

# Newton Citizen

## Mexico holds up delivery of Christmas gifts

By Barbara Knowles  
News Editor

COVINGTON < Doug Doster and several other Covington area residents are no doubt pondering the Scrooge-like philosophy of an American playwright who once quipped, <sup>3</sup>No good deed goes unpunished.<sup>2</sup> Doster and fellow members of a mission team from Julia Porter United Methodist Church in Porterdale have been stranded on the Mexican border since Saturday, trying to deliver 7,500 Christmas gifts to needy children.

Mexican officials have turned the three trailers loaded with gifts away.

<sup>3</sup>This is not the first time we've run into difficulties. We've had problems in the past, but never to this extreme,<sup>2</sup> Doster said Wednesday afternoon from inside Mexico.

The team members themselves and any gifts packed in clear plastic bags have been allowed to cross the border, but the bulk of the gifts remain stacked on the trailers the caravan took to Texas over the weekend.

The mission is called Operation 405 and marks the eighth year members of Julia Porter UMC and others have honored the memory of the late Matt Allen by gathering Christmas gifts for Mexican children. Allen, 27, was killed in a vehicle crash in July 2000 as he returned from a mission trip to Mexico.

He had promised the pastor of a small church in a village near Chihuahua City that he would return with Christmas gifts for the children.

After Allen's death, the church members conceived the idea of a project to take Christmas gifts into Mexico to honor Allen's memory. It wasn't until later that they learned from the pastor in Mexico that that had been Allen's plan all along.

Doster said he's not sure what has caused the lack of cooperation from Mexican officials.

<sup>3</sup>I don't know all the answers to that question other than security is quite tight on the border right now. I don't fully understand,<sup>2</sup> he said, adding that there is a woman who is affiliated with the mission who does the coordination with the Mexican government and their border officials.

<sup>3</sup>She has to deal with them because I don't speak Spanish. I just know they were afraid for their jobs.<sup>2</sup> But, Doster said that he is hopeful there will be vans coming to the border to meet them and they'll be able to off-load the gifts onto those vans and take them to their intended destination, approximately 150 miles into Mexico in the Monterey area.

Since Saturday, Doster and his team have gone into Mexico themselves to worship with the people at the churches whose members are waiting to distribute the gifts for children ranging in age from infants to teenagers.

The boxes contain such items as toothbrushes and toothpaste, socks, soap, composition notebooks, coloring books, pens, pencils and small toys.