



THE SHOEBOX PROJECT for SHELTERS, SUPPORTED by DREAM
MANITOBA CHAPTER
SHOEBOX TIPS

Okay! Now it is time to have fun shopping for great finds to fill your Shoebox with! Every Partner Agency and Organization with The Shoebox Project for Shelters is special and different, and every woman who accesses our partner facilities is beautifully unique...just as your personal Shoebox donation should be!

From experience, and from valuable feedback, there are some items that are very much appreciated because they are very functional and practical, and other items that are considered to be luxurious and beautiful. The most successful Shoeboxes are those which combine the two.

Here are some tips that may be helpful for you as you select and purchase your items ~

- ❖ Like Goldilocks and the Three Bears...bottles and containers that are too big or too small do not work very well. Too big means a lot of space is taken up in your Shoebox so there is little room left for other items. Too small means the item is more like a 'test' product. The middle size is just right!
- ❖ As outlined in the "Please Do and Don't" lists, items containing alcohol are prohibited, whether it is in chocolate, mouthwash, or hand sanitizers, etc. Most perfumed body sprays for example also contain alcohol but it is labeled as glycol (Propylene Glycol), or isopropanol (Isopropyl Alcohol) which are other forms of alcohol. Please keep an eye out for these ingredients too!
- ❖ Lipstick or lip gloss is a very popular item for the ladies' Shoeboxes, and some of them come inside a package. But most do not. If you choose one that is not in any packaging, and does not have a factory seal over the wand and tube, with the help of the store Sales Associate, open up the lipstick or lip gloss to make sure it is in brand new condition. Sometimes, if a tester product is not available in the display case, someone may open the product to 'test' on their wrist, and then put it right back into the display. Of course, this is not the product we want to purchase for ourselves, or anybody else.
- ❖ Eyeshadow is always a very thoughtful item to include as well. Many of the women receiving gift Shoeboxes may have jobs to go to, or may be seeking employment. This may be something to keep in mind when selecting your eyeshadow. If you are including two small shadows then it could be very thoughtful to include a softer, more neutral colour that is fitting for daytime wear, and then a brighter ~ even sparkly! ~ one that will just make someone smile! If purchasing a trio box of eyeshadow, a perfect colour combination has soft and medium colours in the set. Remember, although that neon turquoise, or bright red glittery shadow is very pretty, we must keep in mind that your Shoebox is meant for a woman who likely will treasure this item as a luxury for a long time to be used on many occasions.
- ❖ Nail polish is a small item with big impact, and it really can often boost how a woman feels about herself. It can either add a fun pop of colour, or provide a subtle elegance depending on the hue chosen. Sparkly or glittery polishes are always a treat to have, but please keep in mind that they typically require a special polish remover that is formulated to dissolve the hardening elements in these specific polishes, and to prevent damage to the nailbed. If you choose to include one of these special finish nail polishes in your Shoebox, a thoughtful item to include then would also be the remover and cotton pads as well. Please make sure the nail polish remover lid is on tight, and even placing the remover in a zip-top baggie would be our suggestion!

- ❖ Another popular item is jewellery. This could be a necklace, bracelet, brooch, or hair adornments like pretty bobby pins and clips. We do not recommend pierce earrings as all recipients may not be able to use them. Because we do not know who will be receiving your Shoeboxes, it is good to keep in mind the 'one-fits-all' choice! Necklaces such as long pendants, or statement necklaces at least 17 to 24 inches long will fit everybody. Choker necklaces are usually 13 to 16 inches long and not everyone will be comfortable wearing them. Bracelets ideally should be at least 3 inches in diameter for a bangle style ~ including stretchy ones when relaxed ~ or approximately 7 inches long for a bracelet with a clasp. Keeping these guidelines in mind will guarantee that your recipient will get to wear your specially chosen gift with comfort and joy!
- ❖ Pretty scarves are always welcome by the ladies ~ even in warmer months! Lightweight fabrics that are easily worn around their necks, or can even be used as a pretty belt, can be very versatile as they can dress up an outfit, or keep bodies protected from the wind and cool of a damp day. And, of course, knitted scarves, toques, mittens and gloves, etc. are always welcome in colder months.
- ❖ Summer to Fall can often bring rain showers our way, and a small compact umbrella or a lightweight rain poncho are very practical items to have ~ and they can be a thoughtful addition to your Shoebox.
- ❖ Sweet treats are always just that ~ a treat! Candies and chocolate with nuts are not allowed as a safety precaution against nut allergies. There are all kinds of varieties of treats and they can be purchased in full bars, or packages. If choosing packaged candy, they can be divided up as long as each individual piece is factory-wrapped. For example, a bag of jelly beans that has been opened at home and split up in to smaller zip-top bags, would not pass inspection, because at some time, the jelly beans could have been exposed to possible contamination. On the other hand, a bag of Werther's Caramels could easily be purchased in a large size and divided up because each individual caramel is factory-wrapped. At home when we serve food to our family and friends, we know that we will be washing our hands really well or wearing gloves when preparing and serving food to them. When providing food to the public however, there are very strict guidelines that must be followed and we want to make sure that the women who receive the Shoeboxes are given items that have been handled accordingly.
- ❖ Including a Gift Card in your Shoebox could also be a very thoughtful gesture. A card for Tim Hortons, Shopper's Drug Mart, or Walmart would always be a welcome addition. We do suggest that you limit the amount to \$15.00 so that there is plenty of budget money left for the other practical and fun items in your Shoebox. If your GC does not have the dollar value indicated on the card or envelope, please make sure to write the monetary value on your gift for presentation.
- ❖ Price tags and labels are not something that we would want displayed on any gift that we give to family or friends, and it is the same for when we gift a stranger with something. Where possible, please try to cut off or remove the price tags ~ without damaging the item of course! ~ or for price tags that are printed right onto the factory packaging, using a fun or pretty sticker to cover up the amount is a great suggestion. A product called 'Goo Gone' works great for removing adhesive labels! It doesn't matter how much is spent on purchasing the items, but rather, making someone feel special by taking the time to compose a thoughtful Shoebox for them is what is important. Just like we would do for our own family and friends!
- ❖ Finally, including a card or a hand-written note means the world to the women. It means that they are important, and that you are thinking of them and trying to make their day a wee bit sunnier! We all feel happy when someone takes the time to acknowledge us...even with a simple "Hello"!

Hopefully these tips and suggestions will provide you with some great insight on how to compose a perfect Shoebox for the women who are guests of The Shoebox Project for Shelters' Partner Agencies. The main thing is to have fun, and to remember what a kind and thoughtful endeavour you are taking on! **"Thank you"** for choosing to support our organization...we are very appreciative, and we know that the women will be very grateful, and excited to receive the fruits of your efforts!

Now there is only one thing left to do...
 "Start Shopping, and Have Fun"!