



**school on wheels inc.**

## **Our Mission**

The mission of School on Wheels is the enhancement of educational opportunities for homeless children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Our goal is to shrink the gaps in their education and provide them with the highest education possible. We do this by offering:

- One-on-one weekly tutoring with a volunteer
- Backpacks, school supplies and school uniforms
- A toll-free number for kids to keep in touch with us (800-923-1100)
- Assistance in entering school
- Help in locating lost records
- Parent guidance in educational matters for their children.

We reach out and provide services to all homeless children. School on Wheels has not, does not, and will not discriminate with respect to gender, race, color, religion, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or any or all classifications protected by applicable state or federal discrimination laws, whether in regard to employment or to those to whom we provide services.

## **Our History**

School on Wheels, Inc. is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1993 by Agnes Stevens, a retired teacher, after she read a book called *Rachel and her Children* by Jonathan Kozol and realized that there were homeless children in the USA. She began teaching homeless kids in a park in Santa Monica, encouraging them to stay in school and keep up with their grades and school activities.

Today, hundreds of volunteers work one-on-one with children whose homelessness prevents them from getting the academic stability and help they so desperately need. The heart of the School on Wheels' programs are the volunteer tutors who come from all backgrounds and professions, with one agenda only - to reach out to a child, to teach, to mentor, and assist in their educational life.



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## **Our Services**

Homeless children need extra time and attention if the educational system is to do its job, but because of their circumstances, they often have no one in their lives who can give it to them. That's where School on Wheels comes in. We bring the message to our students that they are cared about and important, and our programs serve as a consistent support system at a time of great stress and fear. We currently work in seven major regions in Southern California, including Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

- **One-on-One Tutoring.** The heart of School on Wheels program is the hundreds of volunteer tutors who come from all backgrounds and professions to tutor, mentor, and assist in the education of a homeless child. Tutors meet once a week with a child and help her learn to read and write, complete homework, or work on special projects. Volunteers also arrange field-trips, arts fairs, and other extra-curricular activities for the children. Most of all, tutors help their students believe in themselves and their potential to succeed.
- **Backpacks and School Supplies.** For a homeless child, a backpack and school supplies are like gold. They have no desk to call their own, no quiet place to study, but with a backpack and supplies they have their own place to keep their own supplies. The potential of clean paper and colored pencils is a powerful talisman for a child with so little else in his life.
- **School Uniforms.** Although illegal, some public schools in Southern California still deny entry to students not in uniform or place them in detention. Homeless children frequently don't have the necessary clothing; uniforms allow them to blend in and not stand out as homeless.
- **Toll-free Number. (1.800.923.1100)** We give each of our students a toll-free number so that they can keep in touch with us no matter where they are or how often they move.
- **School Enrollment.** We help hundreds of children enroll in school. In the extreme mobility characteristic of being homeless, children move from school to school – and each move requires a re-enrollment process that can take weeks without the help of an organization like School on Wheels. To speed this process, we assist parents with necessary paperwork and with gathering needed records like birth certificates, immunization records, and transfer papers from previous schools.
- **Guidance.** We counsel parents on an as-needed basis by providing guidance and advice on the educational opportunities open to their children, making them aware of special requirements they may need to fulfill and of special programs they should investigate.



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## **The Need for School on Wheels**

There are currently over 290,000 homeless children in California. Homeless mothers and children are now the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population, and the percentage of kids who are homeless in the U.S. is greater today than at any point since the Great Depression. In Los Angeles county, there are over 35,000 homeless kids from Kindergarten through Grade 12 enrolled in their School Districts and we know that this under-represents significantly the size of the school-aged homeless population in Los Angeles.

Every child needs an education to have hope and a chance for success, and the homeless child is no exception. If School on Wheels can close the gap for these kids, our program has the potential to help stop the cycle of homelessness and to relieve school districts of a tremendous capacity and resource burden.

## **Homeless Statistics**

Finding accurate statistics regarding the number of homeless children is very difficult. Most counts do not specifically identify numbers of children. Most homeless counts do not include families staying in motels or children in group foster homes. Some statistics are point in time and do not fully capture the number of people who experience homelessness over the course of a year. Many studies are dated or based on dated information. For all of these reasons, no one estimate is the definitive representation of the number of homeless people.

### United States

- One in every 50 American Children go to sleep without a home of their own each year. (1)
- Approximately **1.6 million** children are homeless annually in the United States (2)
- Of the **3.5 million people** who will experience homelessness over the course of a year, nearly half is part of a family seeking shelter. 25% are children under the age of 18 years.(3)
- Largely due to the economic and housing crises, many school districts across the country report increases in the number of homeless students in the classroom (3)
- There are almost 800,000 children and youth served in foster care each year in the United States (4)

### California

- More **than 292,624 California children** experience homelessness each year.(5)
- Of the 2,200,000 children living in poverty in California, thirteen out of every one hundred (13% ) are homeless.(5)
- Families with young children now account for 40% of the homeless population. (6)

### Los Angeles County

- The number of homeless people in Los Angeles is higher than in any other US urban area.(5)
- Approximately 141,737 residents of Los Angeles County are homeless at some point over the course of the year.(7)
- Every night there are over 84,000 people who are homeless in LA County (7)
- Over 35,000 homeless youth are enrolled in LA County Schools, 12,461 in LAUSD alone. (8)

1 National Center on Family Homelessness, *One in 50 U.S. Children is Homeless*, Mar. 13, 2009 - <http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/>  
2 The United States Department of Health and Human Services, January 2010 - <http://www.examiner.com/x-22573-St-Louis-Homelessness-Examiner~v2009m11d2-Homeless-Children-in-America>  
3 National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, 2007 <http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org/homelessness-in-america>  
4 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report: The AFCARS Report: Estimates as of January 2008. [http://www.abanet.org/child/education/National\\_EdFactSheet\\_2008.pdf](http://www.abanet.org/child/education/National_EdFactSheet_2008.pdf)  
5 America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness [http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/pdf/report\\_cards/long/ca\\_long.pdf](http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/pdf/report_cards/long/ca_long.pdf)  
6 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty - <http://nlchp.org/program.cfm?prog=2>  
7 [2008 Report Card on Homelessness in Los Angeles County](#)  
8 Los Angeles Unified School District [www.LAUSD.net](http://www.LAUSD.net)



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### **School on Wheels Fast Facts**

- School on Wheels, Inc. was founded in 1993 by Agnes Stevens a former elementary school teacher. Since its creation, School on Wheels has touched the lives of thousands of homeless children and is the only organization in Los Angeles dedicated to the enhancement of educational opportunities for homeless children K to 12<sup>th</sup> Grades.
- School on Wheels has two Learning Centers. The Downtown Learning Center is located in the heart of Skid Row, Los Angeles, the other, opened in 2008, is in South Los Angeles.
- Our volunteer tutors work in over 200 different tutoring locations throughout Southern California, from Santa Ana to Santa Barbara and everywhere in between.
- School on Wheels relies on the grassroots support of 1,500 volunteers annually to support the organization's mission. Our volunteer tutors are the heart of School on Wheels and work with homeless children every week, 52 weeks of the year.
- To qualify to become a School on Wheels tutor, a volunteer completes our application form, attends an orientation and training and passes a fingerprint and background check.
- To qualify for our program, children are between the ages of 5-18, are currently residing in a homeless shelter, motel, car, on the street or in a group foster home and have permission from their parent/guardian to work with a School on Wheels' tutor.
- Our students meet with their tutor for an hour a week, every week, either at their place of residence (homeless shelter, group home) or in a public place, such as an after-school club, library or book store.
- In 2009, School on Wheels distributed over 6,200 backpacks filled with school supplies and tutored over 2,200 children.
- In 2009 School on Wheels distributed more than 2,000 bus tokens to children who would not otherwise get to school.
- School on Wheels facilitated over 100 enrollments into public schools. We assisted parents in filling out the necessary paperwork and in gathering records such as birth certificates, immunization records and transfer papers from previous schools, without which their children will be denied admission to school.
- For every dollar School on Wheels receives in donations, 88% goes towards matching children with tutors.



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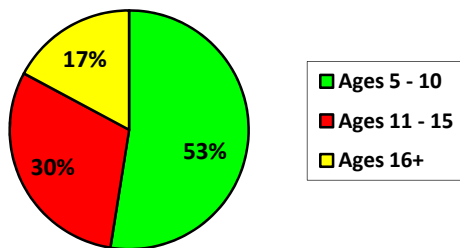
### School on Wheels Program Statistics 2009 (Audited)

- Number of volunteers: **1,485**  
Number of volunteer hours: **90,000**
- Number of students tutored: **2,200**
- Number of backpacks filled with school supplies: **6,236**
- Number of tutoring locations: **234**
- Number of Uniforms: **562**
- We distributed more than **1,955** bus tokens to children who would not otherwise get to school.

#### Student Information

- 52% of our students are girls and 48% are boys with an average age of 8.

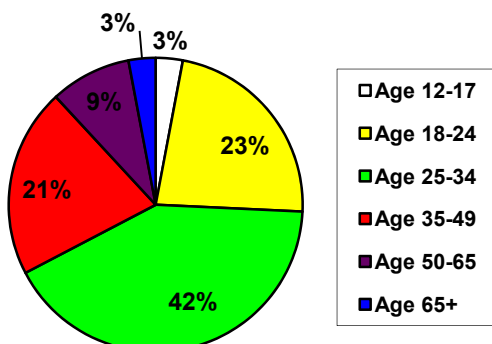
**Age of Students**



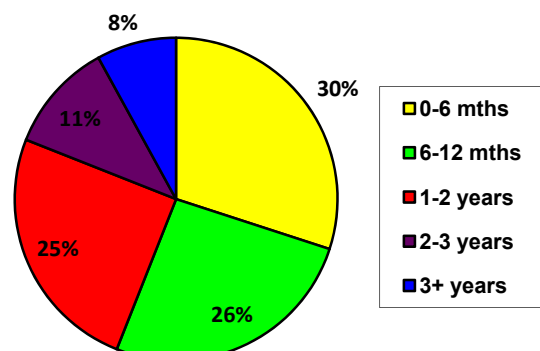
#### Tutor Information

- 29% of our tutors are male and 71% are female

**Age of Tutors**



**Length of Service**

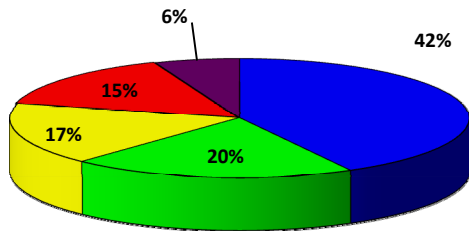




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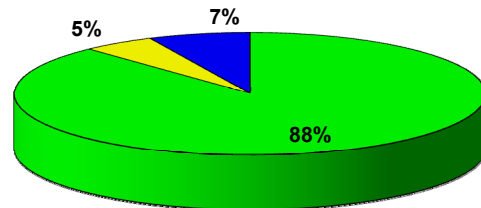
### Financial Summary 2009 (Audited)

**Funding Sources 2009**



■ Foundations ■ Material Donations  
■ Corporate Foundations ■ Individuals  
■ Corporations

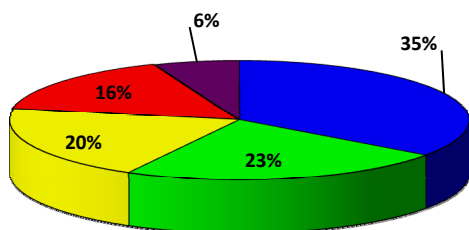
**Functional Expenses - 2009**



■ Program  
■ Fundraising  
■ Management & General

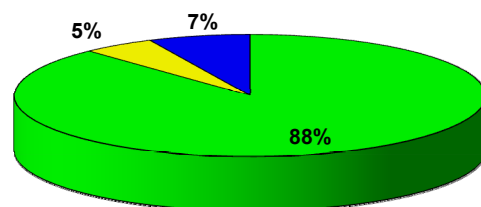
### Financial Summary 2008 (Audited)

**Funding Sources 2008**



■ Foundations ■ Material Donations  
■ Corporate Foundations ■ Individuals  
■ Corporations

**Functional Expenses - 2008**



■ Program  
■ Fundraising  
■ Management & General



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## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Who are your students?**

School on Wheels works with homeless children living in shelters, motels, cars, on the street and in group foster homes. We tutor children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The average age of our students is 8 years old.

### **Why do homeless children need our help?**

Every time a homeless child moves school, they fall behind in their studies. Our tutors help them fill in the gaps. We believe that education is one of the keys to ending homelessness and by helping homeless children succeed at their number one job – doing well at school, we can help break the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

### **Do you have a school bus?**

No, our name suggests that we do, but in fact our volunteers are our 'wheels'. They go to wherever the children are: a homeless shelter, group foster home, a library or after-school club.

### **Are your students with their families or homeless alone?**

Typically, our students are with one or two parents, with the exception of children in group foster homes. The fastest growing segment of the homeless population is single women with children.

### **Do your students attend regular public school?**

Yes, although one sad statistic is that in Los Angeles, over 30% of homeless children are not enrolled in school. One of our program services is to help families quickly enroll their children in school.

### **How many students do you tutor?**

On any given week, we work with as many as 1,000 children in over 200 different locations throughout Southern California. Last year, we tutored approximately 2,200 children in total.

### **Where in California do you tutor?**

School on Wheels tutors throughout Southern California, from Santa Ana to Santa Barbara.

### **Is School on Wheels nationwide?**

No, but we have chapters in Indianapolis and Massachusetts. Our Founder Agnes Stevens is currently traveling around the United States raising awareness about homelessness and finding out how cities and states are helping their homeless children and youth. You can read her blog here, [www.onepointsixmillion.org](http://www.onepointsixmillion.org).

### **Do you have any success stories?**

Yes we have hundreds. Every time we match a student and a tutor, we consider that a success. By being with a positive adult role model we believe that our students have a chance to succeed. Please visit our website to meet some of our students and read about their stories.



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## **Testimonials**

Wow! I just walked into our office and saw all the backpacks that you dropped off. Words can hardly express the gratitude we have in our hearts for our partnership with School on Wheels. Your organization is an incredible blessing to our homeless children. Thanks again for all you do for the kids!

**San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission**

I love the fact that School on Wheels focuses on one thing, homeless children and that the services provided are related to its mission. Other nonprofit organizations tend to provide a scatter gun approach and try to do too many things. By focusing on the kids, School on Wheels is successful.

**Renee Longan - School on Wheels Volunteer Tutor Coordinator**

School on Wheels has proven to be a strong ally by providing tutors to our school aged children. The tutors build a rapport and healthy relationship with the students and parents. The children like their tutors, look forward to the sessions and have benefited scholastically from their aid. The tutors are faithful and this helps to build stability with the family, often a missing link.

**Union Rescue Mission, Skid Row, LA**

Homeless children typically are behind in school because of their high mobility. School on Wheels is making a positive difference in the lives of homeless children by strengthening their educational skills and connecting families to other needed services. Education may not be the only way to improve the lives of homeless children, but it is the best way. Agnes Stevens and her staff are to be highly commended for all they do for homeless children.

**Homeless Education Program Coordinator – LAUSD**

The academic and emotional support that School on Wheels provides to very needy students and their families is unparalleled and has no peer...Young people's lives are made better every day because of School on Wheels.

**Coeur D'Alene Avenue Elementary School, Venice**

Having someone who had genuine concern for my situation, both academic and personal, dedicate an hour of his time helped me stay focused in my endeavors. ....For a year and six months I was homeless, but the situation was never a measure of my capabilities. My tenacity has earned me commendable grades, insured daily attendance, and kept me tethered to my community.

**Angela Sanchez – Former School on Wheels Student and Scholarship Recipient; now attending UCLA**

It is with heartfelt thanks that I send this letter to you. Your organization was such a help to my family during such a dark time in our lives. Never would have guessed that we would have been homeless. But we were and your organization was very instrumental in assisting us in getting our children in school, providing school supplies and tutors.....With extreme gratitude, **Carmen and Family**

"What you and your team do for our kids is amazing and appreciated. Our trip to your center was a giant energy boost to me. Our wonderful country is so lucky to have people like you and everyone at the learning center. Your commitment of time and energy to what you believe in makes companies like us want to help in any way that we can. I give you my commitment that we will help you and your team at the Learning Center. All of you are heroes in my mind. Thank you again for helping our kids. It was an absolute honor for me to meet everyone at the center."

**Sam Duncan, Chairman and CEO of OfficeMax**