Running head: HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES

Homeless Youth Services and Their Relation to

Children's Day in The Plaza

Leah Nelson

California Polytechnic University

Of San Luis Obispo

June 2010

#### CHAPTER 1

Families make up 40 percent of the homeless population in America and within these families more than 1.3 million children are homeless at some time each year (Bassuk & Friedman, 2005). Homeless parents face unique challenges in the sense that they are required to look to public services to provide basic needs for their children. Children who are homeless face distinct disadvantages related to their development, physical and mental health, and education (Bassuk & Paquette, 2009). Bassuk, Brooks, and Weinreb found a need for family oriented programs that consider the emotional status of mothers as well as the traumatic life events and stressors experienced by children (1999).

Homeless families are more likely to have multiple traumas in their lives. A few examples are domestic violence, community violence, and abuse. If they experienced those traumas while they were housed, it is more likely that they will experience further trauma while homeless (Bassuk & Friedman, 2005). Experiencing trauma increases the likelihood of developmental and psychological problems in children. These neurological, social, emotional, psychological, behavioral, and cognitive problems in homeless children negatively effect their developmental growth and put them at risk for ongoing mental health problems (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009). The challenge is to find appropriate services to help homeless children and families.

Head Start is a program used to help homeless and low-income families with early childhood education. O'Neil-Pirozzi determined that parent participation in a program emphasizing preschool child language development was a successful method to increase language development in the sample of homeless preschoolers (2009). Programs that involve the

parent(s) and child seem to be the most successful. Teaching homeless parents about tools and strategies for working with their child will have positive effects on their child's development.

Homeless children and families are important to the field of psychology and human services. With the continual increase in homeless children and families there is a vital need for information about their issues and how to assist them. They are in a unique position that can have negative results on both the children and the family as a whole. Although their situation can make it harder to work with them, in many cases they need assistance more than most housed families. Prevention should be the focus when addressing the issues with homelessness.

Children's Day in the Plaza is an event that helps to bridge the gap between families and resources in the community. The event is put on by SLOCAP and the county of San Luis Obispo. Children's Day in the Plaza has information booths and children's activities to inform children and families about the services available in their community. There are many family and child services in San Luis Obispo County that benefit all families including the homeless. This event brings awareness to child and family issues with resources available to address them.

Chapter two contains a literature review that addresses three topics; initiation of homelessness, homeless children's needs, and services/interventions that address those needs. Chapter three includes the method of how the service project was produced including the steps taken to implement the event. The fourth chapter documents the results of the service project and chapter five is a reflection on the service project and what the process was like. It includes a wrap up and recommendations for future work on the project.

#### CHAPTER 2

The first section of this chapter discusses the cause of homelessness and circumstances that increase the probability of families becoming homeless. The second section identifies the needs of homeless children related to their mental, emotional, and physical issues. The issues are associated with homelessness. The third section introduces some services and intervention techniques that could be beneficial in addressing the needs of the homeless children in all areas. These services not only benefit the children, but some are also geared toward the family as a whole.

#### Homelessness

The National Coalition for the Homeless Web site provides information on the issues of homelessness in the United States including statistics and fact sheets. The rise in homelessness seen over the past 20 years coincides with a shortage in affordable housing and a rise in poverty. These two phenomena have multiple circumstances related to them including foreclosures, decreasing work opportunities, a decline in public assistance, lack of affordable health care, domestic violence, mental illness, and addiction. These issues force families to choose between food, shelter, and their other immediate needs.

The decreases in minimum wage and the increasing levels of unemployment result in job loss for many wage earners. These workers will be forced take less secure jobs with fewer benefits for themselves and their families. With fewer benefits and lower wages families will be more affected when they face any illness or medical cost that comes up. Mounting medical bills may cause families to lose their housing and be pushed into homelessness. Previously, families could look to public assistance in some of these areas of need, but the amount available has declined. The welfare system put in place years ago is no longer able to help the massive

amounts of families in need. Although some people below the poverty line have jobs, their families could be one paycheck away from becoming homeless (http://www.nationalhomeless.org/index.html).

Domestic Violence, Mental Illness, and Addiction Disorders are also related to homelessness for families and single people. Domestic Violence in many impoverished families causes the women to make a choice between homelessness and violence. People with Mental Illness do not receive the appropriate supportive housing assistance to keep them from becoming homeless. Addiction is not directly related to homelessness, but people who are both impoverished and addicted have a higher likelihood of becoming homeless. In any of these situations it is possible that children and families are involved and will be forced onto the streets with their caregivers (http://nationalhomeless.org/index.html).

#### Homeless Children's Needs

Homelessness affects many children and families both in the United States and all over the world. These families have similar needs and concerns as housed families, but they may have more trouble accessing adequate services. Morris & Strong (2004) gave San Diego County homeless shelter residents structured interviews about their lives and challenges as homeless people. The main concerns of the families were that of health care, job needs, and housing/financial support. Certain needs were harder to meet than others which resulted in families letting them fall to the wayside. An example of a need that they had difficulty meeting was healthcare. The study points out that many homeless families feel a lack of support and that community services offered to them are limited and inadequate.

Unfortunately homeless families not only have a hard time obtaining services, but they are experiencing a greater need for services than most other families. Coker, et. al. (2009) took a

sample of 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from school districts in Birmingham (AL), Houston (TX), and Los Angeles County (CA). The students and their families agreed to be interviewed for the study. These interviews assessed the rate of homelessness of the families in the sample. The lifetime prevalence of homelessness among fifth-grade students and their families was 7%. After determining who were homeless and never-homeless families, they compared the child health care information between the two groups. The ever-homeless children were significantly more likely to have a parent-reported emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem and to have received mental health-related services than were never-homeless children.

Emotional, developmental, and behavioral problems are not the only health-related issues that homeless children experience at higher rates than housed children. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network reports that homeless children get sick twice as often as other children; they suffer twice as many ear infections, have four times the rate of asthma, and have five times more diarrhea and stomach problems. More than one-fifth of homeless preschoolers have emotional problems serious enough to require professional care, but less than one-third receive any treatment. Homeless children are twice as likely to repeat a grade and have twice the rate of learning disabilities as other children. They also experience three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems and by the time homeless children are eight years old, one in three has a major mental disorder (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005).

The article also explains that homeless children are more likely to have experienced trauma before becoming homeless which puts them at a higher risk for becoming re-traumatized while they are homeless. The rates of trauma that the children are experiencing may affect their behavioral and emotional well-being. While children are homeless they face many challenges. They are forced to adjust to shelter living, they feel the need to reestablish a home, have

interpersonal difficulties within their family, may develop mental and physical problems, and experience child-related difficulties such as illness (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005). Not only do homeless children face challenges related to their new living conditions, but also in their growth and development.

Yu, et.al. (2008) completed a comparison study of housed families and homeless families in order to find the rates and levels of psychiatric and behavioral disorders in the children of these families. Two groups of mothers were matched based on age, ethnicity, number of children, and location. One set of mothers were housed while the other set were homeless. The researchers administered inventories and diagnostic interviews to the mothers and children. The results proved that, "Homeless children had about four times the prevalence of disruptive behavior disorders as housed children" (Yu, et. al., 2008). They also found that the verbal cognitive scores were significantly lower in homeless children compared to housed children.

Buckner, Bassuk, Weinreb, and Brooks (1999) found that homelessness showed a correlation with school-age children's behavioral level, especially relating to internalizing behavior problems. There is an array of acute stressors and chronic strains which poor children, whether currently homeless or housed, are subjected to and can have a negative impact on their well-being. The stressors may include money concerns, family violence, lack of adequate care, and minimal support. These findings show that internalizing behavior is increased in homeless children. Internalizing behavior causes higher rates of depression and anxiety and could cause self-harm behavior including suicide attempts.

## Services/Interventions

Homeless children have many needs ranging from a place to sleep to intensive behavioral therapy. It is important that early intervention and, in all cases, prevention take place in order to

help give homeless children a more desirable outcome. Homelessness causes stress and trauma which can result in many negative effects on children (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005). The community plays an important role in addressing the issues that homeless children face. Services put in place to assist homeless children and families are the most valuable in this situation.

Three areas in which homeless children are in need of services are care, service, and knowledge (Hicks-Coolick, Burnside-Eaton & Peters, 2003). Care needs include healthcare and childcare. This involves day care and developmental assessments as well as basic health and dental needs. Service needs refer to more emergency shelters, before and after school care including: tutoring, mentoring, and support in school attendance. Service care also addresses the lack of transportation to and from school, parental support groups, case management for children & parents, and counseling. Knowledge needs include the training of staff in shelters to assess children's needs for early intervention, knowledge of special education, and cultural diversity. The staff may transfer skills to the parents through modeling in and direct instruction. Although some homeless children's needs are being met, there is still a large gap (Hicks-Coolick, Burnside-Eaton & Peters, 2003).

Services provided to homeless children and families vary widely throughout the United States. Homelessness is prevalent across the all states, but services may differ from county to county. Hicks-Coolick, Burnside-Eaton, and Peters (2003) found a discrepancy in the number of beds available to the number of people in need in many communities. With such a critical need for more shelter space it seems that more child specialized programs and services fall to the bottom of the barrel. The study also shows that there is a lack of knowledge about the needs and rights of homeless children and that paid and volunteer staff in shelters should be trained in

appropriate ways to work with homeless children (Hicks-Coolick, Burnside-Eaton & Peters, 2003).

Davey (2004) exhibited a small scale example of a service providing for a care need of homeless families. The weekend retreat for homeless families is used as an intervention technique to help families deal with the stresses of their situation. The weekend is for Multiple Family Groups and encourages education and cohesiveness. The families attend four different informative group sessions: building trust-identifying family strengths, communication, stress management, and decision making responsibilities. They are also able to spend time as a family doing fun activities in a relaxed atmosphere. At the end of the retreat the families fill out evaluations of the weekend retreat to assess how they felt about their experience. The results were positive as families were able to build social supports, decrease feelings of isolation, and work on their stress management. Providing education to homeless parents about dealing with stress will help them become more confident and positive which allows them to work more effectively with their children.

Yu, et. al. (2008) found that educational skills and training for mothers would help improve the cognitive verbal skills of the homeless children in their study. They also suggested that the eradication of homelessness completely would improve the behavioral and psychiatric issues of the children within this population. Preventing homelessness may be the most effective, but is a solution that is not feasible. Working with homeless parents one-on-one is an effective tool that is more realistic and can have positive results.

Another effective intervention for homeless children also includes parents, but it focuses on parent participation in teaching their children different skills. In a study by O'Neil-Pirozzi (2009) homeless parents participated in sessions that increased their use of facilitating language

strategies while working with their preschool age children. The results of the study proved that this type of intervention was feasible and beneficial for the homeless children and parents. Parents play an important role in children's language development and teaching the homeless parents tools for increasing their children's vocabulary proved to be beneficial. Reaching homeless parents in the shelters can be more convenient for them and help increase the rate of parent participation in the child's learning. This form of instruction could also be beneficial in raising verbal cognitive scores referred to by Yu, et. al. (2008).

Paquette and Bassuk (2009) encourage involvement of parents in decision-making and treatment planning for themselves and their families. Assisting parents with skills that help to support the growth of their children is invaluable. They also suggest training the staff who works with the homeless families on parenting skills in order to guide the parents in the shelters. Another important variable is to have appropriate space that allows parents to work with their children constructively. The article put emphasis on encouraging family cohesiveness as strength when working to relieve stresses of homelessness.

Another technique proven to be effective in addressing developmental and diagnostic factors in school aged homeless children is play therapy (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009). Baggerley and Jenkins (2009) used play therapy intervention with 36 homeless school aged children. They improved in internalization of controls and self-limiting features and they also showed positive trends in unsupported development. The play therapy proved to be beneficial for children who are homeless and a pilot study is recommended to test whether it is beneficial for homeless children only. This study was done through the children's school which can be another means to reach the homeless children more conveniently and consistently (depending on school attendance). Although many of the homeless children initially involved the study were dropped

because of moving or absenteeism, the group treated was moderate in size (Baggerly & Jenkins, 2009).

While working with children in schools has been proven beneficial by the play therapy study, The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2005) views community shelters and community mental health agencies as the best places to address homeless children and families' trauma-specific care. The trauma-specific care would help assess children's level of trauma, support caregivers in restoring the family, screening the family for trauma history, and training staff to assess trauma history and understand the link between trauma history and adverse mental health outcomes. Using community shelters may have disadvantages including availability of space, privacy, and strict regulations.

## Conclusion

Homeless children and families are in need of services and interventions to address the issues they face. Their issues range from high unemployment rates to childhood behavioral problems. Living in unstable situations takes a toll on these families and it is important that they find services to help address their needs. The problem with the services and interventions acknowledged in this paper is that they all require funding that is non-existent for these types of families. The fact that these families are dealing with the issue of homelessness in general stems from a lack of funding by government agencies to help impoverished families.

Unfortunately with the state of the economy today, many people are struggling more than they have before. Finding jobs, health care, and housing are most important to most families which means that other services to address the children's problems could be considered less. The parents must prioritize and make the best choices for their family with little help from the government and under-funded community resources.

All of the programs discussed would be very helpful for these families and could make a difference for them if there was a way to connect them to these services. This ties into the event Children's Day in the Plaza because the goal of the event is to connect families and children with countywide services. Many of the services with booths at Children's Day are able to help homeless families as well as housed families. All families are invited to attend the event free of charge to experience what San Luis Obispo County has to offer in regards to children and families.

Homeless families could benefit from the experience by interacting with some agency representatives and discovering what is available to help their families in the community. While many of the programs available to the homeless families in the area are posted in the homeless shelters, direct interaction with community members could encourage homeless families to approach the services. There will also be beneficial information about child development and child abuse prevention that could teach homeless parents about child rearing techniques and how to facilitate learning for their children. The ultimate goal is to provide information to all families in order to enrich the lives of children and keep their growth a priority.

#### CHAPTER 3

#### Method

Timeline

## **Winter Quarter**

- Week 1 Week 4: have theme, logo, and tagline completed; able to begin flyers when this is complete
- Week 5: Finish press release and enter information into community calendars online, meet with Lisa Fraser at SLOCAP to discuss publicity plan, begin planning t-shirts (choose colors, logo)
- Week 6 Week 7: Contact Peer Health to reserve sandwich boards if available, make a facebook event page, order goody bags and toys for Farmer's, e-mail Dave Congalton and other radio stations to get on air interviews
- Week 8 Week 9: Call Costume Capers, complete flyers and print, and determine sticker design for goody bags, order t-shirts, complete Press Release, sort flyers to go out before Spring Break
- Week 10 Week 11: Press release out to media outlets (one month before event), order balloon arch, and contact Dave Norton for banner date change (when you have the banner)

# **Spring Quarter**

Week 1 – Week 2: Stickers for goody bags and Farmer's toys done, distribute any last flyers, deliver banner to Corporation Yard (Prado Rd.), separate shirts, pick up sandwich boards, pick up costumes from Costume Capers, and any last minute prep for the event

Logo, Flyers, and T-shirts

The first task to complete for this project is to come up with a theme, logo, and tagline for the event. We each brought a few ideas to one of our first meetings and had the tagline and theme set very quickly. We chose "Express Yourself: Dance to the Beat of Your Own Drum" as our tagline and our theme was music and dance. After we came up with the theme and tagline we brought different images to the meeting to see what we would want our logo to look like. Our chair had a friend who was able to design our logo for our letterhead, flyers, and t-shirts. Our logo was circular with children dancing in a line and music notes above their heads. It said

"Children's Day in the Plaza" on the upper half of the circle and "Express Yourself: Dance to the Beat of Your Own Drum" on the lower half.

The logo is important to the publicity coordinator because they have to order the t-shirts, stickers, and make the flyers. I was able to use the flyer from the previous year, but changed the date, logo, and tagline. Carol gave me a disk with important information from the year before including flyers, school schedules, and the event sponsors' logos. The flyers were different this year because we were not in charge of printing them. The flyer was a part of a brochure that had information about all of the activities during the month of April or The Month of the Child. We were able to have a half page flyer in the brochure and did not have to do any of our own printing.

The brochures came out the week before Cal Poly's spring break so I counted and sorted all of them by hand on the Friday before spring break in order to get them out to all of the schools before they went on spring break. This is not the way it has been done previously, but it only took a few hours and I had the time to do it. This being the first year that the brochures were sent out made a little bit of a difference on the timing. Usually the flyers would be done and sorted by a week or two before Cal Poly's spring break so they could go out to the kids before their spring break starts (March 29 or April 2/5) depending on the district.

T-shirts are a huge part of Children's Day because they help to organize the staff and volunteers at the event. I started looking for people to print the t-shirts during the first week of February. I first contacted a club on campus called AIGA. The club president was very responsive and gave me the information of a club member who would be interested in doing our shirts. I was never able to get a hold of the student, or the president again after that. During this time I was also communicating with Lance at The T-shirt Guy and he sent me color samples so

that we were able to choose the shirt colors while still in limbo. We decided to have teal shirts for the staff and lime shirts for the volunteers.

After our t-shirt logo was completely finished I went to The T-shirt Guy and was able to set up the order with Lance with no problem. I talked to him about the sizes that he recommended and he was very helpful in knowing the sizes of volunteers we would be likely to have (college students). We ordered 10 small, 22 medium, 33 large, and 5 X-large shirts for the volunteers. I ordered 15 staff t-shirts for the 5 group members, Carol, Cheryl, Dr. Engle, Lisa, Roberta, and the 5 Board of Supervisors members. I got a copy of the invoice to take to Roberta at SLOCAP and the shirts were ready by April 2<sup>nd</sup>. We put a small circular logo on the left chest with a music note and our tagline in it. On the back was a large version of our logo, but without the circle shape, and the words "staff" or "volunteer" large across the upper back.

#### Press Release

The press release is important to the event because it gets the word out to radio and T.V. stations, newspapers, and magazines. The press release should be printed on the letterhead that the other group members (booths, donations, and entertainment) used for their letters. The press release should include bolded information about the time, place, and date of the event. It should also include information about what the event is about, who the sponsors are, and the activities for kids. Make the press release fun and inviting so when it is read on the air listeners and viewers will want to check out the event. Be sure to include your contact information at the bottom of the release and the date of the release at the top.

I met with Lisa Fraser at SLOCAP a few weeks into our event planning to get a more updated list of contacts (newspapers, T.V. stations, radio stations) and her advice on media outlets that she wanted to place ads with. She asked me to contact Dave Congalton about doing

an interview on his show that she was willing to do. I e-mailed Dave in February and we were able to get on the air with him the week before the event. He asked questions about the event and Lisa shared some information about what SLOCAP would be doing at their booth for the event. The rest of the press releases were sent as e-mail attachments to the different media outlets and one was sent by fax. It is important to send the releases out early so that they can be put into community calendars and publications. I also went to all the media websites and posted our event on their community calendars that is simple and free of charge.

Signs, Banner, and Balloon Arch

In March I contacted Marti Graff at Balloon Works in Atascadero to order our balloon arch that would be placed at the event. She was very easy to work with and remembered us from the year before. The balloon arch is placed at the Chorro entrance of the plaza to welcome guests and invite people in to the event. She designed, delivered, and put up a biodegradable balloon arch about 25ft. The invoice was sent to Roberta at SLOCAP.

I got the banner from Carol mid-March and contacted Dave Norton at SLO Graphics who changes the date on the banner each year free of charge. I dropped it off about three weeks before the event. The banner hangs downtown and Carol reserves the space early in advance for it. After the date is changed the banner needs to be dropped off at the city office at 25 Prado Road at least two working days before the date it will be hung. The banner goes up a week before the event and hangs downtown until the day after the event.

The signs for the event are to be placed on sandwich boards around the event. They have the entertainment schedules, directions to information booth, and other directions placed on them. The sandwich boards were very hard to get a hold of this year and it took a few weeks to get everything figured out. We ended up taking three abandoned sandwich boards from a spot

next to the facilities department at Cal Poly, behind UPD. Carol brought her husband's truck to pick them up on the same day that we picked up the sound equipment for the event and Carol returned the sandwich boards after the event. Carol has four sandwich boards to use for the event, but it is nice to have around eight. The group before us obtained sandwich boards from Peer Health located next to the Health Center, but I was not aware of this until a couple days before the event and they were not available for us to use.

#### Miscellaneous

In early February I looked online for bags to use as goody bags at the event. I found cheap bags online and sent the link for Carol to order them with her credit card because she could use a wholesale discount. We ordered 2000 bags in teal and they were delivered shortly after they were ordered. These bags are important because they tell us how many children attended the event.

Another way that we advertise the event is to pass out child friendly gifts at Farmer's Market the Thursday before the event. Our chair took on the task of ordering the toys that we were going to pass out as well as designing and printing the stickers to put on the toys. On Thursday our group and Carol met before Farmer's at Woodstock's to put the stickers on the toys and to eat pizza. We passed the toys out to children and brochures (the same that went out to the schools) to the parents.

After Farmer's I went to the County of Education building with Carol to print stickers that would go on the goody bags for the event. The chair designed the sticker labels to be put on the bags, which was our logo in color on a white, rectangular label. At first I was putting the labels into the printer one by one, because the printer would jam when any more were added. Carol found another printer that we were able to print more at one time and it went by much

faster than on the first printer. I would suggest doing labels that have more than one sticker to a sheet and to contact a printing company to get quotes if you want them printed in color. Our labels ended up being printed in black and white because the printers had no color option.

The publicity coordinator is in charge of getting character costumes from Costume Capers ordered before the event. To do this you will call Costume Capers and ask to speak with a manager, then tell them that you are from Children's Day and you were hoping to use two of their character costumes for your event. They only charge for the cleaning of the costumes, but they will have to take an imprint of a credit card in order for you to take the costumes. I made this call a few weeks before the event, and then went into the store to pick the costumes a couple weeks before the event (I got the invoice to have the check written before picking them up). We chose Tigger and Pooh costumes because they had been used previously and the kids seemed to love them. I picked up the costumes on Friday before the event, paid for the cleaning with a check from SLOCAP, and returned them Saturday evening after we finished. Carol used her credit card to do the imprint the week of the event (before I picked them up).

Another thing that the publicity coordinator can do to advertise is make a facebook event page. This page can be used to advertise fundraisers and also to recruit volunteers. We had a CPK event and I was able to put the flyers on facebook for people to print off to bring with them. I also e-mailed copies of our CPK flyers and our volunteer flyers to Dr. Laver to be put in the Monday Mailing which was an easy way to get our events out to a large group of students.

#### **CHAPTER 4**

#### Results

A random survey was distributed to 72 guests on the day of the event. The guests were asked how they heard about the event and given options to choose from. The options were: radio ad, school flyer, word of mouth, community calendars, banner, facebook, Farmer's Market, or other. 25% of people polled stated word of mouth as the way they heard of the event, 21% saw the banner downtown, and 19% reported the school flyer. 17% of participants chose "other" and stated New Times (newspaper), KSBY (TV station), participated last year, balloon arch, and having a child participating in the event as sources of information about the event. Facebook and radio ad were reported the least (1% and 2% respectively).

# Day of the Event

On the day of the event we arrived around 6 am to unload the trucks, set up the volunteer station, and the information booth. Most of the work that the publicity coordinator does is complete by the day of the event. I brought the Tigger and Pooh costumes, helped unload the trucks and set up the information booth, helped the booth coordinator mark out booth spaces, and assisted any other group members who were in need. I greeted Marti Graff from Balloon Works when she arrived to set up the balloon arch and thanked her for being there. I passed out t-shirts to volunteers and helped the chair assign volunteers to different tasks.

I actually woke up the day of the event without a voice, which was difficult because the being publicity coordinator requires an ability to communicate. This was a challenge throughout the day because it was hard for me to be heard over the walkie talkies, and I was not able to speak loudly to be heard over the noise of the crowd. The chair stepped in for me when the news crew came and gave an interview about the event because I was not able.

For most of the day I was stationed at the information booth with a couple of volunteers, but I also checked on volunteers around the event to make sure they were getting breaks (the volunteers at the entrances can be forgotten easily because of the distance from the event). I also relieved volunteers at the entrances when they were in need of a break and we didn't have any one to cover. Although I was stationed at the information booth, I spent a lot of the day running around and checking on the other group members and our volunteers.

When the event ended we packed up the information booth and volunteer station to put back into the truck. We had quite a few volunteers at this time, which was very helpful in getting the truck packed quickly. The event was packed up in about an hour. I cut down the balloon arch to release the biodegradable balloons and to throw away the string as Marti had instructed me to do. After we picked up trash and took a couple pictures I took the Tigger and Pooh costumes back to Costume Capers and went home to rest.

There were around 1400 children in attendance at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Children's Day in the Plaza. The number of children in attendance was measured by the goody bags that were distributed to each child upon entrance into the event.

#### CHAPTER 5

#### Discussion

The results of the survey showed that word of mouth was the most effective form of publicity for the event. The banner downtown and the school flyers were the two other most effective ways to get people to the event. The least effective were facebook and the radio ad. From the "other" selection it seems that newspapers could be a better way to publicize the event and buying more ad space might be more successful than sending out more flyers to schools.

The event was very successful and well organized. The people who I communicated with about the event including Marti, Costume Capers, media outlets, etc. were all excited to be a part of our event and willing to work with me. Carol, Lisa, and Roberta are very involved and helpful throughout the event. They provide much needed support to the group members in planning and getting information about the event.

The t-shirts and logos turned out great and everyone loved them. The event was memorable for all involved and gave a great experience to many children and families. The group experience taught me lessons about myself as a group member and also about the other people in my group. I think this is a unique and rewarding senior project that gives you a sense of being a part of something beneficial. It is a great way to become more involved with the community of SLO.

#### Recommendations

My biggest suggestion is to read through this paper as well as the other four papers for this group. Make sure to choose your position based on your experience and share your qualifications with the other people in your group. It is important that the group members are in the jobs that they are most comfortable in and also will help make the event the most successful. Publicity was not my first choice, and I feel that someone with more experience could have done a much more effective job and could have added more creativity to the position.

Another reason to read all of the papers is to help to keep the group members on the same page about the tasks each position has to complete. Having this information will help to make the day go smoothly and will give the group members an opportunity to offer help to one another on overwhelming tasks. It can be beneficial to help one another because the slack will be less likely to fall on the Chair.

I would suggest ordering more small and medium shirts and less large, we ran out of small shirts very quickly, and mediums went fast as well leaving us with large shirts for many small size volunteers. We also did not have enough t-shirts for all of the volunteers that we had at the event. We took down names, contact info, and sizes of volunteers who came to the later shifts if they wanted t-shirts to be ordered for them. I was in charge of getting back in contact with Lance, ordering the extra t-shirts, and contacting the volunteers to deliver the extra shirts to them. I would suggest ordering more shirts (we ordered 70) or try to recruit volunteers before ordering the shirts in an attempt to avoid this situation.

The survey showed that having newspaper ad space could be more effective in bringing in guests and is something you should bring up with Carol. Try to put more funds into buying ad space than in printing flyers if possible, because the flyers may not be as effective as we assumed. The flyers were different this year that in the previous years because they were part of a brochure. It would be more effective to have an individual flyer to print out that can be passed out in preschools and any other public place. The brochure was a little overwhelming and made the flyer stand out less. While the brochure was very professional and informative, it would be nice to have a flyer with information solely about Children's Day on it.

Be sure to get Press Releases and flyers out early in order to get the most publicity possible for the event. Also make sure that flyers go out to preschools in the area because that is the main age group that Children's Day caters to.

In the past the publicity chairman has had more tasks than I had this year. Our chair wanted to do some of the publicity tasks so I shared them with her. Those tasks were something that I could have done, and I would suggest doing them because the publicity position is as much work as the position-holder makes it. The tasks I am referring to are: choosing and ordering

Farmer's gifts and designing and printing stickers (for bags and Farmer's gifts). These tasks can be completed much earlier than they have been in the past (including this year). The sooner the stickers are printed and the goody bags and toys are ordered, the sooner they can be put together. We did all of the stickering in the week before the event which was time consuming and stressful.

While this position does require time and effort there were times when I felt that I had more time than other group members so I was sure to offer my help to any group members in need. Although they refused my help, it is very important to offer and to be on the same page as the other group members. I would suggest being aware of the positions of each of the group members and what the tasks are that they need to complete. This information will help you in offering assistance and will give you an idea of what all needs to be completed before the event can take place.

## References

- Baggerly, J. & Jenkins, W. W. (2009). The effectiveness of child-centered play therapy on developmental and diagnostic factors in children who are homeless. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 18(1), 45-55.
- Bassuk, E.L. & Friedman, S.M. (2005). Facts on trauma and homeless children. *National Child Trauma Stress Network Homelessness and Extreme Poverty Working Group*. Retrieved <a href="http://www.nctsnet.org/nctsn\_assets/pdfs/promising\_practices/Facts\_on\_Trauma\_and\_Homeless">http://www.nctsnet.org/nctsn\_assets/pdfs/promising\_practices/Facts\_on\_Trauma\_and\_Homeless</a> Children.pdf
- Buckner, J. C., Bassuk, E. L., Weinreb, L. F. & Brooks, M. G. (1999). Homelessness and its relation to the mental health and behavior of low-income school-age children.

  \*Developmental Psychology, 35(1), 246-257.
- Coker, T., Elliott, M., Kanouse, D., Grunbaum, J., Gilliland, M., Tortolero, S., et al. (2009).

  Prevalence, characteristics, and associated health and health care of family homelessness among fifth-grade students. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(8), 1446-1452.
- Davey, T. (2004). A multiple-family group intervention for homeless families: the weekend retreat. *Health & Social Work, 29(4), 326-329*.
- Hicks-Coolick, A., Burnside-Eaton, P. & Peters, A. (2003). Homeless children: Needs and services. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *32*(*4*), 197-210.
- Morris, R., & Strong, L. (2004). The Impact of Homelessness on the Health of Families. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 20(4), 221-227.
- O'Neil-Pirozzi, T. M. (2009). Feasibility and benefit of parent participation in a program emphasizing preschool child language development while homeless. *American Journal of Speech Language Pathology*, 18, 252-263.

- Paquette, K. & Bassuk, E.L. (2009). Parenting and homelessness: overview and introduction to the special section. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 79(3), 292-298.
- The National Coalition for the Homeless. Homelessness in the U.S. factsheets http://www.nationalhomeless.org/index.html
- Yu, M., North, C.S., LaVesser, P.D., Osburne, V.A. & Spitznagel, E.L. (2008). A comparison study of psychiatric and behavior disorders and cognitive ability among homeless and housed children. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 44(1), 1-10.

# Appendix A

# Contacts

Balloon Works: Marti Graff

7187 Old Adobe Way

Atascadero, CA

Phone: (805) 462-3530

The T-shirt Guy: Lance Brandenberg

3468 Sacramento Dr. #1 San Luis Obispo, CA Phone: (805) 541-5111 e-mail: lance@tshirtguy.net website: www.tshirtguy.net

SLO Graphics: Dave Norton

3482-C Sacramento Dr. San Luis Obispo, CA Phone: (805) 543-0804

Costume Capers: Keith Wetzel

2146 Parker St. San Luis Obispo, CA (805) 544-2373

Flyers: Tina Miranda (we did not use this contact for 2010, but was used previously)

1500 Lizzie St. San Luis Obispo, CA

Phone: (805) 549-1340

Appendix B

T-shirt logo

Front left chest:



Back of staff:



Back of volunteer:





Appendix C

Press Release

32<sup>nd</sup> Annual

Children's Day in the Plaza 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...March 19, 2010

Children's Day in the Plaza
Saturday April 10, 2010
10am-3pm
San Luis Obispo Mission Plaza
"Express Yourself: Dance to the Beat of Your Own Drum"

Come join us for food, fun, and entertainment at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Children's Day in the Plaza! With many activities for kids including face painting, inflatable obstacle courses, children's marketplace, and more, Children's Day in the Plaza is an exciting way to spend your Saturday! This event is held every April to celebrate the National Month of the Child and Child Abuse Prevention Month. This year the theme is "Express Yourself: Dance to the beat of your own drum". The event will give children the opportunity to explore music, creativity, and individuality, while it provides adults and parent's access to information and resources to a variety of services and organizations within San Luis Obispo County. This year, five Cal Poly Child Development and Psychology seniors will plan and organize this wonderful event that is sponsored by SLO County Child Care Planning Council, San Luis Obispo Child Abuse Prevention Council, and the City of San Luis Obispo, as well as a variety of other community partners.

CONTACT: Leah Nelson Publicity Coordinator cdip2010@gmail.com (760) 208-7286

# Appendix D

# Media Contacts

	Press Release Contacts					
Station	Address	City	7in	Phone	Fax	E-mail
Station	Audress	<u>City</u>	<u>Zip</u>	FIIOHE	Гах	<u>C-IIIdII</u>
American General Media	3620 Sacramento Dr	SLO	02404	781-2750	781-2758	nous Comovinos and another adia como
Central Coast Good News				434-1848	434-1856	news@americangeneralmedia.com
	3750 La Cruz Way	Templeton			434-1800	-h
Clear Channel Radio	51 Zaca Lane	SLO	93401		704 0005	chazgroves@clearchannel.com
KCBX	4100 Vachell Lane	SLO		781-3020	781-3025	calendar@KCBX.org
KCOY/KKFX Fox 11	1211 McCoy Lane	Santa Maria		925-1200	922-9830	lauriepipan@clearchannel.com
KGDP Christian Radio	2225 Skyway Drive	Santa Maria		928-7707	922-8582	KGDP@KGDP662.COM
KIDI 105.5/ KTAP am 1600	104 W. Chapel	Santa Maria		928-4334	349-2765	KIDIKTAP@AOL.COM
KJDJ am1030	622 E.Grand Avenue	Arroyo Grande		473-8728		
KKOM/ KXTK AM 1280	1303 E. Grand Avenue	Arroyo Grande		489-8450	489-8645	
KLIFE 89.3		SLO		541-4343	541-9101	
KLMM 94.1/KLUN 103.1/KSBQ am 1480	200 E. Fesler	Santa Maria		928-9796	928-3367	
KXTZ/ The Beach 95.3	396 Buckley Rd.	SLO	93401	786-2570	547-9860	aaron@radiocentralcoast.com
KPAT 95.7/ KRQK 100.3/ KBOX 104.1				922-1041	928-3069	agmsmprod@liveradio.com
KPRL am 1230	32nd Oak	Paso Robles		238-1230	238-5332	
KSBY TV 6	1772 Calle Joaquin	SLO	93405	541-6666	541-5142	bdowning@ksby.com
KTAS TV Telemundo				545-9248	928-8606	KYASTV@fix.net
KUHL Radio	716 E. Chapel Steet	Santa Maria		922-7727	349-0286	KUHL@radiocentralcoast.com
Lompoc Record	115 North H Street	Lompoc		736-2313	737-0938	
Nipomo's Adobe Press	P.O. Box 460	Arroyo Grande	93420	736-2313	736-5654	
Mapleton Communications					547-9860	
Robin Smith- Children's & Family Monthly Update				434-2236		robinahc@email.com
Atascadero News	5660 El Camino Real	Atascadero	93422	466-2585	466-2714	editor@atascaderonews.com
The Bay News				528-8776		thebaynews@yahoo.com
The Cambrian	2442 Main	Cambria	93428	927-8652	927-4708	cambrian@thetribunenews.com
New Times	505 Higuera Street	SLO	93401	546-8208	546-8641	calendar@newtimesslo.com
Paso Robles Press	1639 Spring Street	Paso Robles	93446	238-0330	237-6066	news@pasoroblespress.com
Plus Magazine	823 via Esteban	SLO	93401	544-8711	546-8827	slojournal@fix.net
Santa Maria Sun	1954 S. Broadway	Santa Maria	93454	347-1968	347-9889	calendar@santamariasun.com
Santa Maria Times	3200 Skyway Drive	Santa Maria	93454	925-2691	928-5657	PCCN Classifieds@pulitzer.net
Sharp News	702 Pine	Paso Robles	93446	237-0648		
Sun Bulletin	1149 Market Avenue	Morro Bay		772-7346	772-7044	aprado@thetribunenews.com
Times-Pres-Recorder	P.O. Box 460	Arroyo Grande	93420		473-0571	same as Santa Maria Times
The Tribune	3825 S. Higuera	SLO		781-7800	781-7905	newsroom@thetribunenews.com
Five Cities Times Press	Ĭ					bmaulden@pulitzer.net
Post News						neil@tolosapress.com