



Hi Everyone,

Ok, now for the rest of the story...

the rest of the story

After the backpacks had been completed August 27, we were set to deliver them to our kids in Mexico the following Wednesday, September 2. Knowing that the border has been increasingly tightened on the Mexican side over the last few months, we decided to send the supplies across in two loads to make sure they all got across. Norm set out on Monday, August 31, and crossed about 6:30PM but was stopped and searched and detained. Our staffer in Mexico, Olivia Morentin, tried to reason with the border guards for over 7 hours until it became clear that they were not going to release either our backpacks or our van.



Our trusty Chevy van--the "tenki u" van--now lost somewhere in the Mexican border system... This pic taken a few years ago when a child in Mexico had written thank you, "tenki u," in the dust on the door.

Norm called me starting at 9:30PM and updated me until 2AM, when I left for the border to go pick him up. By the time I got there around 3:30AM, they had unloaded, unpacked, and counted every item right down to the last pen and pencil and then rebagged them with tags for each item and quantity. Norm and I waited another three hours, until 6:30AM before they let us leave. Poor Norm had been there for 12 hours by that time.

Norm went back down a few days later with Olivia and representatives from DIF, Mexican social services, to try to negotiate and/or pay fines to get everything back, but border officials wanted \$2200 to release the van, which is worth maybe \$500, and the supplies were confiscated. We had to walk away from everything. **The silver**

lining in all this is that if we ultimately don't get our supplies and backpacks back, they will be given to DIF at the state level, so they would eventually be given to needy children--just not our children.

next steps

We still have over 300 filled backpacks to get to our kids. I delivered a thick stack of new documentation to Olivia who is using it, through DIF, to get COTA on an approved list of agencies that will allow her to get new permits for us to bring materials into Mexico.

We now have permits to take the rest of our supplies across on Thursday, October 1. We trust this will work, but the rules at the border change constantly, so hitting that moving target is a challenge. We've really been fortunate in that this is the first time we've had a major delivery confiscated in one of our core programs. We'll keep you informed of what happens next, and if you're interested in going with us to help distribute the packs, let me know.

next van

Finally, we are in real need of another work van for our ongoing operations. A cargo/service van would be ideal, but we're not above pulling the seats out of any van we can get. Our Chevy "tenki u" van was donated by Grendal and Monica Hanks about 5 years ago, and we pulled everything out of it until it was just a bare fuselage, so

if you have a van or know of anyone who has a van that can be donated for a tax deduction, please let us know. Norm is without a primary cargo vehicle right now, and we need to get him back up to speed.

One way or another, we'll get the supplies to our kids, and we'll report on that soon.

Dave

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