

Mary's Meals launches Big Family Christmas campaign

Global child hunger charity, Mary's Meals, invites you to join its Big Family Christmas campaign to help bring hope to the world's poorest children with life-changing daily school meals.

There are lots of different ways to take part in Mary's Meals' Big Family Christmas campaign – Set a place at the virtual Big Family Christmas dinner table. Every little act of Christmas giving means a brighter future for a hungry child.

Mary's Meals provides school meals to more than 1.2 million impoverished children around the world. The promise of a nutritious meal each school day attracts chronically hungry children into the classroom, where they can gain an education and work towards a life that is free from poverty.

Patty Burns, Executive Director, Mary's Meals, USA said: "Christmas offers a wonderful opportunity to extend the joy and love that we share with our own families to the much wider Mary's Meals family – particularly the 1.2 million children around the world whose lives are being transformed through the simple gift of a daily meal in school.

"Nothing is more precious than the gift of food and education; together they create profound and far reaching changes in the life of a hungry child. There are so many ways to join our Big Family Christmas. Together, let's share what we have with those who lack even the most basic things and bring hope to the world's poorest children with the life-changing gift of daily school meals."

Supporters are encouraged to invite friends, family and colleagues to join Big Family Christmas and help unwrap a hungry child's future this festive season. Those looking for festive inspiration can find plenty of tips and suggestions for how to get involved at www.bigfamilychristmas.com.

From December 1, people will be able to set a place at the Big Family Christmas virtual dinner table for a suggested donation of \$19.50, which will provide a hungry child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year. For each donation, a plate featuring the donor's name, or the name of a loved one, will be set at the digital dinner table, which can be viewed at bigfamilychristmas.com.

Patty Burns added: "The cost to feed a child for a whole school year may seem like a small sum to some of us, so insignificant that we undervalue its worth, but by giving that small amount this Christmas you can send the most incredible gift to a hungry child.

There are many ways to support Mary's Meals as Christmas approaches. Visit www.bigfamilychristmas.com or call 800-385-4983 to find out how every little act of kindness at this special time of year will help to transform the life of a hungry child.

Notes to Editors

- Mary's Meals is a simple idea that works. The charity provides one daily meal in a place of learning in order to attract chronically poor children into the classroom, where they receive an education that can, in the future, be their ladder out of poverty.
- Mary's Meals feeds hungry children every school day across four continents, in 15 countries including Malawi, Liberia, Kenya, Syria, Zambia, Haiti, Uganda, South Sudan, Thailand and India.
- The average global cost to feed a child with Mary's Meals for a whole school year is just \$19.50.
- The worldwide cost per meal is 10 cents.
- Research from Malawi shows that in schools where Mary's Meals are served hunger is reduced, enrolment increases, attendance improves, drop-out rates fall, absences dwindle, concentration in lessons is heightened, attainment levels increase, parents are less anxious and children are happier.
- The Mary's Meals campaign was born in 2002 when Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow visited Malawi during a famine and met a mother dying from AIDS. When Magnus asked her eldest son Edward what his dreams were in life, he replied simply: "I want to have enough food to eat and to go to school one day."
- Mary's Meals is committed to spending at least 93% of donations directly on its charitable activities. This is only possible because most of the charity's work is done by an army of dedicated volunteers – including more than 80,000 in Malawi alone.
- Mary's Meals is owned and run by local communities in the project countries in which it operates.
- Wherever possible, Mary's Meals is made with locally produced food, which helps to support smallholder farmers and boost the local economy.
- Please visit www.marysmealsusa.org to find out more about the work of Mary's Meals.

Media contacts

Diane Driscoll
Head of Communications, Mary's Meals USA
Diane.driscoll@marysmeals.org
203-962-3776

Patty Burns
Executive Director, Mary's Meals USA
patty.burns@marysmeals.org
917-863-8129