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Open Eyes, Open Hearts: A Proposal to Raise Awareness of the Homeless

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Proposal Summary

There is a problem facing many people in the San Jose area, and the problem is only expected to get worse. Homelessness is everywhere as more people become unemployed and lose their homes, and it affects everyone in a community. Santa Clara County has a comprehensive plan, drafted in 2005, in place to address the issue of homelessness, but their plan depends on community support and disseminating important information to this priority population.

Our agency has planned a multi-pronged approach in our efforts to improve the plight that the homeless face in our area. We intend to raise public awareness of the dilemma of the homeless in the San Jose area through the use of an educational video and photovoice project. Enlightening our community about the difficulties that this population faces is the first step in making necessary changes in how they are perceived, and how much public support is afforded this dilemma. We will also conduct interviews among the local homeless population to determine what they perceive their most pressing concerns as and what resources they feel should be made available to them. Furthermore, we intend to educate this population about what resources are currently available to them by creating a changing, constantly-updated informational flyer. We believe we can bring hope and a sense of belonging to this disadvantaged group.

Our agency is uniquely qualified to achieve this goal as our employees have experience in awareness campaigns, program planning, needs assessments, and successful marketing

campaigns, and have received an unparalleled education through the Health Science Department at San Jose State University. We have participated in a number of local health fairs and health promotion events in the San Jose area, and several of our agency staff members have worked extensively with the homeless population in a volunteer capacity. We are excited about taking on this new challenge.

Open Eyes, Open Hearts believes that everyone can play a part in helping the needy in their community. Our project will culminate with a benefit afternoon for our priority population which will allow the community to donate their time and money towards this cause. Through this six-month program, we intend to raise awareness of this pressing issue and foster a sense of hope in our priority population. We look forward to the opportunity to make a real difference for a population in need.

Problem Statement

Homelessness is a problem that affects everyone in a community. This problem, because of the current recession and the high numbers of homeowners defaulting on their mortgages, is on the rise. Unfortunately, at this time of the greatest need, fewer resources are available. The National Low Income Housing Coalition in 2005 reported that the amount of federal support given to low-income housing, between the years of 1980 and 2003, fell by 49%. As of 2004, it took 35 months to get approved for Section 8 housing assistance (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2005). Increasing numbers of families are living in poverty, while decreasing availability of affordable housing is forcing more and more people into homelessness; this issue must be brought to the forefront of our nation's consciousness.

This is a problem whose caliber is difficult to assess with typical survey instruments. When a random digit dialing survey was done in 1990, the lifetime prevalence of literal homelessness was 7.4% (Link, et al., 1994). As the authors explain, this study surely underestimates the actual prevalence of lifetime homelessness, considering that many homeless people would not be available for random digit dialing surveys. Because the nature of being “homeless” is, most often, a temporary status, it is hard to say how many people are homeless at any given time. Definitions of what constitutes homelessness also differ drastically. The National Coalition for the Homeless (2008) states that most counts of homeless people take place in shelters or at soup kitchens; this does not account for the many homeless people who do not take advantage of such opportunities, or the growing numbers of homeless people who are turned away from such services because the services cannot accommodate everyone who needs help. According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2004), in any given year, 3.5 million people, or approximately 1 percent of the population of the United States, will be homeless. In Santa Clara County alone, 20,000 experience being homeless each year (Family Supportive Housing, Inc., 2008).

The homeless struggle with many daily challenges, from finding shelter during inclement weather to falling victim to hate crimes. According to one survey in Washington, D.C., 34 percent of the homeless questioned had been subjected to attacks believed to be motivated by hate (Dvorak, 2009). These hate crimes, which included such horrors as being repeatedly kicked in the head while sleeping, are not limited to the Washington, D.C. area. These figures do not include the frequent rapes that occur among homeless women; one study, in 2000, found that of the homeless women surveyed, 13% of the women reported being raped in the year prior

(Wenzel, Leake, & Gelberg). Domestic violence also plays a role in the life of some homeless women and children. Many homeless people, around 16 percent, struggle with mental illness, oftentimes severe and untreated by medication (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2005). Treatment is difficult to find for those homeless people who suffer from mental illnesses because of a lack of facilities and no health insurance. Addiction is another burden many of the homeless must bear: according to the 2007 U.S. Conference of Mayors, as many as 37 percent of the individual homeless struggle with addiction. Treatment options are limited, due to extended waiting periods, a lack of availability of treatment programs, and, again, a lack of health insurance or the ability to pay. One-fifth of homeless people surveyed in Santa Clara County reported that their homeless status was due to an addiction (Santa Clara County, 2005).

The problem of homelessness affects everyone in a community, not just the actual homeless population. The Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (2007) reports that homelessness has a number of effects on communities. It increases the amount that counties must spend on public health and criminal justice. Homeless people, with lingering health problems and jail time both connected to their homeless status, find it more difficult to make meaningful contributions to society or hold down stable jobs. Finally, homeless children have decreased educational attainment and more absent days from school, so their future contributions to society may be less than they could have been if they had been given the proper resources while growing up. One study in New York determined that 23 percent of homeless children were forced either to repeat a grade or to move to a special education class, and many of these moves may have been made in error (Institute for Children and Poverty, 2003). These different factors only serve to underline the need for communities to address this issue.

Santa Clara County does have resources available to help the homeless, both privately and publicly funded. There are shelters, like Family Supportive Housing, Inc., which provide a range of services from shelter and food to educational classes, and there are soup kitchens, like Martha's Kitchen (2006) in San Jose, which has been feeding the hungry since 1981 (and currently serves over 200,000 meals per year). Unfortunately, more shelters are available during the winter than during other seasons. The Office of Affordable Housing (2008), started in 2003, has thus far awarded over \$10 million towards funding affordable housing projects in Santa Clara County. More funding is sought to expand current programs. The county also offers special programs for first-time home buyers offering extra tax credits and, when funds permit, they also offer down payment assistance programs.

Policymakers are trying to put an end to homelessness in Santa Clara County by the year 2015 (Sherbert, 2008); their efforts will include 500 housing units set aside each year for the homeless and “one-stop” centers where homeless people would be able to get all the services they need, including counseling, housing assistance, haircuts, and health care. The plan was written in 2005, and also calls for a respite center so that ill homeless people are not sent back onto the street before they have recovered. This approach, providing housing first, has proved successful in a number of other communities and is believed to save money in the long run. However, public support is a must.

The success of the Santa Clara County policymakers' 10-year plan (Santa Clara County, 2005) to eradicate homelessness depends on several things, including increasing public awareness (and thus public support) of the issues at stake, increasing governmental funding (which also requires public support), and helping the homeless population in Santa Clara County

to become aware of the options available to them. Federal and state funding will not be enough; funding must come from all of the communities in Santa Clara County. Funding requires support from elected and appointed officials, but it also requires support from the voters, either directly through legislation on the ballot or through electing officials sympathetic to the plight of the homeless. The public must also be made aware of how much less strategies like this cost in the long run, and how many benefits exist from a creative and efficient approach to helping the homeless population. Spending the money at the beginning saves money in the end. Santa Clara County's plan suggests using many different kinds of media to convey these messages and let the public know what they can do to help. The message needs to get out through as many channels as possible.

Increasing knowledge among the homeless population is another mandatory piece of this puzzle. Santa Clara County can develop helpful, effective programs, but if word does not get out and the homeless population is not aware of the programs and the options available to them, they will be unable to take advantage of such programs. Comprehensive information on both privately funded and publicly funded programs needs to be made available, along with locations, hours, requirements, and nearby public transportation routes.

Once public support and funding for Santa Clara County's homeless initiatives have been secured and detailed, comprehensive information has been disseminated to the homeless population, the County can begin working towards the goal of providing residents of the county with a place to live and enough to eat, and, thus, the tools the residents need to be a success.

Problem Goals and Objectives

Open Eyes, Open Heart's ultimate goal, as an agency, is to reduce the number of homeless people in Santa Clara County. However, a goal as lofty as this and, as mentioned in the Problem Statement, one as difficult to track as this requires many smaller steps to accomplish. For this six month program, we have two separate audiences. Because of this, our first goal is to bring awareness of the dilemmas that homeless people face to the surrounding community, thus increasing public support for Santa Clara County's plan to work towards eliminating homelessness. Public support means that elected officials are more sympathetic to the cause and more funding becomes available. Our second goal is to increase knowledge among the local homeless population about the programs and resources that are available to them: in a nutshell, where they can get the help they need. To achieve these goals, we have developed process and impact objectives.

Process objectives are the tangible goals that we look forward to reaching during the program. We will, during the first month of the program, conduct between five and fifteen interviews with a variety of homeless people in local shelters. Using the video footage and still photographs we obtain from these interviews, we will create a fifteen to thirty minute long educational video. This video will be shown once a month at community centers, and we will work towards at least thirty attendees for each of these events. The video will also be posted on YouTube, with a link leading to it from local community websites and homeless advocacy groups, and we will work towards at least one hundred online viewings per month. In conjunction with the video, we will be distributing an information sheet to the local homeless

population, and we will distribute a minimum of two hundred informational sheets per month. At our program-end homeless benefit afternoon, we expect a turnout of at least 150 people seeking services and assistance.

It is harder to measure impact objectives, or the intermediate effect of the program. In order to evaluate the program, we will be conducting interviews with the general public as to their perceptions and prevalent attitudes about the local homeless population. We will look at how many people perceive the homeless in a positive light, and we expect to see an increase of at least 15 percent in this category over the course of the six month program. We will also be interviewing homeless people during the course of the program, and we will see an increase of more than 20 percent in the number who are familiar with local options and resources for the homeless, and who have both seen and used our informational sheet.

Project Methods/Tool Design

Open Eyes, Open Hearts will begin this program with a series of interviews within the homeless community. One of our goals is to increase awareness in this population of the options that are available currently in the San Jose area. In order to create appropriate documentation of these options to disseminate, we will conduct a needs assessment to determine what services the local homeless population need information about. These interviews will take place at local homeless shelters and will be videotaped (with appropriate model releases secured). Those interviewees who do not want to be videotaped will have the option of appearing in still pictures, instead. The interview questions will be designed to help our agency gain insight into the specific struggles and issues that the homeless in San Jose face on a daily basis.

Based on the answers we receive during our interviews, we will create a single-page compendium of the most useful services available to the homeless population in this area. This may include local shelters; places to get housing, financial, or job assistance counseling; soup kitchens; and places to receive medical care. Information for each location will be provided including requirements (if any) and public transportation options for getting to the locations. The information sheets will be designed to be updated or changed quickly and easily, as the availability of social services programs can change by season and with budget changes. The information will be presented on a single page format and distributed in-person, by hand, both on the street and from local shelters, because we believe that is the easiest way to reach the priority population. A supplementary website will exist but, as most of the population does not have regular access to the Internet, distributing the document in person will be the most effective means of reaching the most people.

The recorded interviews and still photographs will also provide raw material for the creation of an educational video. The raw video footage and still photos will be edited into a comprehensive movie exploring the struggles of the homeless population in San Jose. The movie will be appropriate for the general public, as well as for business leaders and elected officials in the San Jose area. It will also feature an educational portion teaching viewers what they can do on a local level. The movie will be posted on the program's supplementary website and YouTube, to allow for the widest dissemination of the film; it will also be shown at different locations throughout the community once a month for those who are unable to view it online. The movie viewings will be at local community centers and/or churches, and will feature a different speaker before each showing. Speakers will talk further about the struggles of being homeless and what

the general public can do to help. We will, through this film, communicate to the general public how difficult it is to be homeless in the San Jose area, the struggles that our homeless population face, and why this issue matters.

Throughout the program process, Open Hearts, Open Eyes will be recruiting assistance for the final event: a homeless benefit afternoon. This will take place at a local homeless assistance location (to be determined) in San Jose. We will piggyback this event with an already-established happening, such as at a soup kitchen after feeding has taken place. It will feature a health fair, with anonymity assured for basic health metric testing, free food, and other services that would be useful to this population, possibly including haircuts, financial counseling, job search techniques, and more. The event will be advertised at local shelters and also on a local radio station and in a local newspaper. Donations of both financial assistance and professional services will be recruited at movie screenings and via the program website. The only way to solve the problem of homelessness in our community is through a partnership with both the general public and local businesses, and this event will allow the culmination of the public awareness campaign through volunteerism. This event will also be an opportunity to distribute the information sheets to a large audience.

Project Evaluation

To ensure that this program is going to actually benefit the homeless population, appropriate program evaluation must take place during and after the implementation stage. There are two different populations where final evaluations will need to take place: the general public in the San Jose area, and the homeless population in the same area. Evaluating these different

populations will require different techniques.

During the actual interviews for the program, our group will evaluate whether the interviews with local homeless people are producing useful information. These interviews should enable us to understand the challenges the homeless face in their daily lives. The interview questions will be changed as necessary to yield the type of information that we can use and video footage that we can use in the creation of the film.

After gaining a deeper understanding of the homeless population and their needs and wants, evaluation will take place during the execution of the program. This evaluation will be conducted through brief interviews and questionnaires administered to the homeless community on a monthly basis. These interviews will allow our agency to track how much awareness of local programs available to them has increased in the priority population, and how often the priority population has taken advantage of these programs.

Open Eyes, Open Hearts will also evaluate how much public awareness has been raised about the issue of homelessness through the viewings and distribution of our film. Public awareness will be measured during the program by conducting random surveys in-person in the downtown San Jose area. One of our objectives is to raise community awareness of this issue and gaining the public's support and assistance.

Our concluding event during this program will be the homeless benefit afternoon. This event will include a number of services provided free to the local homeless population. During the actual event, we will conduct brief interviews with the priority population to evaluate how well the event went and whether or not the priority population felt they benefited from the event. If it is determined that anything should have been added or conducted differently, it will be

reported to work towards improvement of future events. We hope that programs similar to this one will continue in the community after our program is complete, and we hope we will be followed down the path that we create.

Proposal Budget

The following budget layout is for our specific program. The total budget is \$37,765.00.

Budget Summary

	Total Requested
Total this Grant	\$37,765.00
I. Personnel	\$26,940.00
A. Salaries & Wages	\$19,800.00
B. Fringe Benefits	\$5,940.00
C. Consultants and Contract Services	\$1,200.00
II. Non-Personnel	\$10,825.00
A. Space Costs	\$3,000.00
B. Rental, Lease, or Purchase of Equipment	\$1,020.00
C. Consumable Supplies	\$525.00
D. Travel	\$5,220.00
E. Utilities	\$780.00
F. Other Costs	\$280.00

Budget Detail

	Total Requested
I. Personnel	\$26,940.00
<i>A. Salaries & Wages</i>	<i>\$19,800.00</i>
(6) project staff (.10 FTE) @ \$300/mo. X 6 mos.	\$10,800.00
(1) health educator (.50 FTE) @ \$1,500/mo. X 6 mos.	\$9,000.00
 <i>B. Fringe Benefits</i>	 <i>\$5,940.00</i>
Fringe benefits include health insurance, SUI, worker's compensation insurance, FICA, dental insurance, vacation, and disability insurance. Costs are estimated at 30% of salary costs for six months.	\$5,940.00
 <i>C. Consultants and Contract Services</i>	 <i>\$1,200.00</i>
Guest speaker @ \$200.00/speech X 6 speeches	\$1,200.00
 II. Non-Personnel	 \$10,825.00
<i>A. Space Costs</i>	<i>\$3,000.00</i>
Rental space for showing video in community	\$3,000.00
 <i>B. Rental, Lease, or Purchase of Equipment</i>	 <i>\$1,020.00</i>
(1) rental laptop computer @ \$30.00/month each X 6 months	\$180.00
(1) rental copy machine/printer @ \$40.00/month X 6 months	\$240.00
(1) movie projector @ \$100.00/month X 6 months	\$600.00
 <i>C. Consumable Supplies</i>	 <i>\$525.00</i>
Desk supplies for employees @ \$280.00/6 months	\$280.00
10 reams of copy paper @ \$5.00 each	\$50.00
5 toner refills @ \$35.00 each	\$175.00
Disposable cameras 4 @ \$5.00	\$20.00

<i>D. Travel</i>	<i>\$5,220.00</i>
Local mileage for (6) program staff @ 500 mi/mo total @ \$0.58/mi X 6 months	\$1,740.00
Local mileage for (1) health educator @ 1000 mi/mo @ \$0.58/mi X 6 months	\$3,480.00
<i>E. Utilities</i>	<i>\$780.00</i>
Utilities include Internet access and cell phones, and costs are estimated for six months	\$780.00
<i>F. Other Costs</i>	<i>\$280.00</i>
Postage	\$100.00
Newspaper advertisement \$20.00 per month X 6 months	\$120.00
Radio advertisement \$10.00 per month X 6 months	\$60.00

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