

Showers for the Homeless Community: GSP Seed Funding Competition 2017 by David

Our Glocal Service Project serves to aid the homeless community in providing showers, and services to help them regain their lives.

What problem does your GSP seek to address and what community are you trying to serve?

Our GSP serves to address the dehumanization that is linked with homeless individuals by providing showers and services. Not only will they be provided with hygienic support, but also with the opportunity to make a propitious change in their lives. By providing public showers, homeless individuals will have the ability to acquire a job interview despite their current position in life. The majority of the Los Angeles Homeless Community cannot acquire jobs due to the lack of services- showers. If a homeless individual is fortunate to have a job interview, without a shower, their adulterate appearance can be held against them. Showers are not a luxury, but rather a right. The hope of this project, is to have success stories share their stories through seminars and pamphlets. This way, other homeless individuals and the general public can learn about the true, powerful and genuine stories behind these individuals. Many of the times, the homeless population is referred to as the "invisible" people. Choosing to ignore the homeless community is not the solution. With this project, I hope to raise awareness, build empathy among my community so they can continue to support the individuals during their tough times.

Why do you believe that it is important to address the problem you are trying to solve?

Due to the negative stigmas surrounding the homeless community, it is essential that we humanize their experience as human beings. By providing homeless people with showers, it allows them to experience an everyday occurrence many people may take for granted. With this project, providing a shower is merely what we are trying to accomplish. We are trying to help these individuals recover their lives after being on the streets. These showers will help serve as the first step needed in order for these individuals to get a stable job.

On any given night, there are approximately 82,000 individuals living on the street of Los Angeles. Many of these individuals are out on the streets- lost and not knowing how to take the first step into a better life. Without the necessary resources, these individuals can be on the streets for months, years, and even decades. Homeless people are exposed to the many dangers in our community: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, violence, extreme weather, hunger and poor health. It is important for me to address this issue because most often, we assume that these individuals are on the street by choice. However, perhaps this project can shed light on the stories of each individual, and demonstrate how sometimes it is the circumstances that lead them to homelessness, and not choice.

What is your proposed solution?

In order to humanize homeless people, my solution is to advocate and provide a shower at the location where there are a high number of homeless people. We feel that more effort should be focused on providing showers and services because there are plenty of organizations throughout the city that provide meals and shelter, but having a shower is not readily seen. In order to reach this goal, we plan to work with the local organization that provides mobile showers for the homeless called "Lavame". Furthermore, I plan on fundraising with my peers and my school club Feed The Need in order to provide showers and services for the homeless. My peers within this club will also be able to assist me when it comes to hosting these events for the homeless population.

Overall, in order to address this issue, I want to do the following: provide showers for all the immediate homeless community, provide health and screening services by partnering with community members, provide job opportunities for homeless individuals that are interested, and lead troubled or addicted individuals towards the right path. This is to raise awareness of all the possible resources that these homeless individuals have access to, and to also humanize the stories of each individual.

How is your project uniquely situated to improve the lives of your target community?

Growing up in a community where there are thousands of homeless individuals residing on the streets, we believe that providing them with essential needs like food and water is not sufficient to improve their quality of life. There is a lack of access for showers but by providing showers, the opportunity to get a service that was once not readily available to them, can be attainable. Many positive routes will be opened which will allow them to grasp something they once dreamed about in their lifetime. A shower portrays a fresh start in their lives. Giving them a fresh start will improve their lives in so many ways. This will give them a higher possibility to obtain a job and help them restart a new life that they so desire to have. Showers are an essential in providing hope to the affected individuals.

Moreover, this idea is also uniquely situated for the homeless community, upon arrival to these showers, these individuals will be presented with a variety of information towards resources that they can utilize if needed such as self-help guides, drug rehab programs, alcoholic anonymous, and job opportunities. There is really no one spot where people can go and get mass information towards what resources are available to them. By providing this space, perhaps more individuals will be open and eager to rebuild their lives.

Who are your collaborators and what roles do they play in supporting your GSP?

Some of my collaborators that are crucial to my GSP, are my mentors Jasmin Gonzalez, Masa Mitsunaga, and my peers Michael Aquino, Miguel Cueva, and Alexander Martinez. In addition, I also plan to work with my school club Feed The Need and other community members such as Lavame and Fade Masterz barber shop to help provide services for the homeless. My mentors Jasmin Gonzalez and Masa Mitsunaga are crucial to helping me troubleshoot ideas, and find feasible solutions to any issues that might arise as our project come to fruition. Moreover, after speaking with the members of the Feed the Need Club, they have agreed to help us with any further fundraising, social media dissemination of information, and labor that might be needed to complete this project. The Feed the Need club members will help us in keeping in contact with homeless individuals that attain jobs through this program. This way, individuals genuinely feel that there is someone out there who cares, and is counting on their success.

We have also contacted the barbers at "Fade Masterz", and they have generously agreed to provide free haircuts to the homeless community. With the help of these individuals, organizations and shops, I know that the feasibility of this project becomes easier. We still need to contact even more collaborators such as local companies that will be willing to hire these individual. However, through these collaborators, and the collaborators that we plan to contact we can insure that the project will come through due to our passion to help the homeless community.

What is your vision for your project?

Success will be evident if there was more awareness of the need to have showers and services for the homeless community. In addition, another way that we can measure our level of success is by counting the number of lives that we help to get back on their feet. We can hold seminars of the success stories so that other homeless individuals feel empowered to take a action to improve their

lives. One way that I plan to support a sustainable venture is by partnering up with the Feed the Need club at my school. This group of 35 motivated 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th graders with the passion of helping the homeless community is how this venture will continue to flourish as time passes. As of now, we want to create the base of this project so that it can gain support from the community, city, and perhaps even the state. The long-term goal of this project is to perhaps even expand to other cities and maybe even states.

Ultimately, the main goal of this whole project is for society to view homeless people as humans and not as a burden to society. Many individuals are not homeless by choice, but by circumstance. These people just need the little push that will lead them to change their lives. One of the many ways that we can see this is by providing them with the human experience of a shower.



Passing out food bags, water and clothes to the homeless community in Los Angeles.