



# Kases 4 Kids

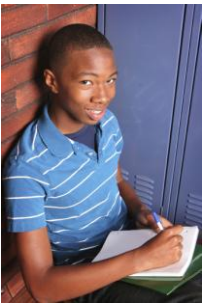
## Help Untended, Unwanted Children Get a Handle on their Young Lives

"I got an idea for a club project" and then started a service project called **Kases for Kids** that would span almost ten years, four countries, and touch thousands of lives, Lions and children.

In the United States, there are over 500,000 children in the foster care program. There because the adult in their life couldn't or wouldn't act like an adult. Through no actions of their own, children are removed from the only life they know. What possessions they may have are thrown into plastic trash bags. This is how they arrive at their foster home, receiving home or shipped to a relative.



**Kases for Kids** is a non-profit/tax deductible service project of your local Lions Clubs, having originated in 1998 in Fresno, California, in order to assist children and young people who exist in anything but stable home lives. It began as a project of the North Blackstone Lions Club and has since expanded to other counties in California, several states and even in Canada, England, and Mexico.



A child looks at his worldly possessions, how ever meager they be, in trash bags and gets to thinking, "If my things are in trash bags, does that mean they are trash? And if they are trash, does that mean I am trash?" Not a message or thought Lions wanted the children to have. So the birth of **Kases for Kids**. After all, childhood is like the old joke about a small town, one blink and it is gone.

**Kases for Kids** tries to give one child at a time with one suitcase at a time, a piece of self-respect. By taking a suitcase that was gathering dust in someone's closet or storage area, cleaning them up, placing toiletry items and a stuffed lion or blanket in them and a nametag on the handle, they are given to children to place their things in so they can arrive at a foster home or a relative's home in something besides a trash bag.

Volunteers from the local Lions Clubs seek out donations of suitcases of any size from the general population. These Lions Clubs also seek from merchants contributions of such items as stuffed toys (lions when possible), toothpaste and brush, soap, and toiletries of all kinds. They make these filled suitcases available to public service agencies such as child protective services, family welfare services, police departments and other agencies that are charged with helping young people. Since the program was founded there have been more than 10,000 donations to displaced children.



One of the main reasons for the success of this program is that local donations stay local. When Lions and the community gather these basic items together, they are distributed to the kids in their community. Plus, Lions are notorious for recycling.



Today's kids identify themselves by what they see on television. The poorest of poor kid, whether running away from home or running from a landlord for unpaid rent, they seem to have a suitcase. But the simple fact is that there are middle class kids who arrive at school field over night trips with their clothing in pillow cases or shopping bags. By giving a child a suitcase that you don't want or need gives a bit of dignity to a child during a tough time in their life.

Josiah Warren writes children are "creatures of example – whatever surrounding adults do, they will do." **Kases for Kids** gives children a positive example of adulthood and their actions. It shows them how to share and give by example.





The truest gift of *Kases for Kids* has been the side benefits and side activities that have arisen from the project. Making Lions aware of a usually forgotten member of their community, Lions have found other ways to expand on taking care of the needs of these children. After all, there are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give to our children. One of them is roots, the other is wings.

In the past and currently, clubs are providing sleeping bags for school overnight trips to children, taking them fishing, purchasing them clothes, buying backpacks and filling with school supplies, providing them with Easter baskets and Christmas stockings. Activities and gifts the children wouldn't have without the generosity of Lions. Leos and other school age students have had suitcase drives and service projects compiling bags full of toiletry items to fill

the suitcases with.

*Kases for Kids* is listed as a Hurricane Katrina relief provider. The work and organization of Lions to help those fellow citizens who were walking around with their worldly possessions in bags seemed a perfect service marriage.

We do not remember days, we remember moments. *Kases for Kids* has the unique opportunity and ability to provide special moments of joy and self respect to kids and families through the work of Lions locally, nationally and internationally.

**For Additional Information on this Project or for a Club Presentation**

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