

20th school on wheels inc. Tutoring Homeless Children Since 1993

ANNIVERSARY 1993-2013



So much has changed since our founder Agnes Stevens started School on Wheels 20 years ago. It was a quiet beginning – a small seed, as one of our first (and ongoing) donors, Jan Miller called it. Agnes didn't know where her vision would lead, but she knew she had to help homeless kids with their education. Little did she dream that 20 years down the road, School on Wheels would be tutoring over 2,000 students, hosting over 1,500 volunteers and working in six counties in Southern California.

While so much has changed, there is one thing that has remained constant: the support and friendship you and so many others like you have given us as we strive to carry Agnes' vision forward. You have made the past 20 years possible; sustained us when times were tough; encouraged us to be creative; cheered us on as we served more and more students.

Shockingly, the number of children without a home continues to grow. In late 2011, California released an estimate of 350,000 children homeless statewide; we were horrified by how high this number was. It galvanized us into action: we developed a plan not only to dramatically expand our tutoring services but also to improve them. Our 3-Year Strategic Plan was implemented in 2012 with an audacious goal of tutoring more than 3,500 homeless children by 2014 – more than double the number we tutored in 2011. These are ambitious goals. We believe they must be. We are the only organization in Southern California that focuses solely on the education gaps of homeless students.

It is my great pleasure to report that you helped us achieve all our progress goals in 2012. You will read about the details of our goal successes in this newsletter. You will also read about the other side of the equation: the intangible success stories, the ones that make you smile and the ones that make your heart ache. These are not our success stories, they are yours. Thank you for the hope you have given to our students that they can have a chance for success through education. You have changed their lives.

With deep gratitude,

Catherine Meek
Executive Director

Message from President of the Board, Jon Tomlin

There are people who care about homeless children. The continual growth of School on Wheels for twenty years proves this. In 1993, we started with only the volunteer efforts of our founder, Agnes Stevens. Twenty years of caring support by volunteers, donors, board, and staff members now enables School on Wheels to tutor around 2,000 children each year. On our 20th anniversary, you, our supporters, should be very proud of what you have accomplished through your compassion. This compassion will undoubtedly allow School on Wheels to brighten the future of thousands of additional children for many years to come.

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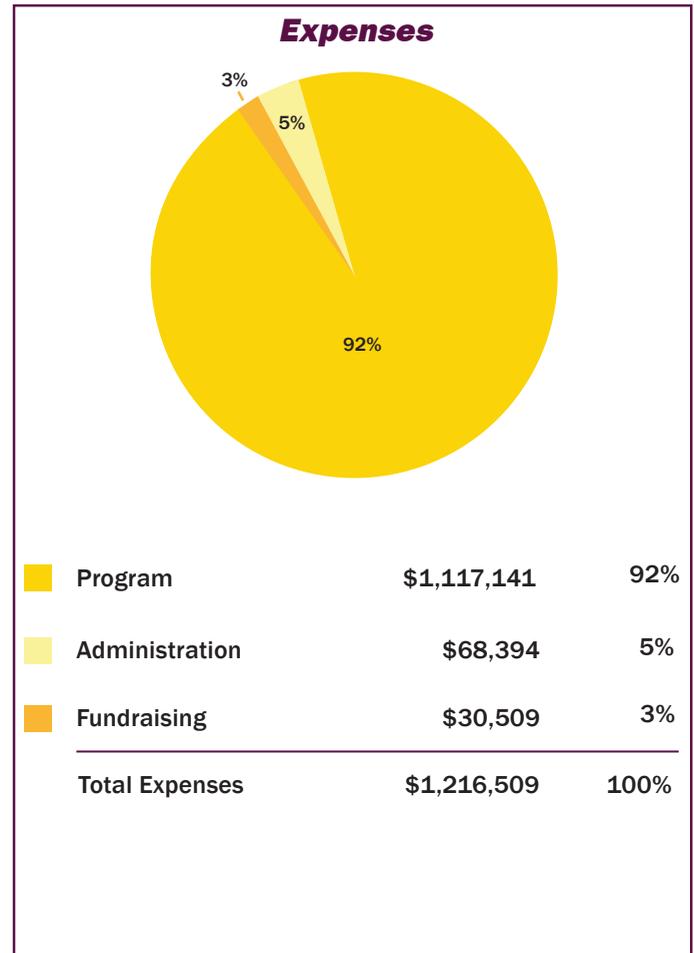
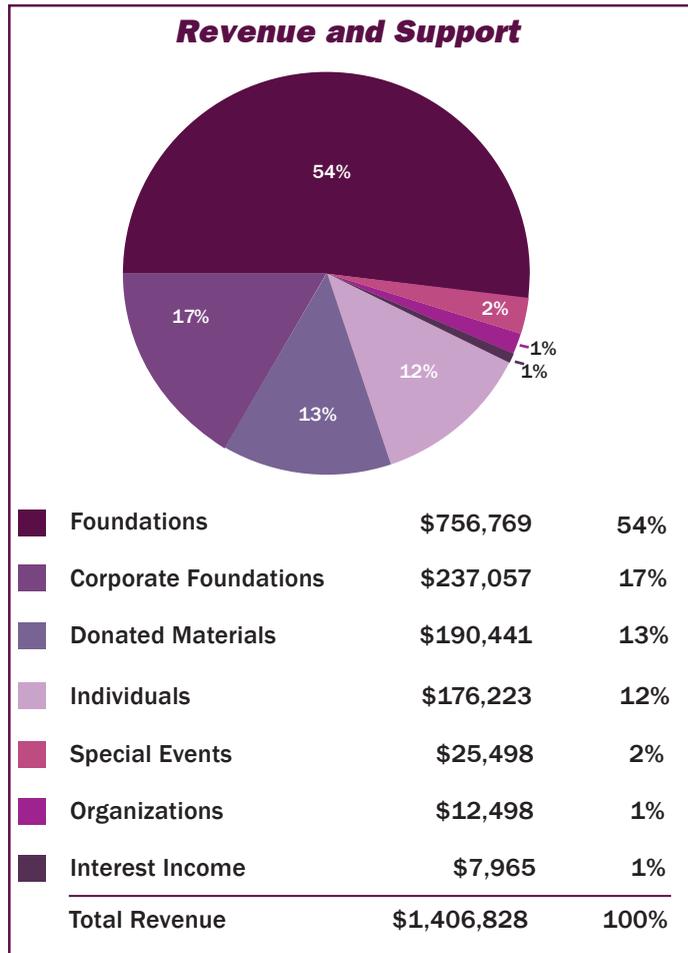
Janet Ambrosi Wertman
Development Consultant

Inside this Issue

Financial Results.....	2
Program Results.....	3
Donor Stories.....	4
Tutor and Student Stories.....	5-7

2 2012 FINANCIAL RESULTS

Our donors continue to amaze and inspire us. In 2012, we increased our support over 2011 by 6%. At the same time, we held expenses to a 4% increase while expanding and improving our program services, which received 92% of all our funding.



How fortunate we are to have so many loyal and generous supporters and friends. Last year, we were honored to have steadfast supporters like The Mark Hughes Foundation, Discover A Star Foundation, BCM Foundation, the Green Foundation, the Sawchuk Family Foundation, Steven & Stephanie Dahlberg, and Jarrod & Catherine Phillips. New foundation supporters included Windsong Trust, the John W. Carson Foundation, Pacific Youth Foundation, and the Marilyn S. Broad Foundation.

Our friends at the Ray Charles Foundation surprised us with a visit and large check:

“Ray Charles learned as a young child the importance of education and that youth is a time to prepare for adulthood. He



was grateful to discover that music was his mission in life and that his other purpose was

From left to right

- Valerie Ervin, President, Ray Charles Foundation, Catherine Meek & Rev. Cecil Murray, Board Member

to help people reach their potential. School on Wheels is exactly the kind of organization Ray wanted to always support. School on Wheels makes it possible for many homeless children to attain an education in spite of the challenges. Their success with so many students is astounding and inspirational. The 20th anniversary is a testament to their effectiveness. It is startling to realize that there are 1.6 million homeless youths in the United States. School on Wheels proves that there are ways to help them get an education.”

- Valerie Ervin, President

Once again, our students had the pleasure of spending a day at the beach, courtesy



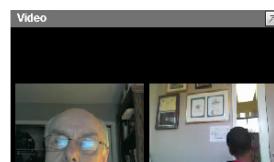
of **Bob Morris** and his amazing family and staff at the **Paradise Cove Beach Café** in Malibu. With the help of **Steve Dahlberg** and the **California Highway Patrol**, Bob hosted the twelfth Annual Holiday Party for over 200 of our students, some of whom had never seen the ocean before.

As mentioned earlier, we achieved all our strategic progress goals in 2012. 1,527 volunteers tutored 2,028 children in over 150 locations. Not only that, but they spent almost 80,000 hours volunteering every week, going to a shelter or a library or an after-school program to help their students. We had many more accomplishments last year:

-  We distributed 3,385 brand-new backpacks filled with school supplies and funded 261 school uniforms for every student who needed them.
-  We awarded four scholarships to wonderful, deserving students in our program.
-  Through our Outcome Measurement Project, we asked students and their parents about the impact School on Wheels is having on the students' lives. 86% of students say tutoring has helped their grades and their parents agree with their child's assessments, with over 90% of parents believing their child is performing better in academic areas of math, reading and writing, as well as working harder, handing in homework assignments, and being more confident at school.

-  In 2012, we hosted workshops for our high school students and took over 100 students on college campus tours to UCLA, Cal State, USC, CSUCI, UCSB, and Pepperdine University.
-  We developed partnerships with wonderful organizations who share our belief in the potential of all children, such as: the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and Pacific Youth Foundation (with a special thanks to Allan Young); Learn To Be Foundation, which provides expertise and technology for our online tutoring project; and, of course, all the amazing homeless coalitions and shelters we work with every day.
-  In addition to doubling the number of students we tutor, one of our major strategic goals is to enhance our core tutoring program to include blended learning - a blend of traditional one-on-one tutoring and new technology. In 2012, we started the blended learning initiative with a small pilot program in our learning centers in Skid Row and South LA. One of those initiatives

includes online tutoring. Imagine a professor from Villanova University in Pennsylvania tutoring one of our students in our Skid Row Learning Center! That's what we're doing.



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Now, thanks to a generous grant from Universal Discover A Star, we are expanding these initiatives to other locations. We will use computer programs to help

address students' unique obstacles and educational gaps. Adaptive assessments will help tutors quickly determine students' areas for improvement and tailor lessons to their greatest needs. This shift to blended learning will also open up new opportunities to reach volunteers and serve more students more effectively.

"I have really enjoyed working with my student, Taree", says Professor Frederick Hartmann. "It is a pleasure to help this bright young man and to see him progress with his studies. I think he has a future in computing – he is better at using our hardware and software than I am!"

Carmen Crocket-Smith

When Carmen lost her job, the loss of income changed the entire dynamic of her family. They became homeless. The



family of six was reduced to living in their van.

Carmen heard about School on Wheels and wanted her children to

participate. Her two oldest children started meeting their tutors weekly at a nearby library. School on Wheels staff helped enroll the children in school. When the holidays rolled around, they made sure the children had gifts.

"School on Wheels tutors and staff went above and beyond for my family. They were in constant contact with us. It made me feel like I was not in this alone.

The fact that the children were able to maintain their school work, do other activities, and have full lives despite our situation was huge."

Carmen and her family were homeless for about seven months. Initially they lived in their van, and in motels. Then they moved to Ohio to be with extended family, then on to her husband's home town of Washington DC. Her husband worked throughout the time they were homeless for TWA. Carmen now works as a Global Travel Program Manager in Washinton DC.

Carmen's children benefited from their School on Wheels experience, and now she is a donor. She says she has a deeper

understanding of the struggle homeless families face and looks at homelessness from a different perspective than she did before:



"We persevered and overcame obstacles. We were helped by having

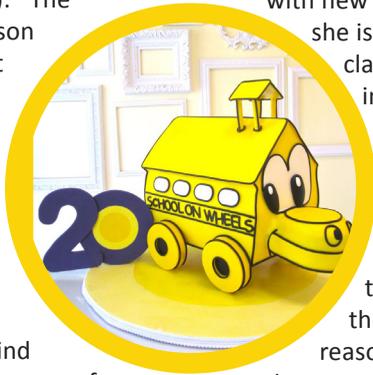
an education and skill sets to fall back on...Your organization was such a help to my family during a dark time in our lives. Never would we have guessed that we would have been homeless. But we were, and your organization was very instrumental in assisting us in getting our children into school, providing school supplies, and tutors."

4 DONOR STORIES

We asked a few of our long-time donors why they support us. Here are their responses:

Carol Hannah (Director, The Mark Hughes Foundation): "The most important reason I decided to support Schools on Wheels was their single-minded focus on homeless children," says Carol. "There is no group more in need than children living in the worst kind of poverty - no home or roof over their head, sometimes sleeping on the street and always moving around. These children have no home, often no food and clean clothing. They cannot go to school because they are transient. Without school, children often have no friends other than siblings. They get so far behind in learning that they can't compete with other children their age. At some point, it is almost impossible to catch up with others their age." *"The best thing about School on Wheels," says Carol, "is the smile on children's faces when they are able to read a book on their own, or can do a math problem or answer a question in their homework."*

These children are our future and thanks to School On Wheels, many who would most likely grow up without an education, unable to provide for themselves or their family, will now have a better chance at being productive adults and stop this trail of poverty. School on Wheels is changing the world of homelessness, one child at a time."



to school with a new backpack filled with new school supplies so that he/she is indistinguishable from fellow classmates is one of the more important reasons. These kids are not responsible for their situations. Helping them to blend in can help their self-esteem." Ellen continued, "Offering one-on-one tutors to students is as important as the backpacks, but for different reasons. Often these children have moved from place to place in a relatively short period of time. Not only do they have to adjust to new living environments, but to new schools and teachers. The wonderful volunteer tutors help a child fill in the gaps in addition to providing an ongoing relationship with someone who cares and is there for them."

Board member **Laurie Levit** and her family's foundation, the Dora Freedman Levit Fund for the People, have been supporting School on Wheels for twenty years. In 1993 they gave School on Wheels its first \$5,000 grant. Laurie was on the lookout for a nonprofit that was doing important work and that didn't have a high overhead. *"What I love about School on Wheels is that it benefits tutors and tutees in equal measure. Volunteers feel good helping the kid by being a tutor, and the students benefit having a one-on-one tutor. The experience is so personal. It is not about numbers, scores, statistics, or raising standards; it is about one tutor making the difference in the life of one homeless child."*

One of School on Wheels' first volunteers and supporters, **Nita Rodriguez**, talks about the

beginning of School on Wheels: *"It was such a simple, but powerful idea."*

Agnes and I taught at the same elementary school for over 15 years. After Agnes retired she volunteered at an elementary school that welcomed homeless children. While working, she realized that they needed an after school tutor to help them with homework and reading. Out of this need she developed School on Wheels. I was in total agreement with Agnes that education is very important in helping kids get out of poverty. I started helping Agnes by training volunteer tutors. It was such a simple but great idea to have the tutors go to where the kids were and to help them with their school work. Observing the excitement of homeless children waiting for their tutors to come has never left me.

Agnes was the guiding light and was so inspirational that many volunteers answered the call. She always understood that every person can make a difference in the life of a homeless child, one child at a time.



WEINGART FOUNDATION

"applauds School on Wheels for its commitment

to serving our communities of greatest need, particularly homeless children and youth in Skid Row and beyond. The agency's dedicated and expansive volunteer base, along with its responsive approach to providing critical educational support to youth from kindergarten to high school, are core strengths of School on Wheels that mirror Weingart Foundation's objectives to support high-impact programs that reach the underserved."

- Fred Ali, President and C.E.O.



When we asked **Ellen and Michael Opell** why they support School on Wheels year after year, they said "Let me count the ways.

Knowing that a homeless child will go



A complete listing of our generous donors can be viewed on our website at www.schoolonwheels.org/aboutus/friends.

Laura & Rebecca

Laura Bundalian decided to volunteer her time because she wanted to serve her community and has a passion for children and education.

"I believe that every kid should have the opportunity to pursue an education, especially homeless kids. It has a domino effect. If you care, they care too!"

Laura's mom passed away when she was six years old. Her family moved frequently because her father was in the Navy. She found the hardest part of moving was leaving friends behind. Maybe this is why she is such a good tutor; Laura understands how our students feel. Laura's current student Rebecca, aged 8, has lived in five



things in the world cannot be seen or touched; they must be felt with the heart."

Jake & Austin

I have been tutoring since 2006. My proudest moments are always when I am presented with a report card by a student or the parent showing that the student's grades have improved. I love helping kids study for tests and seeing their success when they get good grades. The best way to help homeless kids is by creating structure and showing up to see them every week. I mainly work with kids living in domestic violence shelters; they have had so many negative male influences. I turn up and help them with their homework every week; it gives them a slice of normalcy. Showing up when you are supposed to is a powerful way to let kids know that you care.



the next summer Calvin chose to read it again! This time he completed it – I was so proud that he finished the book; it helped me realize how much his reading had improved.

Something that he found tough just a year ago he now understood and enjoyed. Another proud moment was when I went to Calvin's middle school graduation."

Calvin is now a junior in high school and lives in permanent housing with his family. Ryan and Calvin still get together regularly and share a love of African American History. Ryan's favorite quote is by Martin Luther King, Jr: *"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."*

Kai

Likes: His tutor Gloria and frozen yogurt (Any flavor, any topping)

Doesn't like: Not being strong enough to help people

Loves: Skateboarding and Plan B skateboards

Proud of: My school work. I got a Student of the Month award from School on Wheels and 'Most Improved Student' award from my school

Thoughts about his tutor: Gloria has

helped me to read, learn multiplication and division and I like school more because of her. She makes learning fun and puts it into stuff that I can understand....If I do five tricks on my skateboard and take two away, how many do I have left? Stuff like that. She has helped me with learning the Presidents and the states and their capitals. She is funny too.

Wants to be: Skateboard shop owner.



shelters in the time that School on Wheels has known her; Rebecca's family is now living in a motel. Every week Laura calls

Rebecca's mom to find out where they are so that they can arrange to meet at a local library.

Despite such tenuous living arrangements, Rebecca is doing well.

Laura's proudest moment was when Rebecca got a perfect score on a spelling test. They used a white board and flash cards to practice; they also created a "Vocabulary Box" to put the hardest words in using visual stimuli and definitions of the words to help Rebecca learn. Since then, Laura has seen Rebecca's confidence increase. With a mutual love of reading, the pair are kindred spirits. Laura's favorite quote is by Helen Keller; it seems to sum up the relationship she has with her student perfectly. *"The best and most beautiful*

Ryan & Calvin

Ryan De Rosa, PhD is training to be a teacher. Ryan says:

I first met Calvin, his mom and two sisters when they were living at a transitional living shelter in South Los Angeles. Emotionally, it was a really tough time for him. I wanted to help Calvin find an interest

in learning. School sometimes seems irrelevant to a child who is homeless and moving from school to school. I wanted to make learning real so that it mattered to Calvin.

"One of my proudest moments as a tutor was the summer when

Calvin and I read The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison as part of the School on Wheels Summer Reading Program. The book was too tough for Calvin; we never finished reading it. However,



Gloria & Kai

At the very beginning when I first met my student Kai, I kept trying to figure out a way to motivate him. He was not interested in doing school work with me; he couldn't sit still, and the only thing he would do with me was draw. Slowly, I would get him to talk about his pictures. Then he began to work with me to write a sentence about the drawing. When he did start writing, I noticed how far below grade level he was with his writing and spelling. Through our time together, I realized that he had a great memory, just not for spelling. He also had a tough time concentrating. I had the idea of making him turn his body into the shape of letters. He began to spell words out with his body; that physical activity helped him to remember the spelling.

I think one of the best ways to help a homeless child is through persistence and patience. I turn up every week. If Kai and his family do not show up or are late, I never get angry. Their family has experienced so much anger and violence. Living in a shelter is such a tough environment. Kai spends all day sitting down at school, then he goes straight to an after-school club. By the time he gets to me he is exhausted. I tell him he is not at school and that, if he doesn't want to do something, it is fine. We have been together for almost two years now. His progress has been staggering. It is due to the great school he attends but I think our weekly sessions have empowered him too.



Valerie Cavanaugh

Do you believe in magic? Valerie Cavanaugh, one of our first tutors, a former board member and continuing supporter does: "There is something ingenious and magical about School on Wheels. It allows people to volunteer without demanding twenty hours a week. An hour a week is all School on Wheels asks. I first heard about School on Wheels from my friend Laurie Levit. She suggested that I become a volunteer tutor, so I did. *In the early days, School on Wheels literally did not have money for gas or to pay bills. Agnes was always positive and knew that someone would turn up to help. And they did. I worried constantly about how the organization could continue but she always knew somehow School on Wheels would find a way.* I tutored many students over the years; when they moved, I moved with them. I traveled all over Los Angeles to meet my student every week. I think it gave the kids confidence and a real sense of stability, knowing that I was going to be there every week. They were always good at keeping in touch and letting me know where they were. Homelessness equals disorganization and having a tutor helps kids get their school life organized and it works. It is terribly gratifying to be a tutor and to do some good. I literally feel that. I did not really know what to do at first, but Agnes accompanied me to tutoring sessions and showed me by doing. I had never taught before; I was an entertainment lawyer. I soon realized I was helping the kids build their confidence; it was not simply about helping them with school. I continued volunteering for a long time. Tutoring was my outlet; I always made the time to volunteer. Often I was in an important meeting about a TV show that was failing; when it came time to go to tutoring, I would tell the group that I was off to tutor a homeless kid and leave! Who could argue with that?"

Disha Patel

What motivated you to apply to be a volunteer with School on Wheels?

At an early age, I observed my parents giving back to the local community where they lived. They taught me that life is a gift, that we should do our part in making a positive impact, that we should never take life for granted, and that we should respect people from all walks of life. Specifically, I remember my mother volunteering at the local senior citizen and special needs center. When I was old enough to volunteer, I would accompany my mother and learn from her. Her amazing love, respect, and tireless work for those in need inspired me to want to incorporate this into my life.

Tell us about one of your proudest moments as a tutor...

Wow, there are SO many awesome moments. I have had the opportunity to tutor multiple students and share in their successes. However, my proudest moment has been that two of my students who initially did not think college was in the cards for them have now decided college is possible and are working to make this a reality. I am happy to be a part of their journey. Currently I am helping them prepare for the college entrance tests and am accompanying them on college campus tours. I am also connecting them with professionals in their areas of interest and keeping them accountable on their current school work and extracurricular activities.

What is the best way to help a student experiencing homelessness?

Let them know they have someone they can reach out to, someone who will treat them with respect. Also, I hope to help them see their gifts and realize their potential. My most recent student is from Russia and is a very talented painter/artist.



Laura & Maricela

How did you hear about School on Wheels?

I saw a news story on the TV about five years ago and it moved me. I really enjoy working with kids and I knew I had to be part of this organization.

Motivation: Honestly, I have been really blessed in my life and I feel strongly that I have an obligation to give back. If we are to come together as a society we need to help others that are less fortunate.

Proudest moment: My proudest moment by far was dropping off my first School on Wheels student, Maricela, at college last summer. Maricela was a foster youth and had spent 11 years in the foster care system. I met her at the end of her sophomore year in 2010 and helped her to apply to college. She got accepted at lots, but chose Humboldt State. I went to her high school graduation, but travelling with her to college was by far the proudest moment.

Best way to help a homeless student: Show up for them. I have had three different students and they have all been let down in different ways by adults. Showing up consistently makes a huge difference.

Maricela was a junior in high school and needed extra help. She was in the foster care system for 10 years; during that time, she lived in three different group homes. Maricela first met her tutor Laura at the local library; Maricela instantly knew she had found someone that could really help her. Maricela says, "Getting to college was always my goal but I didn't understand the work or the process to get there. Laura helped me with everything. She took care of all my applications for college and helped me secure a scholarship. Nobody tells you how difficult it is to enroll in college. The biggest difference Laura made for me was that she showed me how to get there." She is now enjoying college life, and looking forward to her 2nd year when she hopes to get a room of her own! "The best thing about college," she says "is that I can finally make my own choices." When she was a foster youth she was told what to do and where to live. People that she



didn't know made decisions about her life. "Being in foster care is something you don't have a choice about. It is not something that everyone can survive. Some kids get lost in the system. They don't know how to interact with people around them because they have become so institutionalized and lose motivation. I always knew I was going to go to college and Laura helped me experience things that broadened my outlook. For example, she took me on fieldtrips. It was a great stress reliever to have someone take me out of that environment and show me better stuff so I could achieve higher."

Maricela is grateful for everything that Laura did for her. *"It's great to have people you can talk to, not just for advice, but that listen to you. There have been so many people in my life that have come and gone. You never know who is going to stay. Having someone like Laura is a huge support; she sends me cookies and cards in the mail to let me know that she is thinking of me. It's the small stuff that makes a difference. She is my hero."* Maricela is majoring in Criminology and plans to attend graduate school. She would like to work in the Police K9 unit when she completes her education.

Khadijah Williams

Khadijah Williams, a former School on Wheels student, began moving from shelter to shelter with her mother and younger sister when she was 6 years old. When there were no shelters available, Khadijah says she and her family slept in motels, bus stations and sometimes on the street. We caught up with Khadijah to talk to her about her college experience and how School on Wheels had helped her. In May, Khadijah will graduate from Harvard with an AB in Sociology.

Have you enjoyed college?

Yes and no. I have met lots of new people and had many great and fulfilling experiences, but it has also been a challenge, especially in my senior year, since I knew I would be leaving soon. Four years...this is the longest I have lived anywhere.

Can you tell us about your time with School on Wheels?

The time that I attended School on Wheels' after-school club on Skid Row was a vulnerable time for me. I was homeless and ashamed of it. I wanted to hide being homeless from my friends and teachers at school. But I liked having somewhere to go and somewhere safe to study. But the most important thing that School on Wheels provided for me were caring, committed, and accomplished adults. Having the same tutor, seeing the same faces... It seems like very little, but it has a huge impact, especially in the life of someone who has no stability. When people think of issues homeless students face, they often think of material resources, such as school supplies and backpacks. But it is not just that; emotionally and psychologically it affects you too. It is hard to focus on academics when you aren't even sure where you will stay or eat for the night or next week. Although I was a high performer in school, I never had a permanent home or was part of a community. This made me insecure, guarded, and though friendly, closed off to my peers.

How many times did you move schools?

I changed schools twelve times, attending five elementary schools, three middle schools, and four high schools. By the time I got to 8th grade, I was two years behind in school. Originally having the highest grade in my elective P.E. class, I failed the course because I no longer lived in the county but hadn't been officially un-enrolled. Even if you have an ironclad



resolve and focus as I had (immensely difficult for most homeless students) these issues begin to wear on you physically and emotionally.

Who is your hero?

I have many heroes, but one special lady deserves special mention: My mom. My mom is my ultimate hero because she dealt with so much and kept us safe. It was an amazing accomplishment with her mental illness. Khadijah's mom died in 2010. She was still homeless.



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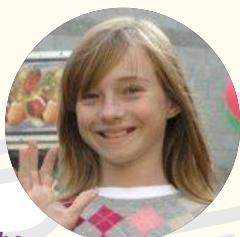
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Lexie Looker (The Looker Foundation) has been a donor since she was 8 years old. She is now 14! Every year, she funds and goes on fabulous field trips with our students

in Skid Row - the Aquarium of the Pacific, ice-skating trips. She also funds brand new backpacks filled with school supplies. When we asked her why she supports us, she says, *"In my opinion, education is a very important thing in life. I feel that if I can change one child's life by giving them an education and supporting them along the way, then I've done an amazing thing. Everyone needs an education; don't just worry about your own."* Lexie, you have done an amazing thing.



"School on Wheels is an organization doing great work. You have identified a most underserved group of children, and have effectively helped them for a considerable period of time."

*- James D. Shepard,
Trustee, BCM
Foundation*



www.schoolonwheels.org



Teresa and her two girls (Ruby, 14 and Rose, 13) have been living at the Union Rescue Mission Shelter in Skid Row since August 2012.

They heard about School on Wheels from another parent at the shelter. The girls started attending the Skid Row Learning Center. Teresa was thrilled that the girls had somewhere safe to go after school instead of hanging out on the streets of Skid Row. *"School on Wheels Learning Center is an important place for us. The girls love the center and the staff. When I pick them up in the evening, they don't want to leave. The girls have met some amazing volunteers, people we didn't expect to meet in Skid Row. They are positive role models who my girls can relate to. The girls are encouraged to do their homework; and, they have access to the books they need to catch up with school. They have gone from D's and F's at school to all A's."*

For all our latest news and events, please visit our website or Facebook page.