

From: **Soul Box Project** soulboxteam@gmail.com   
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ART REVEALING THE GUNFIRE EPIDEMIC.  
MAKE A BOX. SEND IT IN. IT COUNTS.

## Back to School with The Soul Box Project



Nobody likes to hear *school* and *gun* in the same sentence. Schools spent a lot of time and energy **preparing** for the worst. Like teaching new words to *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*:  
"Lockdown. Lockdown. Lock the door. Shut the lights off, say no more. Go behind the desk and hide. Wait until it's safe inside. Lockdown. Lockdown. It's all done. Now it's time to have some fun..."

Or what this teacher says in a note accompanying a delivery of Soul Boxes:

This was my Facebook Post on the evening of February 14<sup>th</sup> following the school shooting in Florida.  
I am a teacher. I make sure the exterior doors to the school are always locked. I wear my classroom key around my neck so it is easy to get to so I

can lock my students inside my room if I need to. I have signs ready to hang on the windows that face outside to alert responders that there are people in the room and whether or not there are injuries. I have an orange emergency vest to wear, and a fully charged walkie talkie. I think about where the best place in the room would be to hide, whether a shooter would break the glass at the door to get in, if we could climb on the bookcases to get to through the exterior windows, and if the drop to the parking lot is safe. I know if we did this, I would tell students to run to the candy store next door to hide. I wonder if I'm brave or selfless enough to confront a shooter in order to save lives. I think about my students' safety, what I would tell parents, what the news would say about us if there was a shooting.

Of course, the stories that haunt us most are about the heartbreaking shootings that actually happen. But there are also stories about **action**. For instance, over the past eight months we've watched the Parkland, FL students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School build a movement out of their tragedy.

**Educators, students and parents are also taking action with Soul Boxes.** Each is a page in our Soul Box story. Here are some of the ways Soul Boxes are going back to school.

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## A Day of Courage and Compassion

Last April, Da Vinci Middle School in Portland, OR spent the day making Soul Boxes. The activities were part of the arts magnet school's full-day exploration of courage and compassion. Soul Box Project founder Leslie Lee visited as the school's HeArt Learning guest artist.



She started the day speaking to an auditorium of middle schoolers about art, activism, courage and Soul Boxes. Guided by peer leaders, the students then spent their morning classes learning to fold Soul Boxes. Leslie visited

classrooms to meet students and answer questions in the afternoon. In their last class of the day, students wrote about their experiences. The feedback from the students and faculty was overwhelmingly positive! If you would like Leslie to visit your school, please [contact her here](#).

## Students Explore Their Power for Good



Woodrow Wilson High School students in Portland, OR carried Soul Boxes as part of their activism against gun violence, recorded here on their yearbook page.

Using the Soul Box Project in a service role provides an opportunity for students to engage, act and reflect while fulfilling their state's high school [graduation requirements](#) or credit allowed toward graduation for service-learning/community service. **Folding Soul Boxes can be tailored to a one-day project or an ongoing endeavor engaging other students over a set period of time.** The individual act of folding a Soul Box, honoring a life lost or affected by gunfire, is meditative and healing. Group folding provides a nonthreatening opportunity for dialogue about gun sense and activism. Working towards a goal tied to a statistic – such as representing the 733 children, 11 and under, shot in 2017 – illustrates the gunfire epidemic, as well as the power of art activism.

Schools wishing to further extend student comprehension on the issue of gun

violence can also order a curriculum toolkit from [Vision Quilt](#).



Hannah Taylor and Graham Yotsuya lead a Soul Box workshop on Unity Day at West Linn High School in Oregon. [Full story here.](#)



Cheerleaders at Parkrose High School in Portland, OR folded 69 Soul Boxes at the first session of their community service.

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## School-based activism doesn't stop when the class bell rings.



A retired teacher sent a set of Soul Boxes. Her note touched on the comfort that can be found, just by folding. “Thank you for letting me express my hurt, anger and frustration with what is happening in our country in a way that’s visual and creative.”



Betty Reynolds, Mark Mandel and other members of Woodrow Wilson High School’s class of '66 in Portland, OR not only folded 87 Soul Boxes, but raised over \$900 for the Project, as well. [You can make a donation here.](#)



Even pre-schoolers can contribute to Soul Box making. **Here’s an idea**



**to help the littlest hands contribute:** Use a cardstock [template](#) to outline the area that will show once the Soul Box is folded. Let them decorate the flat paper, then you do the folding. Cynthia Towle DeVore, on our Facebook [Soul Box Community](#) group, shared this insight: "For the very youngest we chose to simply call them boxes and not to go into the background. We felt that at 4 years of age it was developmentally too young to go into gun violence..,"

That said, any child who has experienced a lockdown at school deserves a positive, empowering way to respond. This second-grader not only comprehends the issue but shows an innocent compassion for the shooter that few adults would extend.

After the Las Vegas shooting in Oct. 2017 a seven year old boy talks about the SOUL BOX he made.



2 views

**And, finally, parents.** Soul Box volunteer Stephanie Bugge Wilson – the person who keeps our social media interesting – penned this blog about her experience as a parent with children in lockdown, and how it led her to the Project.

If you'd like to join the Soul Box team, we could use your help! Specifically, we need to hire an Outreach Coordinator in the Portland, OR area. [More information here.](#)



September 19, 2018

"Mom, we're in lockdown."

[CONTINUE READING](#)



## On to Salem!

**Even with the help of teachers, parents and students we still need thousands of Soul Boxes for our first major installation.**

On February 15, 2019 -

- coincidentally the day after the first anniversary of the Parkland shooting -- we'll fill the Gallery West in the Oregon State Capitol lobby with 36,000 Soul Boxes!

That's one Soul Box to represent every person shot in the US during a typical year. **Legislators and staff will be in session.** We will invite them to stop by and add their own Soul Box. This exhibit is **also a chance to attract media attention** with a parade of 72 volunteers each carrying a clear bag of 500 Soul Boxes in and out of the Capitol. If you want to participate [let us know.](#)

..... 22 000 .....

With an incredible 22,000 Soul Boxes already contributed, we are over halfway to this first goal -- with more exhibitions to come! Gather your friends and family to fold, personalize and send in your Boxes (instructions [here](#)). If you're part of a community, from a book club to a congregation, we have tools to get you organized [here](#). Watch our [Facebook page](#) to find weekly Box-folding gatherings around the Portland, OR area. Better yet, start your own, especially if you are in a different state. However you do it:

**Make a Box. Send it in. It counts.  
Now, more than ever.**

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**Our mailing address is:**

The Soul Box Project

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