

AS PUBLISHED IN:

THE HUFFINGTON POST

FOR A CHILD IN NEED, NEW SHOES MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE



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Childhood poverty rates in the United States are mind blowing. In fact, more than one in five children in our nation, one of the richest on the planet, lives below the poverty line. Helping children in need can seem complicated and beyond our reach. But at Shoes That Fit, we believe we can make a difference with something as simple as a new pair of shoes. Especially for a child like “Daniel.”

“Daniel” came to school every day in torn shoes that were too small for him. He had cut holes where his big toes could spill

out and not hurt so much. One of his shoes was held together with rubber bands. He was embarrassed.

“Schools uniforms are meant to give the impression that the kids are all equal, but the kids know,” says Sandy Torres, the office manager at Daniel’s school.

“One of the main ways they can tell whose family is in trouble is by the students’ shoes.”

Before Daniel was measured for new shoes, he was withdrawn and quiet. Kids like Daniel have very low expectations. They learn not to ask even for their most basic needs to be met because they don’t want to be disappointed.

Once he knew that his shoes were coming, he stopped by the office every day to see if they had arrived. On the morning he saw that the Shoes That Fit delivery was there, Daniel couldn’t wait.

“He was so excited and relieved,” said Sandy. “He ripped off his old shoes and the look on his face was priceless,” she said. He opened the box, put on his new shoes and took his time tying his shoe laces with the bunny ear method he had recently learned.

Daniel’s school is less than 9 miles from

wealthiest counties in California, playground to the rich and famous, paradise for surfers and sun lovers. That’s not the Orange County he knows.

At Daniel’s school, 99% of its 1,120 students are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Life is particularly hard for the students living in the apartments facing the back of the school. Each unit there houses multiple families crammed into tight spaces. Single parents working several low wage jobs have a hard time keeping an eye on their children in the dangerous, gang-ridden neighborhood. Like so many, Daniel’s single mother struggles to raise her three boys.

Occasionally we hear from people who think parents need to take responsibility for their own children and just buy the shoes themselves. Did you know that the federal poverty rate for a family of four is just over \$24,000 a year? For families like Daniel’s who have to choose between rent, and food, and transportation between two and three jobs and shoes for their children, it’s not hard to imagine that food wins.

At Shoes That Fit, we provide new shoes to children in need, like Daniel and his brothers, so they can attend school in comfort and with dignity, better prepared to learn and play. And this is what sets Shoes That Fit apart from similar organizations. Each child is measured to ensure the best fit possible. Then that child receives a brand new pair of shoes, maybe for the first time in their lives. And these are athletic shoes, so not only are they the proud recipients of new shoes, but now they can participate in recess, gym and afterschool sports.

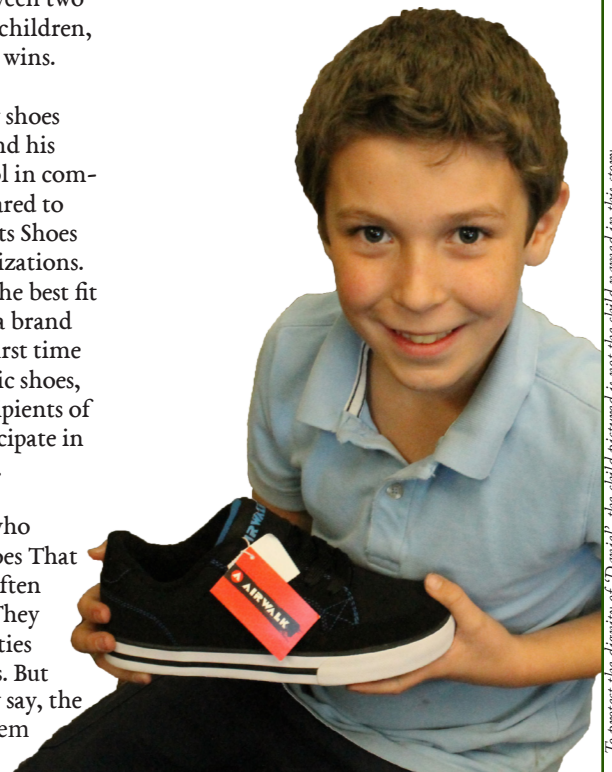
School staff report that children who receive new shoes through the Shoes That Fit program attend school more often with fewer behavioral problems. They participate more in physical activities and interact more with their peers. But most of all, school staff like Sandy say, the new shoes boost a child’s self-esteem like nothing else.

Since 1992, Shoes That Fit has provided more than 1.5 million pairs of brand new athletic shoes and other items essential to school success all across the country. In 2014 alone, Shoes That Fit served more than 90,000 children in over 2,000 schools in 46 states and the District of Columbia. We do it all with 7 staff people headquartered in one national office in Claremont, CA with no government funding. We are able to harness the energy of volunteers all over the United States who are helping children in their own backyards.

Sandy has seen that a happy child can concentrate on school. They are calmer, more relaxed, not as stressed out. Her school has high expectations for the success of all of their students and the staff there believe that this solid foundation must be built in elementary school. But it’s hard to learn when all you feel is shame.

For Daniel, those shoes made all the difference. He was comfortable and he didn’t have to worry—he felt normal. Now he was happy and interacting with the other kids. Because now he was just like them.

“He was so excited and relieved... he ripped off his old shoes and the look on his face was priceless.”



To protect the dignity of ‘Daniel’, the child pictured is not the child named in this story.

For more information on how you can be a part of Shoes That Fit visit our website at www.shoesthatfit.org