

A RUNNER GIVES KIDS REHABBED SNEAKERS

GREG WOODBURN, 20
Ventura, Calif.

Greg Woodburn has donated thousands of pairs of shoes before, but when passing out dozens in a tiny village in the West African nation of Mali last December, he was overwhelmed. The kids laughed and wanted to race the young hero, and the village chief embraced him. As Greg, 20, handed him new shoes, "my hands were shaking with excitement," he recalls. "That was definitely a life-changing experience."

Usually it's Greg, a sophomore at the University of Southern California, who is changing lives. As a high school runner, he suffered knee and hip injuries that cut short his track seasons. He moped around until reminded by his parents, Woody and Lisa, that "there are people who aren't running because they don't have shoes," Greg recalls. The message hit home. Greg began collecting running shoes (first his own, then his family's, then friends'), scrubbing them clean in his kitchen sink before shipping them off—the first time to an Ugandan orphanage. Four years later his non-profit Share Our Soles (shareoursoles.org) has donated 4,700 pairs, mostly to needy kids in the U.S., like Oscar Perez, 17. Oscar used to run track in his coach's tattered hand-me-downs. Now, the Modesto High School senior sports a pair of gleaming, red-and-silver Nikes. "It's amazing," Oscar says. "Who gives you a free pair of shoes just because?"

By Joyce Chen

"When I'm cleaning a pair of shoes," says Greg (with a pile of spruced-up sneakers), "I'll think of the kid that pair will go to and the joy they'll get out of it. And that feels amazing."



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