

# MILES OF SMILES

## Editor's Notes

Welcome to the second 2013 issue of Miles of Smiles.

As spring has (finally) arrived in the Denver area, SmileMakers are busy with activities related to TFGK's as well as enjoying the beautiful weather in this part of the world.

In this issue, we have reports of toy distribution in Africa, Haiti, Miramar (Burma), as well as Parker, Colorado.

Many new toy makers have joined us and existing groups have recruited new members. A map on page 3 shows the location of our SmileMaker groups in 15 states.

As you may have noticed, the format of the newsletter also has changed. We hope this makes for easier reading. A plus is that we now have room for more pictures to accompany nearly every article.

However, as always, we need your help. Let us know if you have comments or questions about the new format. And news about your SmileMaker group and ideas for future issues of Miles of Smiles are always welcome. This is your newsletter and we appreciate your help in making it better.

Fave Kitchen Editor

## JUNE 2013

### Highlights

2013 Charity Golf Tournament Plans in Full Swing	1
Latest TFGK's Chapters and Members	2
Toy Distribution in Burma	5
SmileMaker Report	8

### Our Mission:

To provide hand-made, sturdy, attractive, wooden toys free to God's Children everywhere

## Teeing Up For Kids

On October 14th, TFGK's will hold its 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Tournament and Fund Raiser. The event has proven to be a significant source of funds for the charity as our SmileMakers and Friends in the Denver area gather at Perry Park Country Club for a day of spectacular golf.

Known as one of the most exceptional golf venues on the Front Range of the Rockies, Perry Park offers the beauty and challenge of a high mountain course. And it's close-in to both Denver and Colorado Spring. If you love golf, are in the Denver-Colorado Springs area, and are looking to show your support for TFGK, come join us on



October 14<sup>th</sup>. Information is available by e-mailing [toysforgodskids@gmail.com](mailto:toysforgodskids@gmail.com). Tee times are limited so sign up early.

## Notes from TFGK's Central

At TFGK's Central we're working to make certain our charity can handle the growth we have projected over the next five years. Thus this year our efforts include improving our information base, producing better financial information, and developing better communications with our SmileMakers. We also need to keep on top of the number of cars produced, where they end up and take steps to establish a more cohesive national organization.

So we've put in place a relational database of SmileMakers and friends of TFGK that allows us to communicate faster, more easily, and more accurately with others.

Our treasurer, Lawrence Kitchen, working with our bookkeeper Roy Hoffman, has brought our financial reporting to a point where each month we receive timely, accurate and detailed information about the financial health of TFGK.

In the past nine months, Faye Kitchen has produced four quarterly newsletters with news and information about our SmileMakers. We hear nothing but good comments.

To keep on top of the distribution of cars, a number of you have agreed to report on the cars you or your group sends out. As the number of SmileMakers increases, it's become more than a one-person job to keep track of how many cars we distribute and where they are going.

With our SmileMaker count now topping 125 individuals with operations in 15 states, it's time we take a step toward a more structured organization. Currently, there are nineteen cities where one- or two-man SmileMaker operations turn out the toys that make a difference to children the world over. We want to recognize these operations as important parts of the TFGK network by identifying them as Toys For God's Kids "Workshops". An example: the Manchester MD Workshop of Francis Rill.

Also, there are thirteen groups across the country having four or more SmileMakers: one has fourteen members. We think these groups should be acknowledged for building a substantial, local TFGK organization, so we'd like to designate them as Toys For God's Kids "Chapters" within the national Toys For Gods Kids network.

There you have it. The Toys for God's Kids Network: more than 125 individuals in 19 Workshops and 13 Chapters, in 15 states...nationwide.

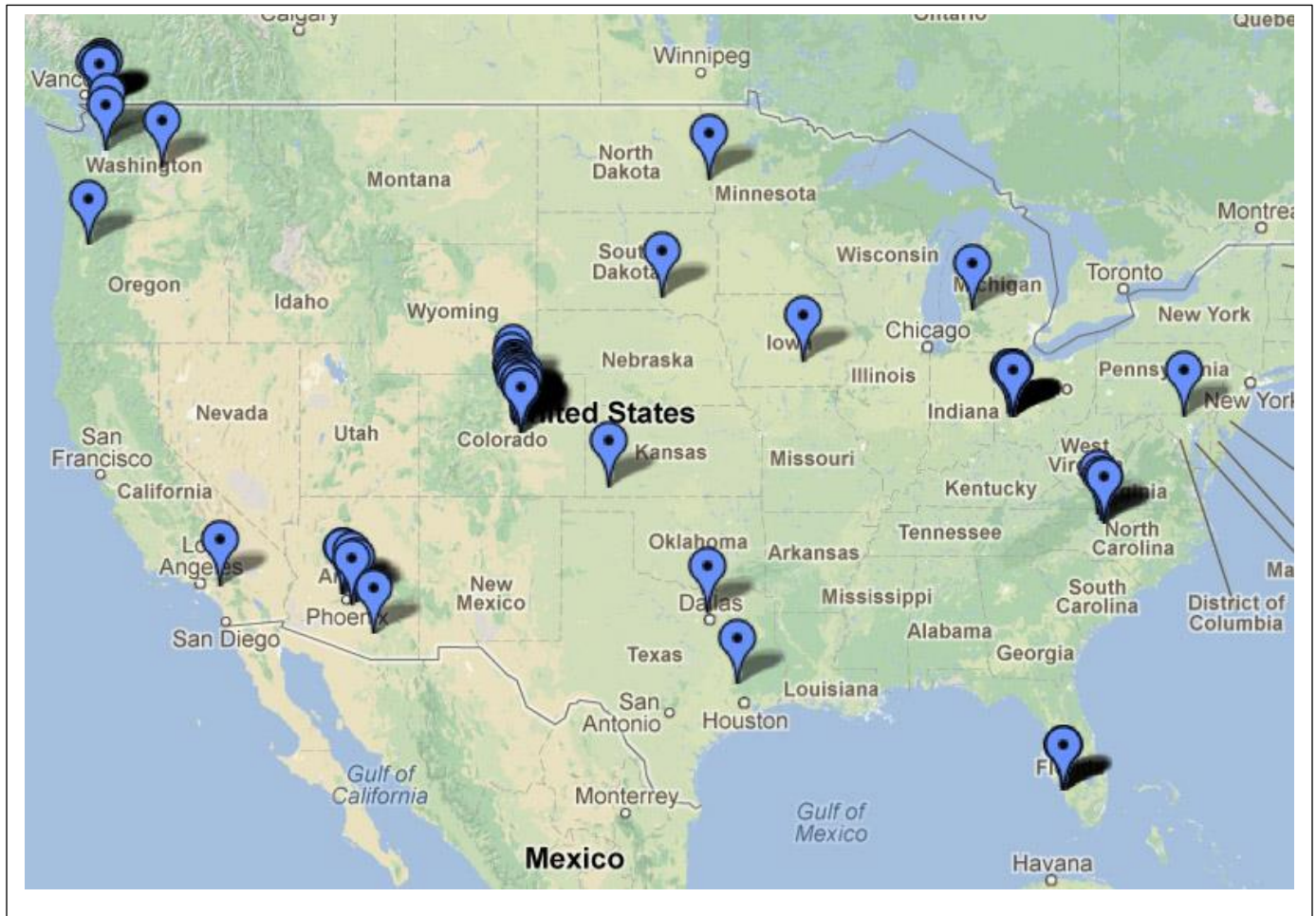
To acknowledge these newly designated Workshops and Chapters, we plan to send out certificates to "Officially" proclaim your Workshop or Chapter designation. And we will begin a program to provide you with business cards that identify you with your TFGK Chapter or Workshop. We hope the end result will be a greater sense of belonging to a growing organization whose members are giving their time and talents to making children around the world a bit happier.

Last quarter, the Shell Point FL Chapter (previously we mistakenly called it Sand Point) added Charles Rue and Frank Harrison as SmileMakers. The Monument CO Workshop grew to Chapter size with the additions of Mac Davis, John Decker, Ed Santucci and Bill Uhde.

Welcome all.

Marlin and your TFGK Board

## SmileMaker Map



**15 States and Counting!**

## Toys for God's Kids Central Organization



**Board of Directors:** Left to Right: (Standing) Marlin Dorhout, President and Founder; Dutch Van Maaren, Technical Support; Lawrence Kitchen, Treasurer; David Berger, Fundraising; (Seated) Marlene Dorhout, Administration; Andrew ( Andy) Morris, Chairman; Jerry Krupp, Vice Chairman; Rita Krupp, Secretary.

*photo by Gloria Berger*

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### TFGK's Teams Up with Parker (Colorado) Rotary for Charity Projects

Toys For God's Kids has teamed up with the Parker Rotary Club to support several Rotary projects.

Don Clasen, SmileMaker and Rotarian, recently delivered a box of 500 cars to Project Cure, a non-profit that supplies medical equipment and supplies to third world countries, to be included in their Kits for Kid's boxes. TFGK's supplied the car kits and the Parker Rotary assembled them. TFGK's and Parker Rotary have now delivered about 1,300 cars to Project Cure for distribution. Parker Rotary has

now delivered about 1,300 cars to Project Cure for distribution.

Additionally, TFGK is sending four toy making kits to Young RYLA camp in July. Each kit consists of 250 toys resulting in 1,000 toys being assembled by YRYLA this summer. TFGK's is also providing kits for 1,000 cars to the Parker Rotary Community Corps in June. A videographer will document the assembly and an article about the event will appear in the September Miles of Smiles newsletter.

## Toys Bring Smiles to Burmese Children

by Faye Kitchen

Miramar (or Burma, as it also known), recently opened up its country to tourism. Shortly after the restriction was lifted, my husband Lawrence asked me if I would like to visit. The idea of seeing their culture as it had been for centuries as well as viewing the result of the juxtaposition of new ideas that had come when cultural and political isolation had been lifted, was fascinating to us.

Therefore on November 2012, Lawrence and I found ourselves on a Delta flight to Bangkok, the first leg of our flight to Burma. Of course, our suitcases contained more than our personal items; there were also as many small wooden cars as we could cram around our clothing and toiletries.

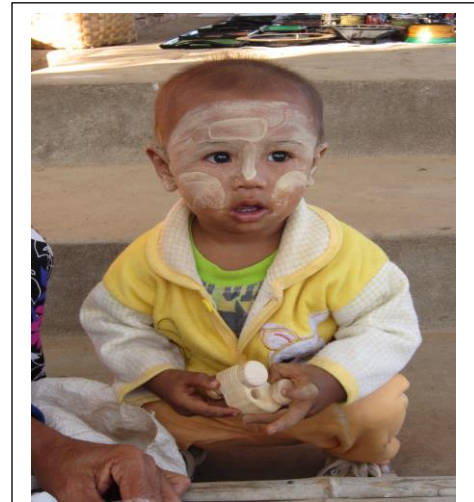
Our cars came from SmileMakers in Denver; and although they were branded with a USA logo, the Toys For God's Kids logo was not stamped on this batch. Despite Burma's lifting restrictions on many aspects, they still refuse to allow missionaries or any other religious groups into the country; it was decided to omit anything about the cars that could risk them being confiscated at the border.

Burma is a land of contrasts. Beauty and kindness exist in the

midst of abysmal poverty and great isolation. The contrasts were poignant. Hungry people that smiled—people living off almost nothing that still offered rice to begging monks. As devout Buddhists, the Burmese live accruing to “Samsara,” the rotation of cycles. For them, every day is really nothing but the eternal cycle of life, death, and rebirth without beginning or end, influenced exclusively by karma (luck).

The small local markets are a microcosm of Burmese life. It is somewhat like the farmer's market we know of, only on steroids. Sights and smells assail the tourists as they enter the market. Every essential for Burmese life is offered in this one place. Raw fish and chicken are piled on the ground, ready for purchase. All kinds of fruits (some identifiable, some not) are stacked artistically for the buyer's perusal. Flies accompany everything and everybody. The stall holders, sitting, standing, squatting by their merchandise, are constantly seeking customers. As the unwary tourist approaches, there is dead quiet; then a cacophony of

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voices begin, all talking at once: "Jewels 100,000 chat (about \$1.00 US)"; "Post cards, I draw myself"; "Come, see my stall."

There are tugs at the arm, children jumping to make eye contact, "Please come see. Just look. More over here." "Cheap, cheap, cheap!"

These children of Burma are everywhere. They are physically beautiful with small structure, dark hair and beautiful dark brown eyes. (As you may notice from the photographs, their faces are sometimes smeared with thanoka cream. For 2,000 years, this ground bark and root mixture has been used as a cosmetic but it also creates a cooling sensation on the skin and protects from sunburn.)

Burmese children often function as surrogate adults, watching their younger brothers and sisters, and helping their parents at their stalls in the market or assisting them with farm work. A few go to school, but most have no formal education.

Burmese children are very shy: some peek fearfully from behind their parents at first at the strange people. Others, however, are "learning the trade," reaching out from their mother's arms with a lacquered bracelet clutched in their tiny brown hands as they look up at the tourists.

For Burmese parents, every day

is "Take Your Child to Work Day." At most of the ruins and tourist attractions, parents were busy doing landscaping and sweeping the grounds, as their children played in the background. At one of the unrestored temples, piles of boulders restricted walking and proved very confusing to us when we tried to leave the courtyard of a ruined temple. A small girl showed Lawrence and me the way, leaping from stone to stone and indicating shortcuts between buildings. She gleefully accepted our dollar bill as well as a wooden car.

At another, three boys were playing as their mother swept the grounds with a rake. The oldest seemed to be in charge of the others; and was drawing pictures in the mud with a broken umbrella rib to entertain his brothers when Lawrence and I stopped to give them cars. At first they looked confused and finally the older boy gave each of his brothers a car and took one for himself. They seemed amazed to receive their cars and stared at us as we walked on. Later we were happy to see the boys playing with their new toys and making the motor sound that all boys seem to know how to make.

We later stopped at a small village and made many new friends. Many children sat outside their homes with their grandparents while their parents were at work. Others assisted their family at the small market.

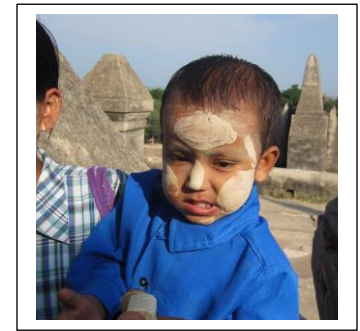
Members of our tour group had brought pencils, notebooks, stickers, and other school supplies and treats to give to the village children. We were happy to include our cars with their gifts. The grandparents seemed happy to have something to entertain their young charges with also and helped them play with their cars!

One experience in toy giving that I will never forget is when we encountered a small boy begging with his mother near a lot where our tour bus was parked. He was dressed in rags and wore only one flip-flop. But his smile was infectious and when we gave him a car, he jumped for joy. He shyly asked for another car for his baby, and when we gave it to him, he ran off to present it to his sibling. Later, his mother and the two children appeared at the bus window. She gave us the Burmese blessing, saying Namaste (thank you) with her hands folded. We returned the blessing, knowing they had given us much more than we could ever give them.

I could tell you many more stories about the recipients of those little wooden cars that we took to Burma. We gave the children more than a hundred cars, but could have passed out a thousand. Perhaps we will return to Burma someday, once again with as many cars as possible tucked into our luggage.

## Photos That Make Us Smile

### Three Photos from Burma



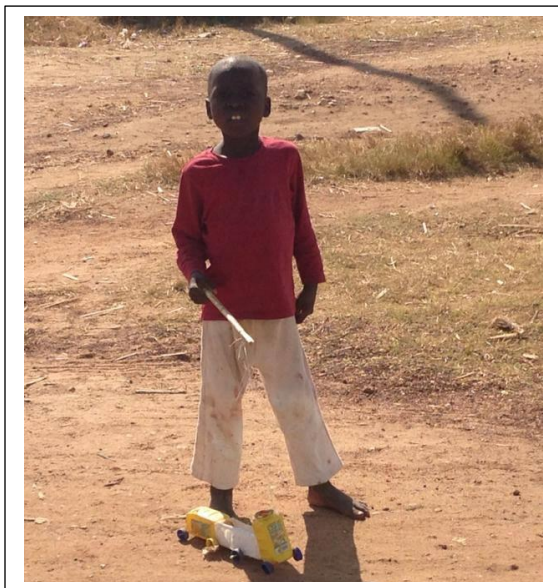
Haitian Child with Wooden Car

Photo courtesy of Bryan Smith



Riverside (California) ToyMakers –

Our Latest TFGK's Chapter



**Zambinan Boy with Car**

**Photo courtesy of**

**Shell Point Chapter**

**Note the car is the boy's**

**custom design.**

## SmileMaker Report

### John and Betty Stitzel

My wife Betty and I are members of the Denver chapter of Toys for God's Kids. We have been happily married for 29 years, and we thoroughly enjoy both our large families. We've long since retired from the workforce, but we keep busy with our house and yard (1 acre). Betty enjoys working in the yard with the flower beds and a rather large vegetable garden. My main job is keeping the yard looking reasonable, and trying to make as many toys for TFGK as I can, while also attending the many family activities that occur when you have fairly large numbers of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

I became involved with Toys for God's Kids back in June 2009, when Channel 9 ran a story about TFGK's with Marlin, who said that they were always looking for people to help out. At the time we were doing woodcrafts at craft shows, but had decided to give that up at the end of that year.

When I saw the story on TV I knew I could make those toys - I had almost all the necessary equipment on hand at the time. I called Marlin for an appointment, and he explained the whole operation to us. He gave me a "starter kit" of a few scroll saw blades, some wood, dowel, and whatever else I needed to get started. I managed to produce about 1,000 toys that year, and have been averaging 2000 per year since. I make the complete toy, and then take them to TFGK headquarters for dipping and distribution.

My workshop is in an old 1-car garage at the south end of our property. Regrettably it isn't insulated so I am unable to work out there in the winter when the temperature is below freezing with no sunlight. I do have a propane heater that makes the place usable as long as there is sunshine; however, from December thru February there is almost nothing I can do. Summer heat is no



*John and Betty Stitzel*

problem as I can open it up wide and get air moving through. Unfortunately a better heating system is out of the question.

I would say that the best thing about TFGK's is the mission itself. Making these toys for kids who have almost nothing in their lives and in many cases not much hope is wonderful. It makes me feel good to know that something I am doing - small though it may be - is making life just a little better for a child. I am both proud and humble to be able to be a part of it.



## Toys For God's Kids Sends Toys with Soldier Deployed to Africa

Recently, Toys for God's Kids received an email from Mitzi Sanchez, who was deployed to Africa with the military. Toys For God's Kids was able to supply her with cars for distribution while she was there and she wrote to thank us. --Editor

**March 22, 2013**

**Hello Mr. Dorhout,**

**It has been some time now, but you and your wonderful volunteers sent a box of 400 cars to the base where I was deployed in Africa. My sister, Natalie Hattenbach, had heard about your organization and coordinated efforts with you to get the cars to me. I was like a kid at Christmas when I got that box. What an amazing thing it is that you do. I was able to deliver the cars to children at a couple different orphanages, as well as to a number of children in several villages in the countryside. They loved them. I also left the box open to my comrades to take the cars to other children they came into contact with through various volunteer opportunities (a health clinic for the locals, coordinated efforts through the embassy, etc.). All the cars found happy homes!**

**I have attached a few photos of some of the children who received them. The orphanages are particular about us not taking photos of the children, so I don't have any pictures of them - mainly the children I gave them to in the countryside.**

**Thanks again for all you do, and please pass the word on to all your volunteers that they and their efforts are very much appreciated.**

**God bless!**

**Mitzi Sanchez**

