



School on Wheels News

September 2006

One hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, how big my house was, or what kind of car I drove. But the world may be a little better, because I was important in the life of a child.

Forest Witcraft

Dear Friends,

September means new beginnings for children and teens across America and that includes our homeless children, kindergarten through twelve grade. September is that symbol to children of starting fresh: new teacher, new grade, new classes and new supplies. Thanks to you, countless numbers of homeless children will get that new start.

In this present world of chaos and sadness, you put aside these tragic realities and have the generosity of reaching out to bring a child a sense of excitement and hope. The consistency of your efforts will turn that excitement and hope into a trust in self and then in others. You truly are making a major difference in the life of a child. You stepped up to the plate when you heard about the needs of the children and teens we work with. You joined School on Wheels in building a safe “educational ark” around each of our students. We should all be proud in being amateurs in helping a child as we know we are coming from renewed energy of true generosity, creativity and sincerity to give of our time, effort and means.

Never be afraid to do something new; remember amateurs built the Ark; Professionals built the Titanic. Anonymous

School on Wheels sees every day how homelessness is increasing. More and more families are living in cars and motels because shelters are full or they are forced to move on. The children don’t understand but bravely adjust again and again. With your help, it becomes a little easier for them just by knowing they are not alone. It is this spirit that grows and spreads and brings our most forgotten kids along with it. Thank you!

In this newsletter, we also look at some new beginnings for School on Wheels: our first Open House in our skid row center, our new partnership with a wonderful organization, The NineTenths Group, new staff members.

With gratitude for all you do,

Agnes Stevens

Founder and Executive Director

Our Mission

The enhancement of educational opportunities for homeless children, from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Our goal is to shrink the gaps in the education of these children and provide them with the highest education possible

WE NEED YOU!

We have hundreds of homeless children in Southern California who need you to tutor them for just one hour a week.

You don’t need any experience, just the desire to make a difference in a child’s life. Please join us at our Open House on September 12 (see page 3 for more information) or visit the Volunteer section at our website:

www.schoolonwheels.org

Inside this issue:

Tutor Tales	2
Open House	3
New Partnership	3

TUTOR TALES

Jason and Henry

Henry was 10 years old. Sometimes he behaved like a ten year old boy. And sometimes he made baby sounds and acted like he was a one year old. But there was always something special about him. He was witty and charming when he wanted to be and his face was always about to break into an infectious smile. Like many homeless people, he could read who you were, even if he couldn't read very well.

Jason Wurtz wanted to make a contribution, but he didn't quite know what that meant. So he filled out a volunteer form on LA Works (www.laworks.com) and found out that tutoring homeless kids would be the right fit for him. We're so happy he made that decision and so was Henry and all the others Jason has tutored.

Many homeless children want to make a contribution, but don't know how to go about it. They look around their neighborhood and all they see are examples of hopelessness. The only role models are the sad ones they see on skid row. The things you and I take for granted, like a refrigerator full of food, or a clean bed to sleep in are luxury items. At a very early age, they give up their dreams for the resignation that being homeless means. Jason wanted to change that.

Among the many things Henry didn't like, multiplication was at the top of the list. He just couldn't understand it. Jason decided to make a game out of it. Take for example 3 times 8. Jason had Henry draw three baskets and then draw eight apples in each basket. They did this many times using containers that grew progressively more silly and filled them up with a variety of strange things. Eventually Henry got it. He got it to the point where multiplication was all he wanted to do when they were studying.

Henry is long gone. But Jason remains working to inspire kids who have no one else to inspire them. Recently he and four other tutors organized themselves so that for the first 40 minutes of each session each tutor works with their student, then, if everybody is on good behavior, they play group games for twenty minutes. And then they have a snack. Many victories are small. But without Jason and tutors like him, these children would have no victories at all.

Melissa

Melissa Humber says, "I guess you could say School on Wheels is my first formal tutoring experience. But I feel like I've been tutoring all my life. I would play school with my younger brother and, of course, I was always the teacher. As I grew older, I'd help neighborhood kids with their studies, and later on, my friends in school. Tutoring has always been a part of my life and it always will be."

"There have been a million little things that have helped define my tutoring experience with School on Wheels," says Melissa, but the biggest one is this: It takes about an hour to get to the Downtown Learning Center. And as I get closer and closer the neighborhood gets worse and worse. And by the time I get to the Center, I've usually seen several sad situations. But as I get closer, I also get excited because all those kids have such spirit and enthusiasm even in the conditions they live in and it rubs off on me. When I get there, they run to greet me and give me hugs. Feeling them hug me makes me want to be there for them."

"While I tutor them with their school lessons, they have taught me a very important lesson," muses Melissa. "Everybody has problems. But some people **really** have problems. When I see those kids smiling up at me, I realize that compared to them, I really don't have any problems. They continue to laugh and be optimistic and have hope. How can I complain about my little problems when they don't complain about their big ones?"

YOU ARE INVITED!

You can make a difference in the life of a homeless child.

Join us for our first ever Open House and find out more.

***Date:** Tuesday, September 12, 2006*

***Time:** 5:00 -7:00 p.m.*

***Place:** 506 S. San Pedro St.*

Los Angeles, CA 90013

For more information, please contact Rosemary Oliva

Email: roliva@schoolonwheels.org

Tel.: (213) 896-9200

Refreshments provided

A NEW PARTNERSHIP

We are very fortunate to begin a new partnership with a wonderful organization, The NineTenths Group (www.nine-tenths.org). NineTenths leverages the diverse skill sets of its membership to provide operational, strategic and financial assistance to organizations that fit their vision of leadership, innovation and community development. School on Wheels is honored to have been chosen by NineTenths. We will be working together over the next two years to strengthen and enhance School on Wheels so that we can support the educational needs of more homeless students who struggle daily to accomplish their number one job as a child: learning.

NineTenths began in 2000 when a group of friends in Los Angeles found themselves thrust into highly specialized professional careers. Although they had been active in their communities while in school, they now found their schedules rigid and their access to a collaborative volunteer infrastructure limited. Additionally, they quickly realized they were gaining professional expertise that could be of more value to community organizations than could their time on its own. Seeking a way to leverage their resources on behalf of the Los Angeles community while nurturing their own strengths as future leaders, they founded NineTenths.

Today, NineTenths is a highly selective group of young leaders across professional disciplines, from attorneys to artists to financial advisors, who collaboratively run a slate of practical programs dedicated to brightening the future of Los Angeles and its leaders.





School on Wheels

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STAFF NEWS

Hello and Farewell

Welcome to Paula Buxbaum, Teresa Codioli, and Rosemary Oliva who have joined our team. Paula is Regional Coordinator, responsible for the East L.A., San Gabriel Valley and Long Beach region; Teresa is our new Administrative Coordinator in Malibu and Rosemary is taking care of business as the Downtown Learning Center Coordinator in skid row. We're glad you're all here.

We bid a fond farewell to Ruth Granados, who is pursuing other interests and Joanie Nelson, who has moved to San Diego. We will miss you both.

"So long as little children are allowed to suffer, there is no true love in this world." Isadora Duncan

"Keep me away from the wisdom that does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children." Kahlil Gibran

Wish List

- *Educational software*
- *Educational workbooks*
- *Laptop or desktop computers*
- *School uniforms*
- *School supplies*
- *Backpacks*
- *Educational board games*
- *Calculators*