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ABOUT US

ENDING HOMELESSNESS THROUGH THE DIGNITY OF WORK.

Our Model is Simple

We provide people who are homeless and living on a low income with the resources they need to rebuild their lives. First, they join one of our teams across the Bay Area and begin volunteering collaboratively on community beautification projects. In return, they receive a basic needs stipend to help them get out of “survival mode” so they can focus on reaching goals like permanent housing and stable employment, with our case managers and employment specialists.

Our ultimate goal is to find our Team Members employment because having a job restores hope and opens the door to other opportunities.

It’s a Win-Win-Win

As one of our graduates said, what we’re doing is a “win-win-win” scenario: the environment wins, the community wins and people who are experiencing homelessness win - it doesn’t get much better than that.

Our History

Since its inception in 2005, Downtown Streets Team has grown exponentially. We sprouted from humble beginnings as an idea of the Palo Alto Business Improvement District (BID), with the goal of reducing panhandling and homelessness in the downtown area. Eileen Richardson, our executive director took the helm and the agency spun off to become a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2005. She was the only employee until her son joined nearly four years later. Today, we have a staff of over 50 and seven teams across the Bay Area (and growing).
Our model is structured to be a one-year transitional program into employment and housing. In short, our vision is to end homelessness by restoring the dignity and rebuilding the lives of unhoused men and women through volunteerism.

**WHO ARE OUR TEAM MEMBERS?**
All of our Team Members are volunteers who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless. They hear about our program via word of mouth from peers and from seeing our current Team Members volunteering thousands of hours cleaning up city streets, removing debris along our creeks, preventing graffiti in our neighborhoods and doing outreach. Service providers also refer individuals to attend our weekly meetings to learn more about us.

**WHAT’S UP WITH OUR COLORED SHIRTS?**
It’s not hard to miss the people in bright yellow, green, and blue shirts sweeping up streets around the Bay Area. These shirts have become symbolic of an individual’s desire to move forward. Much like promotions in a workplace, we reward our Team Members when they go above and beyond and do a great job. We show their progress through shirt color.

When a Team Member joins our work-experience program they become a **YELLOW SHIRT**. The entire team applauds their new Team Member because receiving their yellow shirt is symbolic of big changes to come. This person is making a choice to get back to work and self-sufficient living.

Team Members who demonstrate outstanding leadership and dedication are promoted to a **GREEN SHIRT** to become a Team Lead or part of the Elite Taskforce, both with managerial responsibilities. They manage small groups for designated project areas, which helps them develop an even greater skill-set, empowering them to reach their employment goals. The Elite Taskforce oversees tool inventory.

Team Members are promoted to a **BLUE SHIRT** upon exceeding their Green Shirt responsibilities. They are now responsible for overseeing entire projects in our communities, as well as the teams volunteering for those projects.
OUR TEAMS AND THEIR WORK

Our teams are designed to not only produce results in our communities, but are also meant to build a strong bond between Team Members who are experiencing the same doubts and working towards similar goals. Working in teams helps our team members build job skills, take on responsibilities and are held accountable for their actions. Joining one of our teams is symbolic of changes to come and a celebration for all of us. It’s a step in the right direction and one that is often life transforming. We have nine teams, with six in the Bay Area: Hayward, Palo Alto, San Francisco, San Jose, San Rafael, Sunnyvale and three franchises - two in Florida and one in Gilroy, California. Get to know our Bay Area teams and learn why we absolutely love doing what we do.

PALO ALTO: Est. 2006
Operates in downtown 14 hours a day, 7 days a week. The team reaches out to the homeless living in our focus areas and carries out a variety of jobs.

FOCUS AREAS:
• Security and trash removal of parking garages
• Clean and line soccer fields
• Sweep downtown streets
• Conduct peer-to-peer outreach

SAN JOSE: Est. 2011
Created as a solution to remove debris in encampments and help the people living there, in collaboration with San Jose City Council, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), San Jose Environmental Services Department, Destination: Home, eBay Foundation, and Santa Clara Valley Water District.

FOCUS AREAS:
• Beautify three most blighted neighborhoods: Five Wounds/ Brookwood Terrace, Mayfair and Santee
• Remove debris, roadside waste, and prevent graffiti
• Sweep downtown streets in partnership with San Jose Downtown

SUNNYVALE: Est. 2012
Works in partnership with Sunnyvale Community Services in an area called Ground Zero for Homelessness as part of the Neighborhood Enhancement Action Team (NEAT) Contract in the following locations: Fair Oaks Park, Sunnyvale Armory, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

FOCUS AREAS
• Sweep streets
• Report gang activity and tagging
• Remove graffiti
• Perform peer-to-peer outreach at Fair Oaks Park, Sunnyvale Armory, and Sunnyvale Public Library

SAN RAFAEL: Est. 2013
On average, our San Rafael Team volunteers 400 hours per week, Monday-Friday, working in one of four distinct work zones covering everything from the Transit Center to the library. Not only are Team Members picking up trash and beautifying downtown San Rafael, our Team Leads engage with the business community on a daily basis.

FOCUS AREAS
• Clean up during/after Farmers’ Market
• Sweep downtown streets
• Conduct peer-to-peer outreach
• Attend to specific clean-up concerns
SAN FRANCISCO: Est. 2016
Homelessness in San Francisco has become an overwhelming problem, and is increasingly referred to as a crisis by residents, visitors, and the people living on the streets and in shelters. According to the 2015 Point in Time Count the total number of sheltered and unsheltered individuals in San Francisco increased by 7% to 7,539. A recent poll by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce states that homelessness is the number one concern among the city’s residents. With your support, Downtown Streets Team hopes to address this crisis with our empowering, and sustainable community solution.

A momentous launch in partnership with Dolby Laboratories, the City of San Francisco and Mayor Ed Lee, this team has been the fastest growing of any of our teams.

FOCUS AREAS:
• Sweeping public spaces and removing debris and used needles
• Project areas: Civic Center/UN Plaza and Union Square
• In just four months, our team as removed 74,000 gallons of debris and 2,900 needs and 12 Team Members have found employment

HAYWARD: Est. 2016
We are excited to launch for the first time in the East Bay in ‘The Heart of the Bay’, Hayward! The City of Hayward has welcomed us with open arms as an innovative solution to help men and women get off the streets, while addressing the needs of a strong business community. We will be beautifying the revitalized downtown core in and around B Street, with Team Members contributing positively to the community as a whole, while working toward individual goals.

FOCUS AREAS:
• Beautifying the heart of downtown, B Street
• Remove debris

NOVATO: Est. 2017
“In the short time the Downtown Streets Team has been in Novato, I say: the Downtown Streets Team Program is a grand slam for our community!” - Mayor of Novato, Denise Athas

We’re on a mission to end homelessness through the dignity of work in the beautiful, friendly town of Novato. Say “hi” to our Team Members, easily spotted by their bright yellow shirts, as they remove trash and other debris from the city’s downtown streets. Team Members will engage with the business community on a daily basis by checking in with local merchants about specific clean-up concerns, as well as perform outreach to prospective Team Members (unhoused members of the community), and discourage loitering, panhandling, and disorderly conduct.

FOCUS AREAS:
• Beautifying downtown through debris removal
• Engaging with local business owners
FACT SHEET

• WHO ARE OUR TEAM MEMBERS? Team Members are homeless or low-income men or women, 18 years of age or older, who volunteer on one of our teams to volunteer their way out of homelessness by finding employment and housing.

• WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN OUR TEAM? There is only one requirement to join our team: volunteers must be 18 years of age or older. Everyone else is referred to agencies that focus on individuals aged 17 and younger.

• HOW DOES SOMEONE VOLUNTEER ON A TEAM? Interested homeless/low-income individuals must attend our Weekly Success Team Meetings in one of four cities (Palo Alto, San Jose, San Rafael and Sunnyvale) to keep their spot on the waitlist. When a position becomes available they can accept the offer and begin volunteering immediately.

• WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF WEEKLY SUCCESS TEAM MEETINGS? Once a week our teams get together with DST staff to share resources, news and above all recognize successes, accomplishments and a job well done. It is also a requirement to attend each week to join the team. Attending a meeting is the best way to understand our model and why it works. Everyone is welcome - from community leaders to interested homeless men and women.

• HOW DOES SOMEONE BENEFIT FROM JOINING? Our volunteers build meaningful skills to help them obtain a job and housing by working in groups, keeping a set schedule, being held accountable and earning promotions and recognition from managers and peers, while working towards a common goal and learning essential communications skills. They work closely with our case managers and employment specialist to find housing and employment.

• WHAT DO THEY RECEIVE FOR THEIR VOLUNTEER WORK? Team Members receive a weekly stipend in the form of gift cards. This stipend helps them acquire their basic needs (such as clothing, shelter, food and transportation passes).

• WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY PROJECTS? Each Team Member volunteers every week removing trash, illegally dumped items and debris along streets and creeks, preventing and removing graffiti, lining soccer fields, picking and packing fruit for low-income families and doing homeless outreach.

• WHEN DOES A TEAM MEMBER GRADUATE? When they become employed in a job that allows them to live self-sufficiently.

• WHY IS THERE A WAITLIST? We regularly have over 100 individuals wanting to join our teams but we can only offer positions as they become available. The more contracts and funding we receive, the more positions become available.

• HOW DOES SOMEONE GET OFF THE WAITLIST? Potential volunteers must attend the meeting every week to keep their place on the waitlist. New positions on our teams are made available when a Team Member is promoted to a leadership position, graduates from our team, or if we receive additional funding through city/organization contracts.
HOMELESSNESS FAQ

Q: WHY DOES SOMEONE BECOME HOMELESS
A: From hearing our Team Members’ stories we’ve learned that there are many reasons someone can become homeless: A disastrous, traumatic event took place in their life, like losing a close friend or loved one; losing their job; not being able to pay for needed healthcare; or their criminal background got in the way of finding a job. **FORTY PERCENT** of people surveyed* CITED LOSS OF JOB AS THEIR CAUSE OF HOMELESSNESS.

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS?
A: These numbers are taken from the 2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress.
   • United States: 610,042 homeless total; 57,849 homeless veterans
   • California: 136,826 homeless total --> 1/4 children (23%); 22% of the United State’s homeless population; 15,179 homeless veterans
   • Santa Clara County: 19,063 homeless total --> 1/3 children; 7,631 homeless on any given night in San Jose; 2,804 veterans

Q: WHY DON’T THEY JUST GET A JOB?
A: There are many factors. One, they may have a criminal background that makes it difficult to get interviews, no matter how qualified they may be. They may not have resources to get to an interview or even apply to jobs. And unless they are fortunate to have access to a washer and shower, their appearance may not be interview-ready. The following numbers are Barriers to Employment according to Santa Clara County Homeless Census and Survey (SCCHCS)*.
   • 34% cited no transportation
   • 32% **CITED THEY HAVE A NEED FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING**
   • 28% cited lack of phone
   • 18% cited drug/alcohol issues

Q: WHY DO THEY SLEEP ON THE BUS?
A: People who are homeless are always aware of two things: a) their health and b) their safety. Buses are warm during cold seasons and cool during hot seasons. Getting sick while homeless is bad news, especially if a doctor’s visit isn’t in the cards. Buses are safe and could mean an hour or two of sleep, a necessity difficult to come by when safety is top priority.
A CONCERT TO HELP END HOMELESSNESS

On July 27, 2013 we hosted a unique concert in downtown San Jose featuring music legends Joan Baez, Jackson Browne and Emmylou Harris. Nearly 3,000 people from around the world came together to learn about our program, our impact, our supporters and most importantly, our Team Members.

3,000 ATTENDEES
$350,000 RAISED

GLOBAL AUDIENCE
FRANCE • HAWAII • FLORIDA
TEXAS • CANADA • TENNESSEE
JAPAN • CALIFORNIA
SCOTLAND

3 MUSIC LEGENDS

1 NIGHT

3,000 ATTENDEES
$350,000 RAISED
LOGO GUIDELINES: DISTANCE BETWEEN OUR LOGO AND TEXT, GRAPHICS, DOCUMENT EDGES AND BLEEDS SHOULD BE THE HEIGHT AND WIDTH OF THE ORANGE SHAPE IN OUR LOGO.
MEDIA

TERMS OF USE OF VIDEOS AND PHOTOS
Please make use of PHOTOS, VIDEOS AND INFORMATION from our website and many social media platforms. If there is a graphic that you would like to use, please contact Shin Schwartz at shin@streetsteam.org. Please state which graphic and the purpose of its use.

We have been featured in national and local papers, on news stations, blogs and supported by celebrities. Visit our website to view our press: http://streetsteam.org/about-us/press/.

FOR ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES, please contact Chris Richardson at chris@streetsteam.org
DOWNTOWN STREETS TEAM