

Birthday Shoes

Madie loves reading and writing at school, wouldn't mind having a hippo as a pet, and often plays on the computer in her spare time. She'll be 9 years old soon and wants to do something a little different for her birthday this year. Instead of receiving presents for herself, Madie wants to give her gifts away. She's throwing a birthday party where her friends and family can donate shoes for Africa.

Before Madie's party invitations went out, she came to the Soles For Jesus warehouse with her family to see how it all works. Madie saw thousands of shoes waiting on the front line to be sorted, and she even prepared some to be packed. She peered down into boxes full of shoes bound together, and observed 7 foot tall towers of brown boxes, ready for shipment to Tanzania. Madie looked at a map, and learned about the countries we've sent shoes to. But perhaps, most importantly, she learned *why* we are sending shoes to Africa and about the impact she is making by collecting shoes. A few weeks after her tour, I asked Madie some questions to hear in her own words what collecting shoes means to her.

SFJ: Why did you decide to collect shoes for your birthday?

Madie: Because I do not need any more toys or clothes and some people do. My family talked about ways to help others and this sounded like a good way to help.

SFJ: Did you learn anything new through this experience?

Madie: I learned about some of the countries in Africa where you send the shoes and that you need to sort the shoes before you put them in the box.

SFJ: What would you like to say to a boy or girl your age getting shoes that you donated?

Madie: I am happy to donate shoes to you because I think you need them more than I do! They can help you keep your feet safe. I hope you like them.

It is clear to me that Madie's heart is one that recognizes the words of Paul (quoting Jesus), when he says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," encouraging Christians to take care of those who have less than them. When I read Paul's words and observe Madie's response, I can't help but feel that something incredible is happening in America, as well as Africa. I see sacrifice and generosity lived out by a 9 year old, and spreading to her family and friends. Madie is raising awareness and affecting her own world, as well as the global community. She is a living demonstration of one who counts it better to give than to receive and a great example to many. Her beautiful birthday shoes will go to Africa and slip onto bare feet, changing the lives of those who walk in them...and the journey of compassion that sends them there is also a true miracle I don't want to miss.

