their markets in their bulletins/newsletters and posters on their bulletin boards. For the community market we ask the local paper for coverage. We have tried advertising on the radio including Iowa Public Broadcasting but we did not see any increase in shoppers. We place posters advertising the community market in strategic places such as city hall, the library, etc. We make sure the card inserts look professional and we are sure to thank those organizations that helped us during the preparation process.

AGI: What is one thing you wish you knew the first time you hosted a market?

CS: Since we have eight participating organizations, it took a long time to devise a financial tracking system that couples with the projects chosen by the shoppers. This involved a lot of revisions in forms. The final accurate report to AGI requires that each faith group is diligent and responsible. Also, you may be surprised how many individuals do not understand what an alternative gift is, how to connect the gift with the chosen recipient, and how to make it fun for children.

*Photo courtesy of: <http://www.uufames.org/alternative-gift-market>
We would love to share your market or donor story! Contact us at agi@alternativegifts.org*



Cause 12: Empower Her With A New Skill

When Mamie was widowed, she was left to care for three school-aged children, ages 12-16, as well as other family members. She enrolled in a catering class, and after completing the course, she was offered a job from a Liberian government official to provide catering services to the workers on his farm for nine months. Not only was she able to put food on her family's table, but she was also able to ensure that her children went to school.

However, Mamie wasn't satisfied to simply care for her own family. She was inspired to use her knowledge to help other women. In her small community on the edge of Monrovia, many families are living in extreme poverty. Mamie saw baking as a way to help them earn some income, so she started her own class with 20 women.

"So many people don't have money to feed their children," Mamie says. "I hope for them to learn and to become somebody".

They bake using what they have. They created an oven by covering outdoor stoves with pieces of galvanized roofing sheets, and they stir their batter with glass bottles. Even though the equipment is simple, the women in the class have been selling cornbread, donuts, and cookies in their community. With the money they earn, women have been able to cover the cost of their children's school fees.

"We came together to do something for ourselves," shares one woman in the class.

"When we learn, we can do businesses for our very selves. I feel proud. ... A little bit of happiness came to me."

To provide support for other women like Mamie, click here: alternativegifts.org/giving/gifting/causes/12-empower-her-with-a-new-skill-liberia





Pictured: Kenson

CAUSE 15: HEALTHY STUDENTS, HEALTHY SCHOOLS

There are only six doctors for every 10,000 people in Haiti. Forty percent of the population has no access to healthcare and for rural communities, the nearest clinic is often hours away. Community Coalition for Haiti's initiative, Healthy Students, Healthy Schools, takes healthcare directly to rural communities through school-based clinics, which focus on preventative and curative healthcare for hundreds of rural school children.

Kenson's life was saved when a physician discovered a dangerous heart condition during a routine check through his School-Based Clinic. He had corrective surgery in the Caymans and can now run and play without collapsing! Kenson's dad says, ***"If it weren't for CCH... my son's heart condition never would have been discovered and he wouldn't have survived another year."***

For as little as \$11, you can help save another kid's life by giving a gift of a health checkup for a child here: alternativegifts.org/giving/gifting/causes/15-healthy-students-healthy-schools-haiti



Facebook Live Sessions

Join our live broadcasts on Facebook with our partners as we discuss their programs that are impacting lives around the world! This is your opportunity to hear directly from our partners and ask any questions you may have.



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