



# Alternative Gifts International

January-March 2009 Newsletter • [www.alternativegifts.org](http://www.alternativegifts.org) • 800.842.2243

## An Alternative Perspective...

A year of crises and optimism—

As I've said before, I like to reflect on current events and issues; sometimes my seminary studies provide an alternative take on the media messages. I tire quickly of reading or listening to the same old pundits, using words that writers so often use without defining: crisis, recession, revolution, landslide, 'won/ lost', record lows/ highs, poverty, wealth, liberal, conservative.

Surely, all such terms are relative only to our own experience, and the more limited our experience, then the more difficult to draw comparisons to what such words mean. Often, that experience may correspond to age—which equals 'maturity'. For example: my father was born in 1909 and immigrated at age 2 to this country. In January, he will turn 100. Neither he nor my mother were able to attend school past 8th grade, but they both learned to read and do basic math, which got them into adequate employment throughout their lives. They lived through two World Wars (although no one in our family did military service), all the economic slumps and recessions, and owned their own home—never had a debt problem, because they never used credit. He went from barn dances to radio to TV to Cable; they even trust electronic deposit for their SS checks!

Dad has beaten the odds, but there are millions more who can say the same thing—both senior citizens and current young parents in 2008-09. In the USA, we consider 10% unemployment as unimaginable. How many of us have already seen these statistics in our lifetimes? Personally, I feel it is our role, as elders and leaders, to help calm the fears of the younger generations that we must never give up hope. One way we can do that is by using AGI materials and buying AGI gifts. Why? They can remind us that when we compare our lives to those who face truly life-threatening circumstances each day, we are richly blessed, and in doing so, we are practicing compassion and teaching empathy.

Blessings & Peace,

Lea McCloud  
President



## Helping Others in Hard Times

It seems that so much of our lives these days are based on predictions for the future. The business and political worlds make their plans based on the best guesses of a few 'experts'. How often are they right-on? We are forewarned that virtually everyone will suffer during a recession. That sounds like Fear talking. However, we can be sure of one thing: the poor and sick will suffer, and even die, at a greater rate than those who have little want.

When making choices for charitable giving or gift-giving, we might change some practices, but most of us will not give up our traditions. If we could keep in mind the theology of abundance rather than scarcity, we would all feel more secure. AGI was based on the principle that when simple gifts are gathered together, by caring, concerned people, we can accomplish miraculous deeds. No matter all the negative and fear-based messages we hear, the fact remains: each year, your gifts change thousands—even millions—of lives.

Alternative gifts provide the power to 'keep on giving'. Like diamonds, they increase in value. They can attract the attention of others. They will be cherished by the receiver, and the joy of giving such gifts can be passed on to future generations.

Yes, like diamonds, education, health care, comfort, seeds to grow food and micro-loans to support the livelihood of families and communities qualify as gifts that 'keep on giving'. By working together with partner agencies, AGI provides multiple ways for people who want to help to give gifts to honor their friends, family and neighbors.

Take some time this year to hear the stories of how your elders weathered the financial storms in their lives. Such lessons and stories can predict our resiliency better than the experts and computerized projections of numbers. When we apply our 'gut feelings', exercise God-given intuition, faith and trust, we will also recognize how to do the 'right thing'. Predictions from the experts are not the only resource we have to get through hard times.

**FREE  
CALENDAR  
POSTER!**

### Inside this issue:

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Unfold this newsletter  
to reveal a 3-month  
AGI pledge calendar!

# What on Earth Are Millennium Goals?

What do the symbols on each monthly calendar represent? Three of the eight United Nations Millennium Development Goals (UNMDG), which AGI is highlighting in the annual catalog. For more information, see [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals).



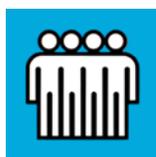
## January

Like most global challenges, to reduce child mortality requires various approaches. In the Northern Hemisphere, many children die of pneumonia during the winter months. Irrespective of the locale, malnutrition is often the key to whether a fragile child can fight off disease or be restored to health. The agencies who serve children know that sometimes simple solutions can save a child's life. Please consider supporting one or more of the following projects: 8, 12, or 16.



## February

Considering the anchor date for February gift-giving to be Valentine's Day prompts us to think of loving relationships, and therefore gender issues. No matter where you stand on the issue of Eros love, global statistics expose the fact that gender bias against women does exist—thus the UNMDG to promote gender equality and empower women. You can support this goal by donating to projects 23, 26 or 35.



## March

AGI has been connecting people by building global partnerships for development since its beginning. However, there are many ways that agencies work to accomplish this more directly. Your support of projects 13, 22, or 29 will help promote efficient and productive collaborative partnerships.



**Note:** The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest.

The practice that AGI Founder Harriet Prichard began in 1980 has become the basis for this organization's success. By using volunteers to spread the message about Alternative Gift-Giving through special events called "Markets" the costs of operating this interfaith global educational fund-raising organization has been kept amazingly low. Still we have only six regular part-time staff, in addition to a full-time President [See photo]. During the holidays, we also hire two or three seasonal workers.

Even though orders received from individuals via the internet are increasing each year, still, approximately 70% of funds that AGI distributes to agencies are generated by Markets in churches, organizations and schools. This season, we have 218 registered markets. If you are interested in knowing where and when the holiday Markets are held, go to our Website, under "Get Involved", and select Local Gift Markets. The list is shown by state.

If you could not attend Alternative Gift Market this year, perhaps next year you can participate as a volunteer or shopper. If there is not a Market in your community, we are always delighted when we get a call from prospective Market Coordinators! Call Lynette (the KU fan in the photo) at 800.842.2243 or e-mail her at [Lynette@alternativegifts.org](mailto:Lynette@alternativegifts.org).

\*Please remember: Alternative Gift-Giving is not just for the year-end holidays. Christian churches and schools have also used the AGI materials for Lenten Studies or Vacation Bible School offerings. Environmental groups will be celebrating Earth Day with Alternative Gift Markets, and AGI gift cards are also used by many donors to remember birthday, anniversary, graduation and memorial occasions.



Some of the AGI staff poses for a picture. Back row: Cameron Houck, Michael Aumack & Eric Salcedo. Front row: Huynh (Lucy) Nguyen, Lynette Vignatelli & Sheila Clements

## Charitable Alternative Gifts:

### An Answer for Expressing Year-End Thanks



Stressed-out human resource managers and executives faced with budget cutting can breathe a sigh of relief. The days of giving the turkey, ham or gourmet fruitcake now has an answer that gives options and shares the satisfaction of giving, along with receiving.

Alternative Gifts International (AGI) is not like most charities that have an option to donate to their specific cause. This innovative charitable practice begun by a visionary Christian Education Director in 1980, not only gives choices, but educates and raises awareness about various sustainable, non-governmental solutions to global challenges.

My Shopping List for the World is the catalog of a wide variety for alternative charitable gifts. Gift 'price points' are designed to be affordable, meaningful gifts that children can buy for parents, grandparents or teachers. Teachers can honor their students as well. All gifts are tax-deductible, and 90% of each designated donation is guaranteed to go to the selected agency project—which includes no administrative costs! The ten percent share is what fuels the non-profit that has designed this tool for teaching and giving.

When shoppers adopt the AGI tradition of giving, they find it so easy and rewarding that they return year after year, and expand their gift-giving and charitable giving to birthday and memorial gifts. The variety of gifts allow the gift-giver to personalize their selections, based on the country or location of the gift, along with the endeavor that fits the recipient: education, animals or books; medical supplies, water wells and training for community health workers; transportation for disabled or community-based health workers in developing countries; trees for deforested areas and seed banks, support systems and micro-loans for women who are facing their futures alone. The list has at least two options for each project; some examples include solar heat and groceries or emergency assistance in the USA; long-term solutions to environmental challenges facing Haiti, Tibet and people enmeshed in the struggle of recovering from war or living with debilitating disease.

In recent years, AGI has distributed up to \$1,300,000 annually, to more than 60 reputable local and international charities. Those

**Gift Certificates are also available which allow the recipient to choose the kind of project their gift will provide to a needy world.**

gifts represent the specific intention of the gift-givers; AGI takes the responsibility to assure the accountability of each agency.

Shop at our Web site, e-mail [AGI@alternativegifts.org](mailto:AGI@alternativegifts.org) or call 800.842.2243 (316.269.0635 local). The office is located in Wichita, Kansas, and is staffed by fewer than ten employees who work tirelessly during the holidays, as they are allowed to share the joy of their donors who appreciate the kind personal service and ability to personalize their gifts. Gift Certificates are also available which allow the recipient to choose the kind of project their gift will provide to a needy world.



## ADS YOU CAN USE



Visit AGI's Web site to download these two ads for newspaper, magazine or other print media use.

To request additional ad sizes, contact AGI, 800.842.2243.

### Make Your List. Check It Once.

- won't collect dust
- no batteries required
- no wrong sizes, colors, styles or brands.

### The perfect gift.

Shop online: [alternativegifts.org](http://alternativegifts.org)  
or call: 800.842.2243

Alternative Gifts International  
*"Gifts of Hope & New Life"*

### Find the perfect gift...

### stay in your bathrobe.

Shop any time, any day of the week at [www.alternativegifts.org](http://www.alternativegifts.org).

If you would like to speak with a sales representative about our gifts, call us at 800.842.2243.

Alternative Gifts International  
*"Gifts of Hope & New Life"*

Alternative Gifts International  
 Alternative Gift Markets, Inc.  
 P.O. Box 3810  
 Wichita, KS 67201-3810  
 USA

Non-Profit Org  
 US Postage  
 PAID  
 Wichita KS  
 Permit # 84

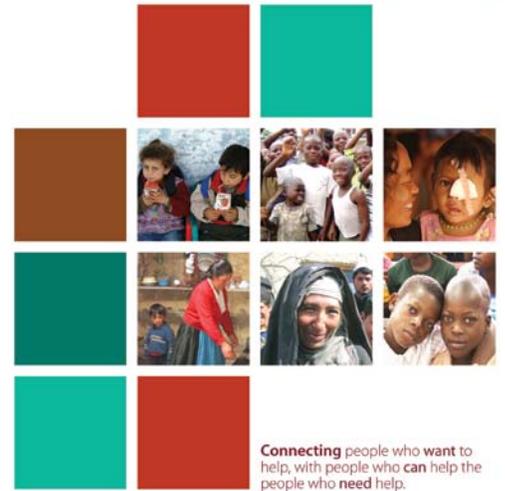
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## 2007-08 Annual Report Now Available



Following the July 2007 meeting in Jacmel, Haiti, when the Haitian National Coalition for the Environment was formed, the AGI Board took action to support the coordination the Coalition, granting more than \$20,000 from General Funds. AGI's future may include being a connecting agent to initiate similar coalitions in other countries that would welcome AGI's help with sustainable solutions.

 Alternative Gifts  
 International



Connecting people who want to help, with people who can help the people who need help.

annual report 2007 - 2008



## A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words

In October, I spoke to students of the Pocotello Idaho Charter School. After taking this photo, we talked about how important pictures are to tell stories. That's part of the reason AGI's materials are so effective. We work to touch hearts.

The reverse side of this newsletter provides great ideas for discussion in classrooms or offices. Using AGI's catalog is also a powerful teaching tool. But add some discussion and 'hands on' learning, and conceptual ideas and complex processes will come alive.

Consider the impact:

- when a child understands that the \$4 she pays for a single dip of gourmet ice cream could feed and shelter a child in Kenya for 24 hours (Project 4);
- of creating a display with the contents of a items provided by a food pantry--enough to feed a family of four (Project 32);
- when 28 children each bring \$1 and learn that by adding their dollars together they can send a child to school for an entire month in another country (Project 14)!

Please ask every teacher you know to consider using AGI materials in their classroom.

### AGI's Mission...

The global mission of AGI is to send authentic, life-giving gifts to a needy world — gifts that build a partnership with people in crisis and that protect and preserve the earth's endangered environment — to nourish and sustain a more equitable and peaceful global community.

AGI is a nonprofit, interfaith agency. AGI provides education for people of all ages about global needs and raises funds each year in its Alternative Gift Markets and from individual donors to respond to those needs. Designated grants then are sent to the established international projects of several reputable nonprofit agencies for relief and development.

Poster Photo Credit:

Nepali Children; Artist: Aeon Jones, [www.aeonjones.com](http://www.aeonjones.com)

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