

Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF

Lamorinda kids continue a 57 year old American tradition

By Sophie Braccini

When Sarah Jessica Parker opened last year's launch of the 56th Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF campaign in New York, she said: "Halloween can be very focused on the amassing of bucket-loads of sweets. Yet 'Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF' demonstrates that kids can do good deeds and still have fun. A positive first experience with philanthropy can lay the groundwork for a lifetime of giving." This year, many Lamorinda community groups are encouraging families to join the challenge. So don't be surprised when young trick-or-treaters come to your door this Halloween toting an orange UNICEF box along with the usual plastic pumpkin basket or devilishly decorated goodie bag, and have some pocket change handy by the candy bowl.

UNICEF is the acronym of the United Nation Children's Fund. It began as the "Food for Europe" program after WWII and became an integral part of the UN in 1953. Every year, more than 10 million children under the age of five die totally preventable deaths.

UNICEF works with governments, national and international agencies and civil society to support effective and essential actions at each phase of the life cycle of the child, from the mother's pregnancy through early childhood, preschool and school-age years and adolescence.

Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF was started in 1950 when a group of young trick-or-treaters went door-to-door on Halloween night in Philadelphia, carrying milk cartons to collect change. The result was much bigger than they could ever have imagined, since over the past 56 years the children of the United States have raised more than \$132 million to help build a better future for children around the globe.

Some in Lamorinda have taken over the challenge and this year, community groups and schools are joining forces. The Moraga Junior Womens' Club joined the fund raising effort two years ago. Anne Robles, a mother of 3 young children, says, "Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF is a great way to teach our children that there are less fortunate children in the world and that this is one way in which they can help." Mei Lin Wolff, who started the program for the Moraga Juniors, said the experience was great: "My daughter, who attended school at Glorietta, went with a group of friends and the response was unanimously positive. Some people were surprised, but most remembered doing it during their childhood or having had their kids doing it." "Some people didn't have change," she adds, "so we ended up getting \$5 and \$20 bills!"

Robles campaigned to get other groups to join in, and this year the Lafayette Juniors and the Lamorinda Moms Club plan to share in the philanthropic effort. "It is amazing what difference even small amounts of money can make," adds Robles. According to UNICEF data, \$1 protects a child from polio for life. Additionally, \$1 immunizes one child against the deadly disease measles. Measles claims more children's lives each year than wars, famines, and natural disasters combined. \$2 can provide 66 children with vitamin A capsules for a year. Vitamin A protects children from permanent blindness, helps them grow strong and protects against certain types of infections. \$2.46 can buy school supplies, such as pencils, books, chalk, slate board and paper for one child for one year.



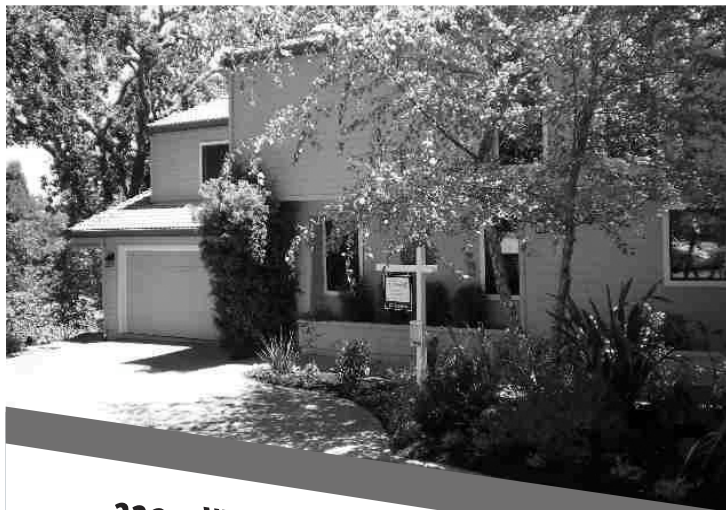
Trick-or-Treating for UNICEF (top to bottom, left to right): Anne Robles holding baby Carly, Andrea Lucacher, Kelly Robles, Charlie and Grace Woidat

\$9 buys a pack of 200 water purification tablets. Drinking unsafe water can lead to diarrheal diseases, which kills 1.5 million children each year.

The "Leadership" class at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School is a veteran of the program. For 10 years now the middle school students have participated, raising anywhere from a few hundred to more than a thousand dollars depending on the year. Gerald Gruen, the Leadership teacher, explains that the students chose a different way to raise money this year. "The students have dropped boxes in every first period class and organized a competition between them," says Gruen, "some classes have already required additional boxes and we are very excited to see the outcome."

Pier 1 Imports, a corporate sponsor of the project, gives away the orange containers for free. The Walnut Creek store, 2099 Mount Diablo Blvd # 101, confirmed that it has many containers available in a basket just inside the entryway. For more information on this program and on actions developed by the UNICEF go to www.unicef.org.





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