Fundraising for Homeless Women and Children

An Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the Faculty of WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science.

COMPLETED BY:

Jenny Marquez

Emily McWilliam

William Rios

Kandance Ward

Lu Zhao

ADVISOR:

Professor Hossein Hakim

DATE SUBMITTED:

March 12, 2012

Abstract

There is a growing population of homeless all over the world. Through our research we found that there are a wide variety of reasons why people become homeless, and there is simply not enough awareness or support for these people in need. We brought awareness to the Worcester Polytechnic Community about this growing problem and received positive feedback, from students and faculty alike. The group worked closely with a Worcester homeless shelter, Abby's House, which provides support for homeless women and their children. Through our work with the shelter we found the areas where the most help and resources were needed. The group collected essential goods that will be used in the emergency shelter, and also were able to set up and raise money for the Abby's Empowerment Fund at Greater Worcester Community Foundation. This fund is set up to help women with one-time fees that have been preventing them to process with their education.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Homelessness as a National Issue

Even in this modern civilization, there are still countless individuals who struggle to survive on our planet. Many people live without housing and essential materials such as food and clothing. Countless people are freezing in cold winters and fearing for their safety while sleeping in their cars. Even though the United States is commonly considered the most powerful and wealthy nation in the world, millions of men and women have lost their ability to maintain consistent housing. Homeless individuals and families exist everywhere, from the center of Manhattan to the sandy California beaches.

Homelessness is not a term like those learned in science and math classes; it is impossible to describe or identify in a couple sentences. Homeless individuals have a variety of needs and are in need of a wide range of support programs. Public policy makers have yet to carry out sufficient solutions that address homelessness and all of its complexities. The lack of a common definition on the international level, not only limits the number of people that can receive help, but also limits the help that they can receive. It is commonly believed that the number of homeless individuals, especially women, has been increasing since the early twentieth century. Homelessness has become a worldwide issue because of difficulty involved with developing practical solutions that benefit all categories of homeless people.

The issue of homelessness is caused by a variety of reasons in both developed and developing countries. One major cause is the current economic atmosphere in the world. These economic conditions have raised the housing prices along with decreasing wages. Some women became homeless because domestic violence and divorce, others because of drug abuse and mental illness. Above all other factors, the current economic climate has played a key role in the prevalence and visibility of homelessness today. Most cities still lack affordable housing for low income families; the number of homeless people who have applied for low income housing is far greater than the availability.

We should acknowledge that homelessness is a serious problem that we all can help to reduce. It's not only an issue that exists in developing countries; it affects many people in our local communities. Even in the most economically developed countries like United States, there a large number of people spending substantial amounts of time living on the street and under dangerous condition simply because they can't afford housing. To help homeless people, we need raise public attention and create general awareness.

1.2: Homelessness Locally

Though the city of Worcester has implemented changes to decrease it, homelessness is still a pressing issue. Although there are shelters that provide immediate assistance, few provide the resources to give people the ability to sustain themselves financially. The primary reason for this is because there is not enough government funding to keep these shelters running adequately. Most of the money that makes these shelters possible comes from private

donations. Since there is evidently not enough money helping these shelters run, they are only

given the means to cope with this problem and not fix it. Therefore, the rate of homelessness

continues to grow rather than diminish.

1.3: Project Description

The goal of this project is to fully understand homelessness in its entirety. Along with all

the statistics in relation to homelessness, we also want to have a deeper understanding at a

personal level. Collecting essential goods and monetary aid for one of these local homeless

shelters, Abby's House is just one step in our project. In addition, we hope to raise awareness

in the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) community so that others may join our cause. We

hope to bring an understanding to the community that homelessness is around us and that as

individuals we have to educate ourselves to be able to move forward.

Chapter 2: Background

2.1: U.S. History with Homelessness

Homelessness is not a new concept. It has existed for thousands of years. The earliest record in the United States of homelessness was in the 1600 hundreds. The new colonist had brought much turmoil, and homelessness was one of them. Throughout the year's unemployment, homelessness, and famine fluctuated, but one of the most significant impoverished times in the United States history was the Great depression in 1929. In the 1920's the United stated seemed like it was unstoppable, and the entire country believed that there would never be trouble again. This economic turmoil lasted over a decade and is the longest depression of this era; it showed the world just how low the economy could go. The growing number of homeless people living on the streets can be attributed to certain factors in each decade. In the 1960s and 1970s a surge of mentally ill people were forced to the street to fend for themselves. In the 1980s and 1990s homelessness grew even bigger and became a modern problem. In the 2000's we started seeing a new demographic encountering the world of homelessness; families with children and people in the LGBT community.

The new colonist that came from England had the same burdens that were prevalent in England at that time. Because the death rate was so high in the colonies, many children were left without parents and without homes. The English Poor Law of 1601 which, was created in England, was passed onto America, and also lead the way to other laws, like the 1647 Rhode

Island Colonel Poor law (Woods, 24). These laws are some of the earliest recorded instances where the American government began to address problems such as homelessness directly. In 1657, ten years after Rhode Island enacted its law, Renssalaerswyck, New York created the first almshouse to give indoor shelter for those that were unable to shelter themselves. A few Years later Plymouth and Boston also created almshouses as well. As the colonies started getting larger, the more visually noticeable homelessness was getting. This continued throughout the years and places like the skid row, "The Bowery" in New York influenced the Salvation Army and the Bowery Mission; so that the people sleeping on the streets had a place to go.

In the time before the great depression people thought that the economy would continue to grow and create wealth for everyone. In 1928, the unemployment rate was starting to decrease. Even though many of the important people like the president and law makers should have been seeing this foreshadowing what was to come, it was brushed off and no one was prepared for the immense downfall. The Market crash was going to have an effect on not only the United stated, but the world. Homelessness still existed, but the number grew exponentially when the market crashed in 1929. Now, the people that had been ignored before were banding together with people, which at one point, had it all. Hoovervilles, named after President Herbert Hoover, were popping up all over the nation. These people had nowhere to go and had to rely on each other to survive in small tents or shanties. In 1935 the Social Security Act was created, which was an effort to help the elderly in their old age, women with

children, handicapped, and the blind. (Wood, 35). The economy regained itself during World

War II, but a lot of the effects from the 1930s were still present.

In 1963 the "Community Mental Health Act" was passed. It was meant to give funding

to community mental health centers. But what the act actually did was deinstitutionalize

patients in long term psychiatric help, into single room occupancies. They were expected to get

checkups frequently, but most of the patients ended up on the streets. This led to a rise in the

homeless community because these people had to support system to care for them.

In the 1980s there were a lot of economic troubles in the country. As one of the worst

economic downfalls of our modern day, many people found themselves homeless. The

unemployment rate was very high, and to make matters worse the government had to cut

funding for low incoming housing and many institutions that help people in these kinds of

situations. Along with this, the deinstitutionalization of the mentally will was still continuing in

the hospitals due to lack of funds. In this time there was a large rise in homeless families,

runaway children, teenagers, and young adults. By 1990 the McKinney-Vento Homeless

Assistance Act for 1987 was the only legislation helping places like the soup kitchens. And even

though they were getting help the number of people walking through was extremely high,

many of these places had to move to larger areas to be able to house and feed people.

Throughout the past decade, the federal government has been able to reduce the

number of homeless veterans due to bills allowing them rights, housing, and medical support.

But homelessness is still on the rise. As the times change, we see a new surge of groups that

are falling in the gap, now it is the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) community; the

majority of them being teens or young adults.

Although there are a lot of organizations in the US trying to help, reduce, and eliminate

homelessness, there are so many factors that contribute to this issue that it will take a long

time for us to be able to see a real significant difference.

2.2: Causes of Homelessness

In today's societies, despite the gilded appearance of affluence, the unfortunate reality

is that an increasingly large percentage of inhabitants living in the United States are homeless.

According to a study done in January 2009 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

Development, on a single night there were over 643,000 sheltered and unsheltered homeless

persons nationwide. In addition, during a 12 month period from October 1, 2008 to September

30, 2009, roughly 1.56 million people used an emergency shelter or a transitional housing

program. In other words, during this span of 12 months roughly 1 in every 200 persons in

the U.S. used the shelter system at some point. Furthermore, the homeless population living in

the United States increased by approximately 20,000 people from 2008 to 2009, a 3 percent

increase. Congruently, 31 of 50 states, and the District of Columbia, had increases in their

homeless counts. The homeless population doubled in Louisiana, accounting for the largest

increase. Fortunately the majority of people experiencing homelessness are sheltered by

existing housing programs. However, this can never eclipse the fact that nearly 4 out of every

10 people are living on the street, in a car, or in another place not meant for a human being to

call their home. A January 2011 report released in Washington D.C. by the National Alliance to

End Homelessness has stated that homelessness is underreported in the United States. In

accordance with this statement, it is widely agreed upon that there is a vast undercount of the

number of young people experiencing homelessness. Highlighting this is the fact that 35

percent of all communities reported that there were no homeless youth in their communities in

2009.

In order to find a definitive solution to this growing problem currently afflicting the

United States, it is very important to have an understanding of who these homeless people

actually are and how each ended up in such a vulnerable state. Only then can real, practical

steps be taken to finally reverse the increasing number of homeless and eventually rid the

nation of this unfortunate circumstance of so many. The problem is that because of the

negative way homeless people are portrayed in movies and throughout the media, people with

means in today's society have a predisposed notion that all homeless people are the same.

More specifically, they are made to believe that everyone who ends up homeless must be an

alcoholic or a drug addict, when in reality this is far from the case. While, of course, there is

certainly a significant percentage of the homeless that do fall into this category, there are

equally as many, if not more, who find themselves in this situation by a swift and unforeseen

spell of bad luck. In many cases these individuals go from riches to rags in a matter of weeks or

even days. These individuals are who the documentary *It Was a Wonderful Life* titles the

"Hidden Homeless." As quoted in the opening credits, "Thousands of homeless people in the

United States are hidden and go unrecognized as homeless. The majority of them are women."

The opening line given by narrator Jodie Foster continues by saying, "You won't even see them

at first. They don't sleep in refrigerator boxes or on street grates. They don't hold out a hand

for your change. But there secret, what these women hide from friends, family, from all of us,

is that they too are homeless."

As the U.S. Conference of Mayors' survey pointed out, poverty, unemployment, and

high cost of housing was the most frequently citied factors that caused homelessness. (U.S.

Conference of Mayors, 2008) There is no question that poverty is the main reason for

homelessness and they are unavoidably connected. Low-income households or individuals have

to make a tradeoff between basic essentials for survival, such as food, and housing. It's notable

that a significant proportion of homeless are actually employed, but income they made can't

afford a stable housing. The survey of 24 American cities found that 13% of the urban homeless

populations were employed, and the recent survey shows that percentage is even as high as

25%. (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2005) In many states, more than the minimum wage is required to afford a one-or two-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent. (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2001) The raising of average housing price, especially in metropolitan area, and the shortage of available low price housing has contributed to the increasing of homelessness in the past few years. According to a public study, many low rent apartments have been closed or turned to high price apartment in the past decades (National Coalition for the Homeless Fact Sheet #1). The unaffordable housing price makes the stable apartment very difficult to be reached by those low income families.

The major causes of homelessness, especially in the urban or metropolitan areas, are basically remained unchanged since the 1980s. A government sponsored research report in 1984 showed that the homeless are made up of deinstitutionalized mental patients, drug and alcohol abusers, families with a black or Hispanic woman as head of household, and the marginally employed who have suffered a major financial setback, such as with a prolonged illness (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1984). On the past several decades, the causes of homelessness have been shaped by the growing world and domestic economy and competitions. Many people were actually forced to live on the street because hardships in their households. Those affect children and women, who are more dependent compared to male adults, even worse than before. Also, the lacking of federal subsidization for those children, women, and their households even more increased the margin between the wealthy and the

poor. A research done by the National Development and search Institutes argued that the rapid

changes in the world market economy have served to destabilize many local institutions,

widening the gap between the rich and the poor and undermining viability of key social and

economic institutions such as family and household (Clatts and Davis 1999).

2.2.1: Poverty

a. Homelessness and poverty are directly and unavoidably connected.

b. Poor people are often unable to pay for housing, food, childcare, health care,

and education.

c. A significant proportion of homeless people are actually employed.

i. Many have to choose between housing and essentials for survival, such

as food.

As mentioned before, a large portion of homelessness is employed but the wages they

earned are not able to afford stable housings for their families. Due to many reasons, such as

globalization and the decline of manufacturing works, the wages and especially the real value

of the wages have decreased in the past years. According to a study, the real value of the

minimum wage in 2004 was 26%less than in 1979 (The Economic Policy Institute, 2005).

Declining wages have put housing out of reach for many low income families, especially

workers who are looking for manufacturing jobs (Why Are People Homeless? National Coalition

for the Homeless) .

Poverty is most concentrated in urban areas in the United States (Joassart-Marcelli et al.

2005). In 2000, a study done by several experts from major universities, including the

University of Massachusetts and the University of Southern California, showed that 16.1

percent of central city residents lived under the federal poverty line, compared to 11.5 percent

for the nation as a whole, and 78 percent of the nation's poor lived in metropolitan areas, over

half in central cities (Dalaker 2001 and Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2005). Accompanied with the

relative higher living spends and higher housing prices in the central cities and metropolitan

areas, people with low wage have to make a choice between the basic living material, such as

food and clothes, and a stable housing. In the United States, the homelessness has become a

serious problem in urban areas, such as New York City, Los Angeles, and Detroit.

To make a clear demonstration of how poverty is concentrated in certain central city,

the researchers used the uncompensated poverty cost in Southern California to reflect the

regional geography of poverty (Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2005). The two figures below show the

estimates of uncompensated poverty costs in Southern California Cities in 1982 and 1997

(Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2005), and basically no improvement has been detected.
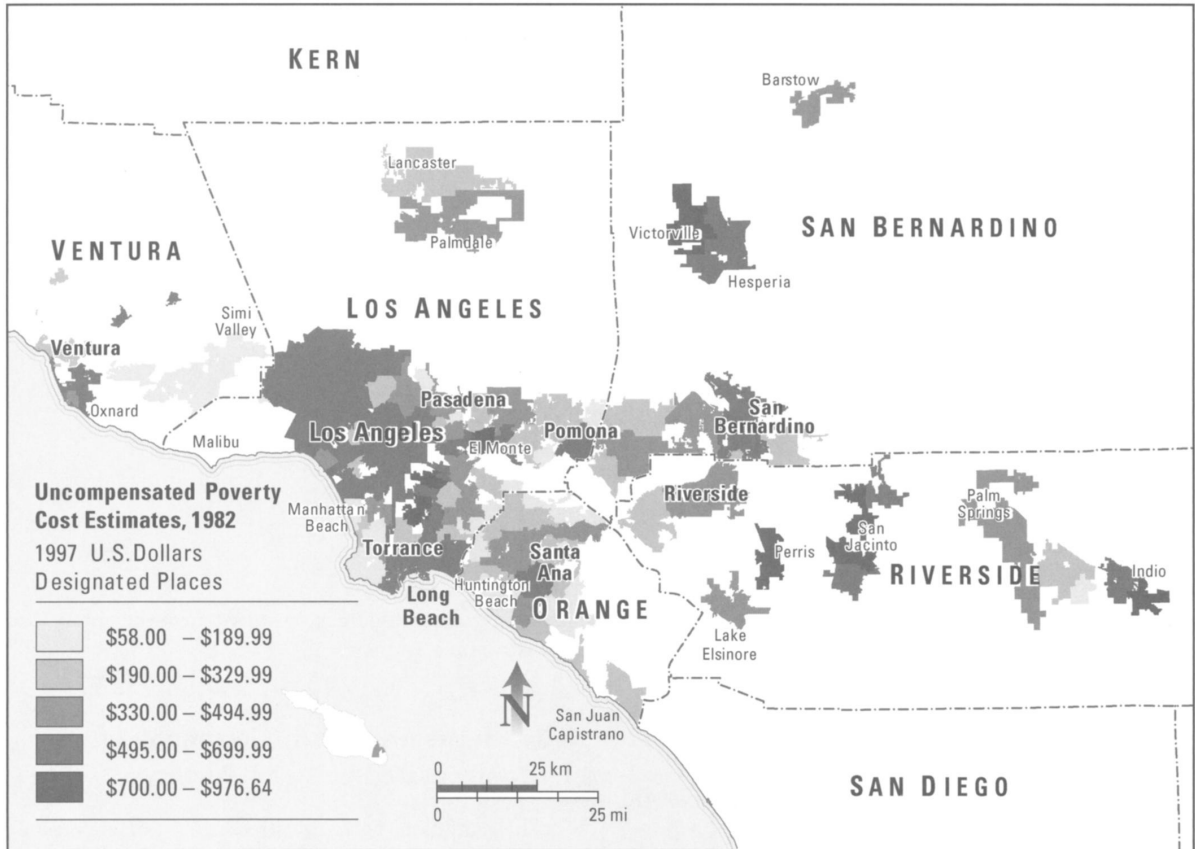
Figure 1- (Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2005) Fiscal Stress Index, Southern California cities, 1982
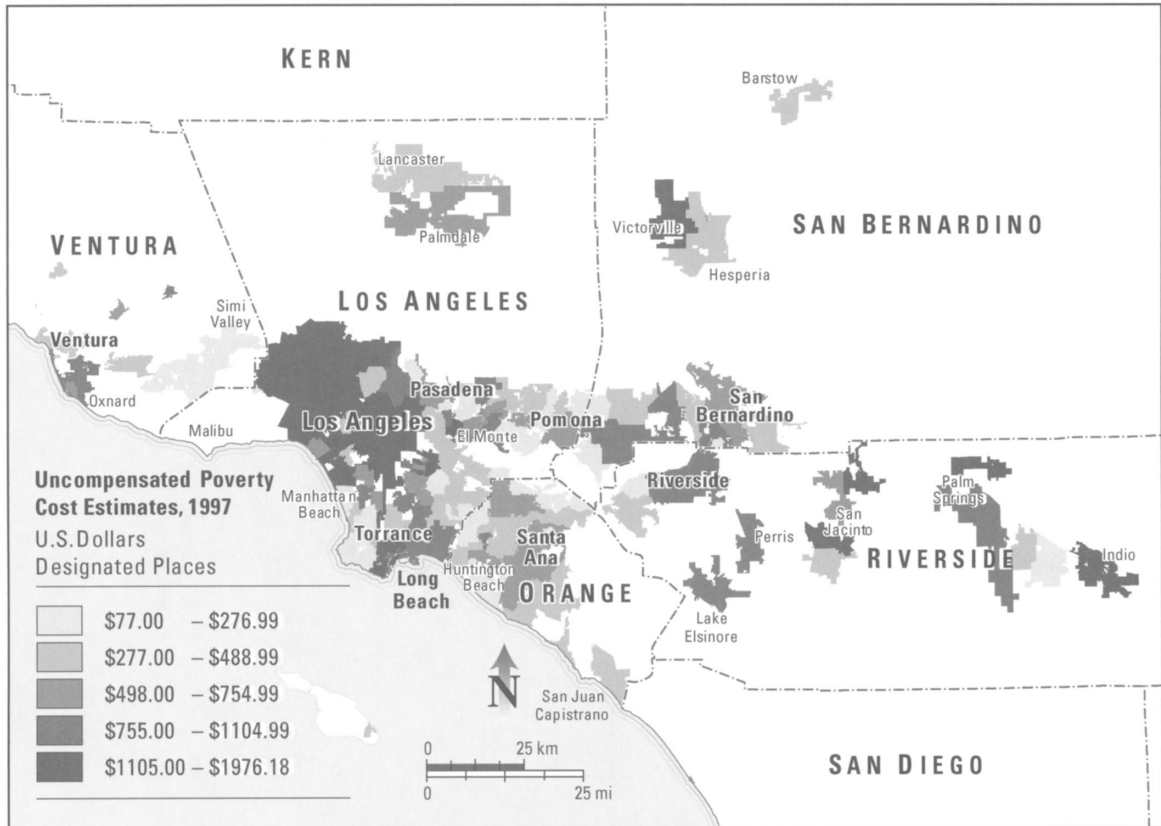
Figure 2- (Joassart-Marcelli et al. 2005). Fiscal Stress Index, Southern California cities, 1997

2.2.2: Education, Illiteracy, Unemployment

    a. Lack of educational opportunities limits access to living-wage jobs.

    b. From 2008 to 2009, the number of unemployed people in America increased by 60 percent from 8.9 to 14.3 million.

    c. In recent years, every single state in the U.S. has suffered an increase in its number of unemployed individuals.

Currently, the demand for assisted housing clearly exceeds the supply: only one about one third of poor renter receives a housing subsidy from the federal, state, or a local government

(Daskal, 1998). As the housing prices increase in many states, many low rent apartments are also out of reach now. The lack of affordable housing has not only forced many people to become homeless; they have put a large and growing number of people at risk of becoming homeless (Why Are People Homeless? National Coalition for the Homeless).

Back to the 1980s, when the rate of unemployment in the United States is relatively low, there were still a large number of people remained unemployed, especially among the minorities. Another important thing we need to point out is, some states underestimated the joblessness rate by reporting as "employed' anyone who works one or more hours a week or those who have exhausted their unemployment benefits (Ropers 1988). Even when the unemployment rate was comparatively low in the eighties, political leaders, such as former presidential candidate Michael Dukakis and former Speaker of the House Jim Wright have claimed that three million Americans are huddled in the streets, doorways, and shelters each night (Whitman 1989).

After the Second World War, women's household responsibly has been dramatically shaped as more and more women go out to work and support the family, which traditionally is men's duty.   Because the role of women has been changed in the past, the subgroup of homeless women, including those women with children, is increasing in actual number as well as in percent of the total population (Wright 1987). In some metropolitan area, it is estimated that as many as three fourths of the total homeless population is composed of single mothers with children (Wright 1987 and Axelson et al. 1988). Because it's even harder for women with

equal ability, single women or single women with children are easily fall into unemployment and further became homeless.

2.2.3: Shortage of Affordable Housing

      a. According to the National Low Income Coalition, Federal support for low-income housing has fallen 49% from 1980 to 2003.

      b. Lack of affordable housing leads to high rent costs which take up a high percentage of income, overcrowding and substandard housing.

      ii. These factors force many people to become homeless.

One critical component of becoming homeless today is the paucity of low-income housing available to meet the needs of the poor (Axelson et al. 1988). Many federal acts had been passed to help people with a stable housing. The National Housing Act of 1949 called for" the realization, as soon as feasible, of the goal of a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family" (Axelson et al. 1988). The 1968 Housing and Community Development Act reaffirmed this goal (Axelson et al. 1988). Despite all those efforts from the federal government, the number of homeless men and women still growing annually.

The declining value and availability of public assistance also contributes to the increase of poverty and homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless Fact Sheet). Those assistance programs are either unable to keep up with inflation or lack of enough sources to help those in need families.

Lacking of housing assistance is an example of that. There are many people stay on the waiting

lists for public housing or private shelters. Because people who get into the shelters are not

able to receive future assistance to get a stable housing, they stay in the shelter for a longer

time. Lacking of job training from public assistance also resulted in unemployment or low wage

jobs. Longer stays in shelters result in less shelter space available for other homelessness (Why

Are People Homeless? National Coalition for the Homeless) .

To solve that problem, enough low rent dwellings are in need to satisfice the increasing

number of applications. However, approximately 500,000 low rent dwellings continue to be

lost each year since 1985 (Axelson et al. 1988). The reasons are very complex and mainly due to

condominium conversion, community revitalization, economic development, abandonment,

arson, and demolition (Axelson et al. 1988). Another important concern is the lacking of

legislature protection of those dwellings. Many cities do not allow tenants legal recourse when

their dwelling units become uninhabitable due to disrepair and disintegration of physical

structure (Galbreath 1986).

2.2.4: Decline in Public Assistance

           a. Current TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) benefits
and food stamps combined are below the poverty level in every
state.

         iii. The median TANF benefit for a family of three is approximately one-third
of the poverty level.

b. Contrary to popular opinion, welfare does not provide relief from

poverty.
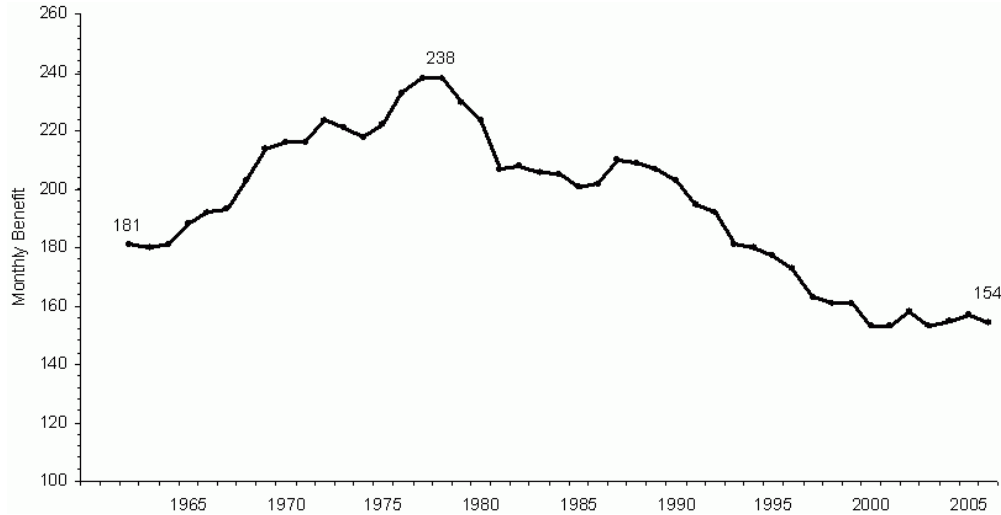
Figure 3-Monthly benefit family got for a period between 1965 and 2005

Study shows that a majority of homeless women are victims of domestic violence in

2008 (U.S. Conference of mayors, 2008). Lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for

assisted housing mean that many women and their children are forced to choose between

abuse at home and life on the streets (Domestic Violence and Homelessness National Coalition

for the Homelessness, 2009).Since that, many women who can't receive housing assistance

have to turn back or become homeless. According to a study, 28% of families were homeless

because of domestic violence in 2008 (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2008).

Homeless individuals or families may expect potential assistance, supporting, and

services from individuals, nonprofit organizations, business, and local, state, and federal

governments. Before wondering if those help are sufficient or effective, its interest to know

that the nonprofit sector, including religious congregations and organizations, were the first to

respond to the current homeless crisis (Burt and Cohen 1989).

The federal involvement has been quite limited due to varied reasons, and the private

organizations have remained as the major sources of assistance for homelessness. The

nonprofit sector continues to be the dominant operator of services for the homeless, as well as

the largest source of donated labor, space, food, and other goods and services (Burt and Cohen

1989). Although the federal government involvement is not the dominant factor, it can't be

ignored because the actions are quite significant in many ways.

The first major federal initiatives of the 1980s related to homelessness and hungers

were two new federal programs implemented in the environment of the 1981-1982 recessions

(Burt and Cohen 1989). These programs, including the Emergency Food and Shelter Program

(EFSP) and the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), were focused primarily

or exclusively on food assistance (Burt and Cohen 1989). Ironically, few supporting and services

had been successfully located to the homeless people. For example, the food supplied by the

TEFAP, such as flour and rice, was actually for home use. At the end, those people without a

permanent housing received very few helps from that food program.

Next actions took by the Congress are the Food Security Act (FSA) of 1985, the Homeless

Eligibility Clarification Act (HECA) of 1987, and the Homeless assistance Act (HAA) of 1987 (Burt

and Cohen 1989). Those congressional actions directly focused on the food needs of the homeless by stipulating changes and clarifications in the regulations governing the Food Stamp program to make that program more accessible to the homeless (Burt and Cohen 1989). Similar to the two programs discussed above, those new actions were also failed to address the potential difficulties and were have hard to maintain the serviceability.

In 1987, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (HAA) of 1987 was created as the first federal programs to provide direct support for emergency shelters since the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) was authorized in 1983 (Burt and Cohen 1989). The McKinney Act programs were funded 80 percent of budget authorization for federal fiscal year (FFY) 1987 and at 59-60percent of budget authorization for FFYs 1988 and 1989 (Burt and Cohen 1989). Those shelters provided under those acts were supposed to be funded by both the federal government and the state government. However, when state governments saw a major reduction on federal funding, they feared that federal government was much less interested in the programs. As the result, same shelters had to seek private donations to keep running.

2.2.5: Other Causes

Domestic Sexual Violence

        a. Leading cause nationally, especially for women.

b. According to studies, up to 100% of homeless women have experienced domestic or sexual violence at some point in their lives.

c. A study of homeless and low-income women in Worcester, Massachusetts, found that 63% of these women had experienced some form of severe physical violence by their current or most recent partner.

d. Survivors become homeless when they flee this abuse.

Drug and Alcohol Related Problems

e. People become so dependent on drugs and/or alcohol that they liquidate all their assets to acquire more.

Institutional Discharge to Homelessness

f. People are released from jails, prisons, or hospitals without sufficient reentry planning to ensure housing stability and success after discharge.

g. People with histories of incarceration face particular challenges in accessing and maintaining housing post-release as there are few housing options targeting this population and there is resistance in many neighborhoods.

h. Legal Issues

iv. Legal barriers can lead to homelessness or the inability to secure permanent housing.

v. Prior felony convictions, outstanding warrants, and lack of proper documentation are barriers to accessing many subsidized housing programs, which are key supports for low-income persons.

FIGURE 1.—PLOTS OF STATE PRISON POPULATIONS (PER 100,000) AGAINST STATE MENTAL HOSPITAL INPATIENT POPULATIONS (PER 100,000), DEVIATIONS FROM STATE-SPECIFIC MEANS

A. 1972-1980

Prison Population = -2.50 - 0.28*Mental Hospital Population, R2= 0.30

t-statistics   (-3.71) (-13.99)
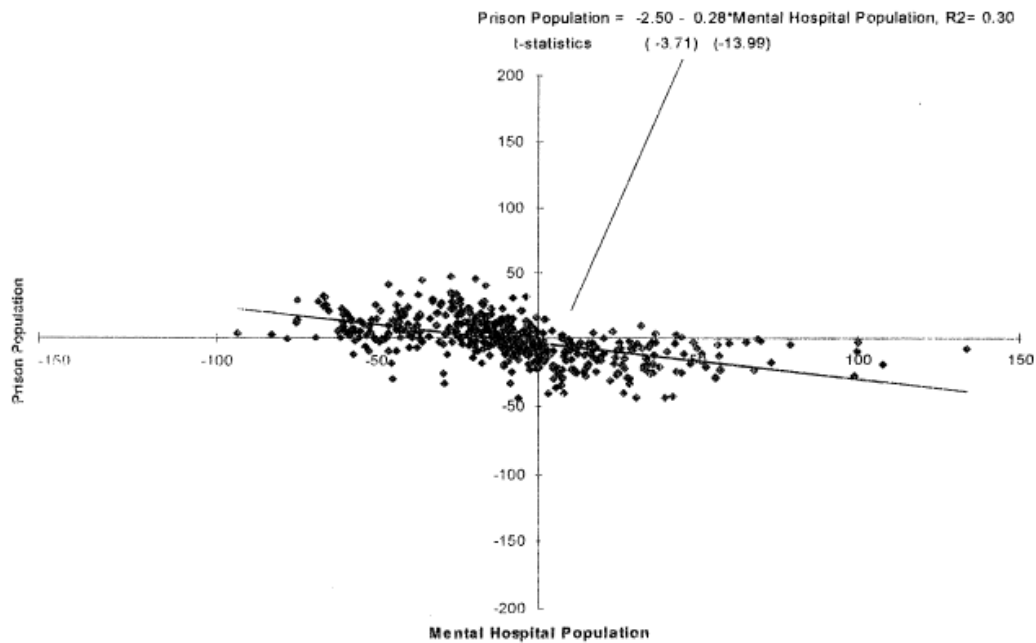
Figure 4- (Quigley et al. 2001) Plots of State Prison Populations (per 100,000) Against State mental Hospital Inpatient Populations (per 100,000) Deviations from State-Specific Means, period 1972-1980

B. 1981-1992

Prison Population =   0.03   -   2.77*Mental Hospital Population R2=0.28
t-statistics   (0.019) (-15.76)
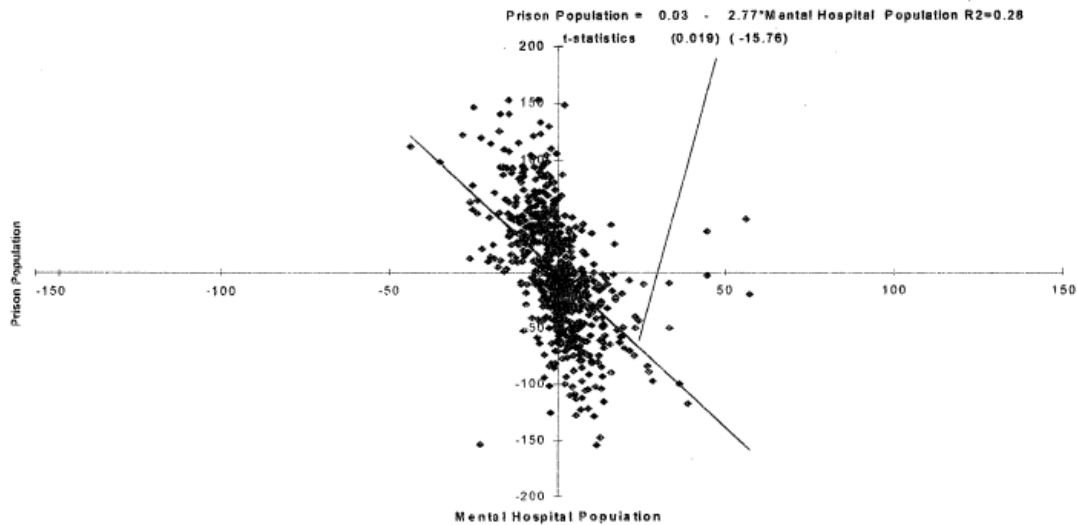
Note: All observations are measured as deviations from state-specific means over the relevant time period.

Figure 5- (Quigley et al. 2001) Plots of State Prison Populations (per 100,000) Against State mental Hospital Inpatient Populations (per 100,000) Deviations from State-Specific Means, period 1981-1992

Steven Raphael plotted the within-state changes in incarceration rates as related to the pace of deinstitutionalization in two different periods, as the two figures above show (Quigley et al. 2001). For both periods, there is a negative and highly significant relationship, in years when a state's mental hospital population is below its average level, the prison population is larger than average (Quigley et al. 2001). His study shows that mental illness maybe the causes, but definitely now a very significant causes of homelessness.

23

Foreclosure

      i.   Foreclosures have increased the number of people who experience homelessness.

    vi. According to a report released by The National Coalition for the Homeless there was a 32% jump in the number of foreclosures between April 2008 and April 2009.

      j.   The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that 40 percent of families facing eviction due to foreclosure are renters and 7 million households living on very low incomes are at risk of foreclosure

Illness

      k.   A serious accident or illness and the high costs that accompany it can lead a family struggling to pay rent to eventual homelessness.

      l.   It may cause them to lose their job and use all their savings for care.

Mental Illness

      m. Approximately 20-25% of the single adult homeless population suffers from some form of severe and persistent mental illness.

Physical Disabilities

      n.   Unable to work.

o.　Insufficient income to sustain a household.

Natural Disaster/Fire

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　p.　Situations where due to chance a fire, tornado, flood or

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　hurricane renders housing inhabitable.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　q.　This disorder is common with veterans and those that

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　have been in violent situations. It can make it difficult to

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　have a stable life.

Tragedy

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　r.　Many people just quit functioning because their families

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　died or were killed.

Lack of Child Support

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　s.　In families where child support is ordered but not paid,

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　the decrease in income can lead to an inability to pay

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　rent, utilities, or both.

2.3: Demographics

The Statistics on how many homeless people there are, is very hard to acquire and hard

to record because the word "homeless" is very broad. Also, different organizations use

different methodology to obtain their information; so some information may be skewed.

Furthermore, since homeless individuals do not have a set location, it is hard to keep records of them. There hasn't been set criteria as to what qualifies as homeless; to get these numbers, you have to get information from all different types of categories.

The States with the highest percentage of homelessness are Alaska, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington State, and Washington, D.C. Homeless tends to be more of an urban city problem:

- 71% are in central cities

- 21% are in suburbs

- 9% are in rural areas.

We see a very large percent of children/ minors that are considered homeless.

- 39% Under the age of 18 (42% of these children were under 5)

- 5% Unaccompanied minors

Veterans are more likely to be homeless than any other group. About 40% of the homeless men populations are veterans (yet, only 34% of males are veterans in the US)

Ethnicity also plays a large part in homelessness.

- 39% are non-Hispanic whites (compared to 76% of the general population)

- 42% are African-Americans (compared to 11% of the general population)

- 13% are Hispanic (compared to 9% of the general population)

- 4% are Native-American (compared to 1% of the general population)

- 2% are Asian

A very large percent of people who consider themselves homeless also have some sort of substance abuse, mental illness, or other health problems.

- 38% report alcohol use problems

- 26% report other drug use problems

- 39% report some form of mental health problems (20-25% meet criteria for serious mental illness)

- 66% report either substance use and/or mental health problems

- 3% report having HIV/AIDS

- 26% report acute health problems other than HIV/AIDS such as tuberculosis, pneumonia, or sexually transmitted diseases

- 46% report chronic health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or cancer

We can see from these statistics that homelessness is not a simple calculation. There are many elements that have to be considered.

2.4: Living Conditions

The living conditions of those who are homeless are greatly dependant on the reasons for their homelessness. The needs of a homeless individual vary from those off a homeless family. Similarly, the needs of an individual suffering from substance abuse are different from those of someone fleeing domestic violence. Living conditions also vary depending on the location of the individual. With this in mind, there are large arrays of living conditions possible for those who are homeless.

The most commonly thought of housing situation for homeless individuals are shelters. A typical shelter consists of several beds for individuals, and some have kitchens to feed those who stay there. Many shelters only allow for people to eat their evening meals and sleep in the facility at night. During the day many of those who rely on the shelters are forced to fend for themselves. Shelters for the homeless generally run on a first-come, first-served basis; to those who rely on these shelters this means that there is no guarantee of a place to stay from night to night.

Many of those who live or have lived in shelters dislike them for several reasons. One of the main reasons is the lack of privacy. In many shelters it is normal to have a large number of beds per room to accommodate as many people as possible. For residents, this means more inhabitants that you do not know. In addition, those who have experienced shelters often dislike the lack of independence and freedom. Many criticize that rules within the shelter

system are too strict for what is being offered. Therefore, though the shelter system is often

the most convenient and readily available organized, is not as comfortable, convenient, or less

stressful for its inhabitants.

For many, thought of the living conditions of the homeless make them think of

individual sleeping on park benches and door stoops. For many homeless individuals this is the

reality due to lack of consistency in the shelter system. Many homeless people are forced to

find any place that can provide the most shelter for the evening. This can be a car, an

abandoned building, a park, even a friend's couch. Though not the most ideal living situation,

these locations are often more readily available to the individual and sometimes more

consistent than shelter.

Some homeless individuals prefer the above living conditions to those of a shelter. With

these conditions the individual has a level of control and independence. They are able to create

some stability, and often times form social connections and alliances with those who live in the

same area. Though there is independence with this particular living situation, there is also an

increased level of risk. For those living in public places this can mean scrutiny from the police

and local businesses, which sometimes can lead to incarceration. In addition, there is a lack of

consistency of food sources depending on the location. Despite these concerns, some homeless

people still prefer this to shelters because of their access to basic human rights of

independence.

Though public living and shelters are often the most widely known and talked about housing options for the homeless, recently there has been an increase in the number of tent cities present in the United States. Tent cities are temporary housing facilities for the homeless that are often made of tents. Tent cities generally allow for more independence and freedom for those who live there in comparison to shelters. This freedom is accomplished through the self-governance of the cities and the basic rules associated with living within them ("Tent Cities in America").

Though tent cities often allow for fewer residents than shelters, they often provide those residents with better possibilities of succeeding and finding more permanent housing. The tent cities are usually self-governed, which provides the residents with the possibility of being more involved in community organizing and provides them with the possibility of holding positions within the city. This experience not only boosts the residence confidences, but also helps with making residence more aware of what is involved in the running of the town. Most of homeless individual prefer this mode of living to any of the others mentioned above.

Like tent cities, permanent supportive housing is often seen by residents as a better alternative to shelters. This housing system is more geared toward the chronically homeless which included those suffering from drug and alcohol addictions, the disabled, and those who suffer from mental illnesses such as schizophrenia ("Fact Sheet: Chronic Homelessness") . In these housing systems, residents are not only provided with shelter and food, but also with the

resources to aid them with their ailments. Studies have shown that permanent supportive

housing is more cost effective for this specific group of individuals.

Many of these units follow a "housing first" policy. This means that people wishing to

live there are provided housing regardless of their illnesses or addictions. This is very different

from many shelters that require that residents be sober before they are admitted. This benefits

residents by providing them with the tools to manage their disabilities and overcome their

addictions, which increases their chances of successful job hunts and home hunts in the future

("Fact Sheet: Chronic Homelessness") .

Though many homeless individuals are still are forced to live in bleak living conditions,

such as in public places and shelters, options such as tent cities and permanent supportive

housing provided a select few with a more positive living environment. With the help of local

organizations better living conditions and quality of life can be made normal for those

struggling with homelessness.

At the end, homeless children need even more attention from the public because they

always involved risky activities when they are living on the street. The study of the homeless

children in New York City showed that street youths are involved in multiple risk behaviors,

including chronic, high-risk drug abuse, as well as high-risk sexual behavior (Clatts and Davis

1999). The report also argued that those risky behaviors can be found throughout areas of

north and Central America, Southeast Asia, Western Europe, Eastern-bloc nations, and former

Soviet Union (Clatts and Davis 1999). The confluence of drug and sex risk among street youth

worldwide is of particular concern in relation to HIV infection because several segments within

this population interact behaviorally with two other high-exposure populations (Clatts and

Davis 1999).

As discussed above, the living condition of homelessness, typically children or youths

are in high danger and need assistance from both federal and private organizations. Since that,

more awareness about the homelessness must be created among individual, schools, public or

private organizations, and well federal government. The network and cooperation is highly

recommended to prevent homelessness, which is caused by plenty complex reasons that all

interacting each other.

2.5: Society's Involvement with the Homeless

Many people in our society think that we should criminalize the homeless, even

members of the government wish to prosecute the homeless for living on the streets. Previous

Mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani had become infamous for his so-called "quality-of-life"

violations. These violations range from jay walking to drinking in public and affect mainly the

homeless. In November of 1999, he even threatened all of the homeless, in saying, "Streets do

not exist in civilized societies for the purpose of people sleeping there. Bedrooms are for

sleeping" [Hurley, 144]. The city of Chicago has also put a program in place that advertises that they have put up services at the end of the late night subway lines to give information to the homeless of where they can seek shelter for the night. However, what they do not advertise is that they also put up barriers so they cannot re-board the subway again to stay there during the night.

Many government leaders have given up trying to "deal" with the homeless and leave it to policemen to arrest them and clear away their belongings from the street so they can stay out of sight. In Tucson, Arizona it has gone as far as the city officials attempting to make the sidewalks in the downtown area private therefore the business owners can legally deny homeless people from sleeping there [Hurley, 146]. Even after a group of homeless people in Seattle set up a camp ground on private land with the land owner's permission, they government did everything they could to get them off the land. This act seemed greatly unwarranted because this community that the homeless had set up had enforced their own rules to be alcohol and drug free, and was against fighting and profanity. They also never had the police called upon them. If homeless shelters continue to shut down and the government continues to disrupt the current living situations of the homeless, what options do they have left? Especially since policy makers are making it easier and easier to evict low-income residents with mental illnesses from their homes because they might pose a threat to their neighbors.

Some think that the best option to deal with the homeless who do suffer from mental illnesses is to force them into mental institutions. Is simply not a appropriate solution, not does forcing them into an institution denying them of their rights, before the 1960's this was what they did. It was decided that forcing people with mental illnesses was not the best option because many mental illness can be treated through outpatient medications, so they released thousands of patients.

2.6: Preventing Homelessness

The general way to prevent homelessness is to create more jobs, increase income support, expand on public housing and greatly improve health care, education and employability among the poor. The people that are the most at risk of becoming homeless have previously been homeless, have been subjected to social isolation, have serious mental or health problems, or have had a history of institutionalization. In order to help prevent homelessness assistance programs need to be advertised at sources of at risk individuals.

As many as half of all homeless adults have become homeless due to eviction or other landlord/rent problems. Out of these people, very few of them contact social service or government officials before losing their lease.   Few tenants are given any notice of evection because no formal eviction papers have been filed with the court. This is a problem because with some notice the tenant would be able to contact homeless prevention agencies and they would be able to learn how to declare their legal rights and would be able to make landlords go

through the formal court proceedings; which in turn can help prevent eviction. Providing proper notice and assistance programs will reduce the number of tenants who are willing to leave just because their landlord has asked them to leave because they will know their rights.

There are two types of assistance programs, legal and cash. Only about 20% of all tenants in formal eviction proceedings have legal representation and loose their case by default of not filing papers and such. If this need for legal assistance were addressed then it would prevent a lot of homelessness. This was proven through a study at Berkley. The studied determined that when a tenant did not have legal representation during eviction proceedings only won 6% of the time. However, when the tenant did have legal representation they won 58% of the time.   The problem is that not all legal assistance programs have the resources to offer full legal representation and can only offer advice on a case, and this advice at best just delays the amount of time before eviction.

The other service that is provided to prevent eviction is cash assistance. Many people, even with legal assistance, will not be able to pay their current and past-due rent. Therefore there are programs that provide financial help, however the amount of how much it prevents homelessness is not clear. By providing one-time cash assistance to working people facing a one-time emergency has been proven to prevent homelessness. However, one-time cash assistance programs do not benefit people who are continuously in need and it again only delays the amount of time before they get evicted.

In order for these programs to be the most effective, there needs to be a way to provide a mix of legal assistance, cash assistance and other social services for each at-risk individual. An effective homelessness prevention strategy from those who have be institutionalized would first be to identify those who fit into the at-most-risk category of being homeless and then offering them support. This support would include transitional assistance. Transitional assistance would include connecting the at-risk individual to public assistance, as well as help them to develop connections to appropriate housing, referrals to employment opportunities, etc. Then if necessary the stay of the at-risk individual could be prolonged until adequate housing is found.

2.7: Homelessness in Worcester

Homelessness has been a significant problem in the Worcester area for many years. Though the specific numbers of homeless people in the area has fluctuated with time, it has remained an area of top concern for both the inhabitants and the members of government in the city. Prior to 2010, Worcester's homeless population had consistently been over 1000 people ("CMHA Documents"). Between 2005 and 2007 there was an increase in the homeless population of about 10%. Indicators show that rising housing costs and the effects associated therein are the primary cause for this increase in prevalence of homelessness. Though this amount may be considered small in comparison to the population of Worcester, usually only

amounting to less than one percent of the population, the shelter systems within Worcester were struggling to cope with the influx of people.

The city of Worcester has a variety of different shelters available to the homeless in the area. Depending on the status of the person or persons, there are often several places within the city where one can go to seek shelter. Shelters are often separated into those that cater to individuals, those who cater to families and those who cater to domestic abuse victims ("CMHA Documents"). Many of the shelters under each of these categories have their own specifications for admittance. Some shelters are gender specific, some require sobriety, while others have no specifications at all.

Shelters within the Worcester area are struggling to support the growing numbers of people coming for assistance because the function of the shelters has changed with time. Originally designed to provide emergency accommodations to the homeless, shelters are now turning into longer term solutions than what was anticipated. As the length of an individual stay within a shelter increases, more of the basic problems of the shelter system emerge. Due to the fact that shelters were initially meant for short term emergency care, there is very little semblance of a normal daily life ("Fact Sheet: Chronic Homelessness"). In larger shelters there is very little privacy, higher incidences of theft, and personal safety is of higher concern for the residence. Also, in most shelters only the bare minimum necessities are provided, adding another level of responsibility onto residents with health and other more complex needs.

In addition to the problems directly impact individuals already in homeless shelters, there are additional difficulties caused by isolation of each of the shelters. In the Worcester area, shelters are very much isolated from each other. Each shelter has its own intake process, as well as its own regulation for who can be accommodated within the shelter. These differences not only make it difficult for homeless individuals to find shelters that are best suited for their needs but it also lengthens the amount of time that they remain without housing. Also, Worcester has no organizing group that encompasses all of the homeless shelters in the area and organizes the movement of individuals from shelter to shelter as their needs change. These difficulties only add to the stresses that are placed on a homeless individual.

Many of the shelters in the Worcester area mentioned above, and those suffering most from the limitations caused by outdated shelter models, fall under the Continuum of Care model. Under the Continuum of Care model, chronically homeless individuals move through a several steps in order to acquire more permanent housing ("Introduction"). This particular model is generally used in situations where the individual requires mental health or substance abuse treatment. In this model, housing is a reward for the continued treatment. Residents move from emergency temporary shelters with a shared living conditions and as the individual continues sustained treatment they move to transitional housing and then into independent living areas ("Introduction"). The Continuum of Care model does provide support to homeless

individuals, but the progress of these results is relatively slow due to the various steps involved in the model.

Housing First is a fairly new model that has been introduced as a way to combat homelessness in the Worcester area. As the name would suggest, in this model immediate housing is the first priority that is addressed with each homeless individual. Once permanent housing is found, the belief is that individual will be more responsive to additional support and services that can be provided to them ("Housing First, Ending Homelessness"). The aim of this model is to eliminate the need for homeless shelters entirely by providing shelter to individuals as soon as they become homeless.

Home Again details compared to Standard Care Feature	Home Again	Standard Care
Case management	✓	✓
Case manager: client ratio	1:10	1:≥70
Case management appointments at home	✓	X
Sobriety/abstinence is not required to receive housing*	✓	X
No mental health treatment pre-requisite for housing	✓	X
Mental Health treatment at home	✓	X
Permanent subsidized housing	✓	X
Average wait for permanent housing	<3 months	>2-5 years (unless client can afford market-rate housing)
Case management support after housed	✓	No, unless specific housing program provides it
Housing retained during temporary departure (e.g. treatment facility or incarcerated)	✓	X

Figure 6- Data comparing the Home Again program with Standard Care

This model does not completely eliminate responsibility of homeless individuals in their

housing. Generally those using this model are required to use 30% of their income as rent for

the apartment ("Housing First, Ending Homelessness"). Federal, state, and private funds are

used to offset the rest of the cost of housing so that the additional financial burden is not

placed on the homeless individual. Housing can vary depending on the needs of the individual,

from apartments to single rooms. Also, though those who accept housing are not required to

take part in the various services that are provided to them, they will have to agree to basic

contact with staff.

By not requiring participation in services homeless individuals are given more freedom.

Also, unlike many homeless shelters in the area, this model does not require sobriety as a

condition for entering the program. It also does not use housing as a reward for sobriety. This

allows people to do what they feel is necessary to improve their current situation. For many

individuals, they know what they must do in order to improve their living conditions, for others

the availability of resources will help them to improve both their lifestyle and their living

conditions.

When compared, the Continuum of Care method does not provide as rapid

improvement of situations as the Home First Method. This can be seen as applied in Worcester

alone. Worcester has relied on the standard shelter method for accommodating homeless

individuals for several years. In 2007, the county implemented a 3 year plan to eliminate

chronic homelessness. A results report conducted in October of 2009 found that the Housing

First model had not only greatly decreased the burden placed on traditional shelters, it also

found that the program had positively impacted the mental health of those involved ("Three

Year Plan to End Homelessness in Worcester").

2.8: Existing Organizations for Worcester Homeless

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines being homeless

as an individual or family living in places not meant for human habitation, such as cars,

sidewalks, abandoned buildings, etc. and those who are sleeping in a emergency shelter as a

primary nighttime residence. HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs were created be the

McKinney-Vento Act, 1987. The McKinney-Vento Act is one of the first acts to address the

problem of homelessness. The act consists of fifteen programs that provide a range of services

for the homeless. These programs include the Supportive Housing Program, the Shelter Plus

Care Program, the Single Room Occupancy Program, the Emergency Shelter Grant Program,

and many more. This act inspired more aid programs for the homeless.

There are several Worcester and surrounding area agencies that offer support for the

homeless, these services include homelessness prevention, emergency shelters, Residential

Assistance for families in transition, as well foreclosure prevention programs.

Abby's House is one of these existing organizations. Abby's house is one of the first homeless shelters for women in the US. They help women recovering from drug or alcohol abuse, women with mental health problems or HIV/Aids and women who have been subjected to domestic violence. This organization began in June of 1976 because of the dedication of Annette Rafferty and hundreds of others to make a difference. Since then, Abby's house has helped 11,500 homeless women and children with a safe place to stay. Not only does Abby's house have an emergency shelter, where someone can stay for up to 27 nights, they also have 78 units of reduced living homes where there is no limit to how long someone can stay.

Abby's House goal is to get women to be able to be self-sufficient again. They do not only provide a safe place to stay for the night but an individualized plan to help her succeed in her goal. Many programs are set up in order to achieve this goal; these programs include counseling and referrals, a food pantry and thrift shop, educational programs, and medical care. Abby Rafferty's Survive to Thrive Fund is one of the most notable programs. This fund is set up mostly to provide money for women with one-time fees, that without which they would loose the opportunity to achieve their goal of a better quality of life. This program has been able to help 25-30 women each year, since the program started in 2000. The amount they have been able to give these 25-30 women in total has been between $12,000 and $15,000 however they receive about $25,000 worth of requests for assistance.

Abby's house is funded through numerous donations and grants. The largest single

source of income to Abby's house is their thrift shop; all of the goods are donated to the thrift

shop therefore all of the proceeds can go directly to the emergency shelter. However, they are

always in need of more donations.

Community Healthlink does many outreach programs with the homeless in the

Worcester area. They provide the homeless with connections for healthcare, counseling,

substance abuse treatment, and much more. The organization also has a program called

Healthlink's HEART program, which provides emergency assistance to the homeless and people

on the verge of becoming homeless. This assistance includes emergency shelter, food,

clothing, and medical and mental health services. Healthlink has also observed that many of

the reasons that people are homeless are because of mental health disabilities and substance

abuse. Therefore, they offer outpatient services as well as residential treatment programs. A

major program that helps people with these conditions is called the Homeless Outreach and

Advocacy Project (HOAP). This program works with a variety of different shelters and other

emergency shelters. There is a main office where one can go and seek a consultation from a

doctor and there are also doctors that travel to different shelters to evaluate the residents.

They perform mental health screenings, prescribe medicines, and offer counseling. This

program also employs case managers who will help clients enroll in health insurance and access

social security benefits which might be available to them. HOAP also provides scattered-site

housing for at-risk people, men, women, families and people infected with HIV/AIDS. There is

also a HOAP medical respite bed program, which offers care to homeless adults after being

hospitalized or suffered an illness.

2.9: Poverty Level

The United States Census Bureau has recently published current information about the

poverty level in the country. It has been reported that the national poverty rate rose from

14.3%, in 2009, to 15.1% in 2010. This poverty rate has only been this high once, in the year

1993, since the Census Bureau has started tracking poverty rates in 1959. However, the year

following the high in 1993, the national poverty rate steadily decreased to a rate of 11.3% in

2000. The poverty rate now does not seem to be able to decrease this rapidly now, however.

This is because of the lack of jobs and the poor economy. Since, the recession began in 2007

the poverty rate has been steadily increasing. This can be seen in many ways, the amount of

children under the age of 18,in 2010, living in poverty rose to 22% from the 20.7% in the

previous year. The poverty has also risen in all racial and ethnic groups (excluding Asians); the

number of Hispanics in poverty rose from 25.3% to 26.6% in the past year, for African

Americans it rose from 25.8% to 27.4%, for whites it rose from 9.4% to 9.9%, for Asians it can

constant at 12.1%. The poverty rate for single-mother families in poverty is also high at 31.6%.

The working-age Americans, ages 18-64, have seen the biggest rise in poverty form 12.9% to

13.7%. Thus, working age Americans represent 3 out of 5 Americans living in poverty. The gap

between the rich and the poor has also significantly gotten larger in the past year. The income

for the wealthiest top 5% of Americans fell by 1.2%, while the income rate for the poorest fell

by 4%.

The Census Bureau has also noted that without government safety-net programs there

would be 20.3 million more Americans in poverty.   There are also more than 6 million people

categorized as being long-term unemployed, which means being unemployed for more than 26

weeks. These people are likely to fall into the poverty, especially because only 2 out of 5 of

them have jobs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to successfully carry out our project goals, we have mapped out our desired plan of action in a way that addresses the problem a variety of different ways. We consider this crucial to our success due to the fact that our group is one that only contains five students. By approaching the problem from a variety of different angles, we provide ourselves a more powerful arsenal to learn from and build on as we progress through the project. In addition, it will give us the opportunity to reach out and increase our support base.

The first way we plan on addressing our fundraising project is by directly holding fundraising events in which we make or obtain a product to sell in large quantities to the WPI campus community. Our plan is to focus on specialty food items to sell during these events such as ethnic foods because it will give students, faculty and visitors more of an incentive to buy since it is not an item that they can find anywhere. We also intend on holding a fundraiser to collect basic essentials such as toothbrushes, deodorant, cleaning products, and toilet paper. We came to the decision of fundraising for these types of items after meeting with Abby's House and discussing what they needed most and what they felt would be the most useful to the shelter and its tenants.

Another way we plan on addressing our project goals is by creating a fundraising website where anyone can visit to make a monetary donation. This is a great fundraising technique, because as opposed to a specific fundraising event that only lasts a few hours, this

will be long term. We will have this website running for the duration of the project so that

there is ample time for donations to accumulate into something substantial.

Furthermore, besides solely raising money and goods to aid the homeless in Worcester,

we also plan to help by volunteering our time at Abby's House. Getting involved in this way will

be beneficial to both the shelter and to ourselves because it will give us a better understanding

of how things work there and a better understanding of the actual homeless women inhabiting

it. In turn, with this better understanding we will be better equipped to carry out our project

goals.

Lastly, to increase our support base we will spend a great deal of effort educating the

WPI community on the topic of homelessness and raising awareness of the homeless women

and children that exist in Worcester and the surrounding areas. We plan on doing this at the

various fundraising events that we will be hosting by emphasizing what we are fundraising for

and what exactly our donor's money or donation will be going to.

Chapter 4: Fundraising Website

4.1: Strategy

When beginning a large scale fundraising endeavor with a small group such as ours, it is important to determine ways to branch out and increase awareness of the project's specific goals and aspirations. Luckily, in this day and age we have numerous methods at our disposal by which we can spread the existence of our project to others in the hope that they will in some way contribute. If done successfully, this will be very effective because even the smallest of contributions from enough people can add up to be a substantial one.

In the hope of reaching out to as many people as possible, the most obvious and accessible tool to utilize is the internet. Therefore, we decided it would be most beneficial to develop a webpage for our fundraiser, where anyone with the URL can visit to contribute. It is obvious that the easier we make it for a visitor to contribute, the greater likelihood that they will. Consequently, simply having an account set up on the webpage, to which they can donate any denomination of money directly with a credit card, is the best option.

After creating this website, our main focus will then turn to distributing the URL to as many individuals as possible or, more specifically, distributing it to those who will be most likely to actually make a contribution. There are several ways we can go about doing this. One such way is to make it personal. If we target those individuals we know well, such as family and friends, there is a much greater likelihood that they will contribute. The likelihood increases

because seeing us succeed in our project is an added incentive for them to help out, in addition to the main incentive of aiding homeless women and children. This is an excellent way to follow a *Strength in Numbers* approach because if we ask each of these family members and friends to then share the URL with their families and close friends as well, the number of those aware of the URL will rapidly increase. And with this increasing awareness of the URL comes an increasing chance of donations.

Another way we can go about distributing the URL is using social media such as Facebook and Twitter. With just a click of a button we can easily post the URL to each of our Facebook pages or Twitter accounts and directly share it with every person we are "friended" with or "followed by." Along these same lines, we could go a step further by making the fundraiser its own Facebook page. This will be beneficial because the page could include the URL and a description of what our fundraiser is all about. Therefore, those visiting the URL by chance will have a description of what their monetary contribution will be used for, thus making it more likely for them to donate.

In order to further spread our URL, we can take advantage of Worcester Polytechnic Institute's email databases to target all students and faculty. With a single email we can make everyone on campus aware of our fundraiser and fundraising website, and hopefully many will contribute. In addition, we can easily spread awareness of the website while we are performing

other fundraising events. For example, when people come to purchase what we are selling we can hand them a card with the webpage information so that they can visit it and donate.

Although we realize that many people will simply discard our attempts at acquiring their support, we hope that the combined effort of the numerous methods mentioned above will amount to something substantial and worthy of the effort. The advantage of having such a fundraising technique as a donations account, in addition to smaller scale fundraising events such as setting up collection bins and having food sales, is that it can continue to run behind the scenes as these other events take place. Therefore, the account we set up to receive donations can continue to receive them for the duration of the project, making it much more likely to accrue a respectable amount of money in the end.

The next step will be to look at the best way to form such a website so that it is congruent with our methodology.

4.2: Execution

After researching the best methods to create a donations website, we found that the easiest and most effective way is to use an online service that already provides you with such a page. After weighing the pros and cons of the numerous online services available, we determined that the best online service to fit with our methodology was www.gofundme.com. There are several factors that brought us to this decision. The first is that the webpage is extremely user friendly for both the fundraiser and the donators. Another factor is that

GoFundMe only charges a 5% fee of total funds collected for their service. This is the lowest fee we could find, as others were asking for as high as 7-10%. Besides the low user fee, another advantage that this fundraising webpage service has is its built-in ability to share via Facebook, Twitter and email. To gain a better appreciation for how GoFundMe works, a self description of the service has been taken straight from their website:

What is GoFundMe?

Launched on May 10, 2010, GoFundMe is a do-it-yourself online fundraising service that has helped thousands of people raise millions of dollars in online donations for the fundraising ideas that matter to them most. GoFundMe allows regular people to accomplish extraordinary things with easy-to-use personal donation websites. From exciting life events like weddings & graduations to challenging circumstances like accidents & illnesses, the GoFundMe fundraising software remains one of the best ways to raise money online.

The website also provides a space for the fundraiser to describe what their project is all about and what its goals and aspirations are. Therefore, to take advantage of this we devised the following description for our webpage:

We are a group of five WPI students raising money for the homeless women and children of Worcester. This fundraising webpage is part of our large scale effort to raise funds for the cause.
The money accrued will go towards helping local homeless shelters in Worcester, such as Abby's House. (http://www.abbyshouse.org/)

Also, a portion will go towards grants that we are currently formulating. These grants will be available for the homeless women of these shelters to apply for. They will be granted to women looking to better their situation through seeking an education.

Supporters can also help by spreading awareness of our project and sharing this webpage with their friends and families to increase our support base.

Your support and generosity is greatly appreciated!

Thank you!

With the webpage now complete, the next step was to raise awareness of its existence and to distribute the URL to as many people as possible. The first method of doing this was apparent because of how easy the webpage made it to share with Facebook. Therefore, each member of our group uploaded the URL onto his or her Facebook wall so that anyone they are "friended" with could see and contribute. In addition, each of us notified our families and close friends of the webpage and kindly asked for their support and donations.

Once this initial distribution was completed we began to think of other ways to spread the URL. Consequently, we began to consider creating a business card specific to our fundraising website. We saw this as a great asset because it would grant us the ability to hand out our URL at fundraising events as was mentioned in our strategy section. The most alluring part of having an actual business card was that we could hand out the URL in a way that was more official than simply having the URL handwritten on pieces of paper or typed on cutouts of printing paper, both of which could be easily discarded, lost or forgotten. On the other hand,

the business card would make an impression on each individual receiving it, thus greatly

increasing the possibility of a donation.

The only possible downside to acquiring business cards for our fundraising website was

the cost. However, after researching the best ways to acquire these business cards, the group

came across the company Vistaprint. Through their website, Vistaprint allows a first time

customer to create and receive 250 business cards free of charge. This is done as a promotional

incentive. Our group did not need much discussion before deciding to place our orders. To get

the most out of this, each member of our group set up an account with Vistaprint and ordered

their own set of business cards, resulting in the group obtaining a total 1250 business cards for

free. Using the interactive templates that Vistaprint provides on their website to create a

custom business card, the group created the following layout for ours:

Figure 7- Business card used to spread awareness of the fundraising website

Out of all the fancy colors and designs that Vistaprint allows its customers to choose from for the background of their business card, we decided to keep it simple and choose the one above. We felt that the picture of the extended hand represented the act of giving and that the light represented hope. With this visual, we felt the people receiving the card would be more emotionally stimulated than if the background was just a plain color or design. This, of course, would thus result in a greater likelihood of them contributing. Therefore, at each fundraising event that we executed, we made sure to pass out these business cards and spread news of our fundraising website.

4.3: Results and Discussion

At the completion of the IQP project, the website proved to be a great success. Our combined efforts to distribute the URL and get people to make donations culminated into a substantial sum in the end. This sum was $450.

The reason this fundraising technique was so successful was because of its duration. Since the website was created towards the beginning of the project, it was able to stay up the entire time and collect funds all the while. In addition, due to the fact that the website was functioning for such a long time, it gave us a huge window to try out different methods of spreading the URL and trying to get people to donate. This left plenty of room for error and allowed us to learn from our mistakes and try again. Similarly, it allowed us to learn what worked well and therefore allowed us to implement it again in the future.

A way in which future groups could improve on this fundraising technique is by finding more ways to distribute the business cards. One such way would be to distribute them at local churches. These would be great locations because those attending a church ceremony would typically have a more charitable mindset.

Chapter 5: Food Sales

5.1: Strategy

One effective fundraising technique is selling a low-cost product and turning a profit. The idea is to sell enough of these products so that the profit results in a sizeable amount of total funds in the end. To go about doing this we have decided to focus on food sales, selling authentic Guatemalan Tamales and Spanish Tortillas on campus to students, faculty and visitors. A member of our group is of Guatemalan and Spanish descent so making these food items will be a great way to expose our campus to his culture, as well as fundraise for our project.

The first step in carrying out this operation is choosing a time and a location. The most sensible time will be lunchtime, when the campus is busiest and when people are most likely to purchase food. Therefore, we have decided for the designated time of sale to be from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. In addition, we have determined that the most sensible location for this to take place is in the Campus Center. This is an obvious decision because this is the location on campus that sees the most traffic throughout the day. Also, it is where the majority of people go when looking to buy lunch, since there are several other food vendors at the location. Having the sale here will be most promising because the more people passing by, the greater likelihood that our stand will be seen and that people will stop to make a purchase.

There are several advantages to making food items like tamales and tortillas for our sales. One advantage is their uniqueness. People passing by will be much more likely to purchase the item we are selling when it is not available at other food vendors in the building. Another advantage is that there is a large Hispanic community at Worcester Polytechnic Institute that will be likely to purchase the food. The success of similar Hispanic food sales for other projects on campus helped us come to this conclusion. The other advantageous thing about tamales in particular is that after they are made they can be kept in the freezer for extended periods of time. This allows us the flexibility of making them little by little over a period of several days, as opposed to having to make the large number of tamales from scratch the day of the sale in order to ensure their freshness. In turn, this makes it possible to significantly increase the number of tamales available for sale, and thus increases total profit potential. Therefore, on the day of the sale we can easily heat and make ready the tamales by simply boiling them in water for 15-20 minutes.

The last step before carrying out this fundraising technique is raising awareness around campus that it will be taking place. The more successfully we do this, the more successful the fundraiser will be. This is obvious because if more people know that the sale is taking place, the better the chances that more people will show up to buy. This allows us to also reach those individuals who may not be planning on visiting the Campus Center that particular day. Therefore, our first step is making attractive flyers that include all the information of the sale.

They need to be concise and to the point or else the majority of people will not take the time to

read them. Also, they need to be eye-catching so they do not blend in to the sea of other flyers

that circulate the campus every day. We will be posting the flyers on the bulletin boards around

campus throughout the week leading up to the sale and also be circulating them via email by

utilizing WPI's various mass emailing lists.

5.2: Tamale Sale

5.2.1: Execution

In executing the Tamale food sale, our first step was designing the flyer. Therefore, we

created the following flyer to fit the criteria mentioned in the strategy section:

Figure 8- Flyer used to advertise the Tamale sale

Next, we chose a day during the week when the group, as a whole, was most available

to table sit and sell the food. Picking a day when we would all be available for at least a portion

of the sale's duration was crucial because it allowed the sale to function without interruption

from start to finish. For this particular sale that day was determined to be Thursday, November

10. We decided to sell the tamales at $3 each because of the high cost of ingredients and

difficulty in making them.

With the day of sale chosen, the next step was making the necessary preparations

leading up to the event. First, we contacted the Campus Center to reserve a table in the lobby

of the first floor, where sales of this nature usually take place. Our next step was sending out

the flyer to raise awareness. Unfortunately, we initially had some difficulty in doing this

because we were unfamiliar with using the WPI mass emailing lists and also unfamiliar with

formatting the flyer as an email. In the end, we were only able to email out the flyer the

morning of the sale, with the actual picture of the flyer as an attachment and not the main

email. The last step in preparation, of course, was actually making the tamales. This was done

over the several days leading up to the sale, and they were stored in the freezer as mentioned

earlier.

For the actual sale we made sure to show up half an hour early for setup. The group

member who made the tamales also brought a visually attractive tablecloth made in

Guatemala, which had the country's national bird, a Quetzal, embroidered on it. To make the

food stand even more attractive, we printed out several copies of the flyer and taped them to the front of the table. This also allowed people walking by at a distance to see what the stand was for.

5.2.2: Results and Discussion

At the conclusion of the sale, the group raised a total of $160. About $110 was collected during the actual sale on campus and the rest was collected during the days that followed, by selling the remaining tamales to faculty, friends and family. This extra $50 that the group was able to raise, even after the designated sale, was due to the aforementioned advantage of keeping the tamales in the freezer.

From this first food sale, we learned much invaluable information that could be applied to the future sales we planned on conducting. First and foremost, we learned the basic process and necessary preparations of holding such a sale, which would undoubtedly make things run smoother in the future. We also learned basic things like the best ways to ask a passerby if they would like to make a donation and help our cause by purchasing our food. In addition, after this food sale we knew that there was plenty we could improve upon. The primary thing was raising more awareness prior to the day of the sale, which we had difficulty doing for this tamale sale due to inexperience. Looking forward, we also considered lowering the price of the food item

since most college students do not have too much extra money to spend. The idea is that despite a lower price, more would be sold resulting in a higher total in the end.

5.3: Tortilla Sales

5.3.1: Execution

Identical to the tamale sale, our first step in executing the tortilla sale was designing the flyer. Therefore, we created the following flyer to fit the criteria mentioned in the strategy section:
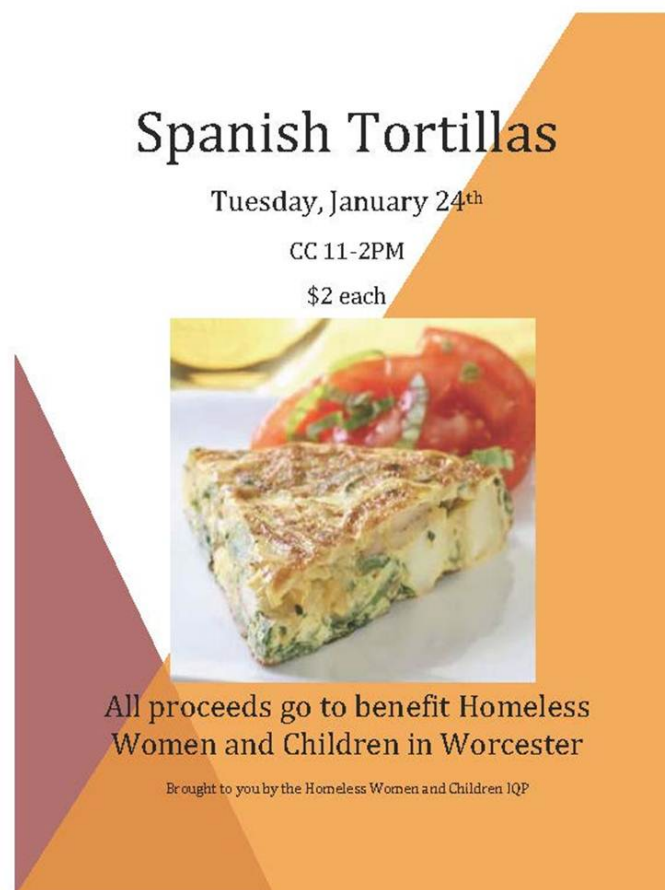
Figure 9- Flyer used as advertisement for the tortilla sale

After discovering that both the cost of ingredients and preparation time for the tortillas was much less than the tamales, we lowered the price of each tortilla to $2. We were happy to do this because, as mentioned above, this would make more students willing and able to make the purchase. By the end of the IQP project we ultimately held two tortilla sales. The second one was conducted due to the success of the first, and due to how much everyone liked the product the first time around.

In terms of logistics, the two tortilla sales were executed in the same fashion as the tamale sale. We chose days that worked well with each group member's schedule and the table in the Campus Center was reserved ahead of time for each of these days. With the experience and knowledge gained from our first sale, we were able to make some improvements too. For example, prior to the tortilla sales, we created a large eye-catching poster that we hung from the front of the table. The most important improvement though, was more effectively raising awareness around campus on the days leading up to the sales. We achieved this by learning how to successfully make the flyer the main body of the email. With this, we were able to successfully use WPI's mass mailing list and send out the flyer well in advance of the each sale. In addition, to further raise awareness, during the week leading up to the sales we posted hard copies of the flyers on the various bulletin boards located around campus.

5.3.2: Results and Discussion

From the two tortilla sales we raised $120 and $130, respectively. We were extremely happy with these results because despite the lower price, each sale raised more money on campus than the tamale sale did. We attributed this to people being more familiar with Spanish tortilla than they were with the Guatemalan tamales. This resulted in more sales because people are more likely to purchase a food item when they are at least somewhat familiar with it. Furthermore, we discovered that having a repeat sale of the same food was beneficial because basically everyone who bought the food the first time returned, and in some cases bought more than before. In addition, some people buying for the first time admitted that they were buying solely because they heard how good it was the last time it was being sold.

Looking forward, future groups should consider holding the same sale multiple days in a row. We came to this conclusion because at each sale we were asked multiple times if we would be back the following day, the reason being that the person really wanted to purchase the food but didn't have cash or forgot the sale was taking place that day.

Chapter 6: Basic Essentials Drive

6.1: Strategy

The "Basic Essentials Drive" is a fundraiser our IQP is hosting for the women in Abby's house. When we first met with some of the women who work at Abby's house, we asked them if there were things that they needed for the shelter; if they had any request we told them we would hold a drive specifically for those needs. Initially we assumed they would ask for food, or clothes; we were slightly shocked when they told us, in unison, "toilet paper." They continued by explaining, apparently, in the thirty plus years that Abby's house has been open, not once have they needed to pay for toilet paper. That was one of the goods that people have donated in bulk to the shelter, and they have not needed to worry about having that item. But in the past week they had been running low, and were nervous they would have to go out to buy some for the first time. Luckily, a donation came in just in time; ridding them of that problem.

The fact that toilet paper was the first thing that came to all of their minds at the same time made all of us realize that sometimes we take things for granted. Things like toilet paper, laundry detergent, house hold cleaners, toothbrushes; these are all things we use on a daily bases without even giving it a second thought. But the women at Abby's house have much big problems than having to deal with restocking toilet paper. With that, our group came up with the "Basic Essentials Drive." Our campaign is "You don't realize how important it is, until you don't have it." By posting posters and boxes around some of the more densely populated areas on campus, we believe that people will respond positively. By placing boxes at the bottom of

Daniels and Morgan, we will be able to reach the students that live in Daniels Hall, Morgan Hall, Riley, Stoddard Hall, and Ellsworth Apartments, students who have a meal plan to eat in the dining hall, and anyone who passes by there to get to the parking lot on Institute Road. By placing boxes at the bottom of Founders hall, we can reach the students who live in Founders, and anyone who eats at the Goats Head Pub and Out Takes. We will also place boxes in the Campus Center, which get hundreds of students, faculty, and visitors a day.

Our goal for this Drive is to get as many items as possible; preferably enough items to last roughly two weeks. We hope that people will realize this is an important drive, and donate what they can.

6.2: Execution

From the onset of this Basic Essentials Drive on campus, it was quickly realized that an overestimation was made on how many WPI students would participate in the fundraiser. We concluded that students would simply forget due to the business of their schedules and due to the fact that there was no real incentive for them to remember. Therefore, we decided to try a different approach to this fundraiser by targeting a different group of students; namely, high school students.

At the time, the girlfriend of a group member was student teaching at Milford High School, located in New Hampshire. With her collaboration we ultimately decided to hold the

Basic Essentials Drive there at her school. After confirming with her principal, we set up boxes around the school and in the classroom.

6.3: Results and Discussion

The decision to hold the Basic Essentials Drive at the High School proved to be far more advantageous than holding it on the WPI campus. In the end, we collected a wide variety of goods, from shampoos to deodorants to toothbrushes. In addition, since we emphasized toilet paper, we also collected a considerable amount of that as well.

We attribute the ultimate success of the fundraiser to having it take place at a high school, instead of on campus, for a few reasons. The first reason was because it was much easier to address every student in the school using the PA (Public Address) system. This ensured that everyone was made aware of the fundraiser on a daily basis, which decreased the possibility of a student forgetting and contributed to the large number of donors in the end. Another reason for the fundraiser's success was because, through collaboration with some of the teachers at the high school, students were given the incentive of extra credit if they brought in at least one item to donate.

Due to the success of this fundraising technique we advise future groups to expand to other high schools, middle schools and elementary schools in the Worcester area. Sticking to schools in Worcester is smart because it gives students even more incentive to donate, since

they will be more sentimental to improving their own city. This will undoubtedly add to the

total goods collected.

Chapter 7: Volunteering and Involvement

7.1: Strategy

In addition to raising money for our project, we also see it fit to volunteer our time to a local homeless shelter in Worcester. This is fitting for our fundraising project because the time that we donate to help out around the shelter directly translates to money that the shelter will not have to pay to others to do the same job. Therefore, this will allow them to save this money instead and use it to further improve the shelter for the women and children inhabiting it.

The shelter that we have chosen to volunteer at is called Abby's House, which is located less than two miles from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Our plan is to visit this shelter and meet with the administration. We will inform the administration of our project and share our desire to volunteer our time.

In addition to directly helping the shelter we hope to gain a better understanding of what it is like to be homeless. We hope to interact with as many of the women, who reside at Abby's House, through the various tasks we are assigned.

7.2: Execution

The first time the team traveled to Abby's House we were invited for lunch. During lunch the team split up amongst the tables of both the residents and volunteers at the shelter. There we were able to learn how some of the women became homeless as well as why so many local people help out at the shelter. It was interesting for many of us on the IQP team to hear

that the reasons why many of these women were homeless were not for the stereotypical

reasons. We also heard that many of the volunteers were not there under court order or

because they had a lot of spare time and money. Many of the volunteers at Abby's House are

working class citizens who have lived in the areas surrounding the shelter and have been

volunteering there for many years, some of the volunteers were also once a resident at Abby's.

After lunch the team met with the administration of the shelter, they gave us a tour of

the entire facility so we could gain a better understanding of how the shelter is run. There are

three main parts to Abby's House, the first being the main building. The main building provides

low-cost housing to more than thirty women, all of whom share one kitchen, and two washers

and dryers. The administration offices are also located in the main building, the first office is

near the main door of the shelter and this is where visitors and the residents can be "buzzed"

into the building. None of the residents of the shelter are permitted a key to the building, they

only have a key to their individual rooms. The next part of the shelter is the thrift shop; this

happens to be located in the basement of the main building, however there is a door located at

street level where the public can enter. The thrift shop only contains items that have been

donated to the shelter. These items are available for sale to the residents for little to no cost to

them. When learning about the thrift shop it was interesting to hear that they had an

excessive amount of items being donated that they could accept. The trend seemed to be that

whenever a big holiday was approaching they would get an excess amount of donations but

then in the other months of the year the thrift shop receives very few donations. This is very unfortunate; however the woman who runs the thrift shop tries to get more people aware of the shelter during the "off" season of donations.   Each year a fashion show is organized with some of the vintage items that have been donated to the shelter.

The last major part of how Abby's House is organized is the emergency shelter. This building is located a couple blocks from the main building, but it is able to house as many as thirteen women at a given time. The rules of the emergency shelter are that you have to check-in by 7 o'clock (6 o'clock in the winter) and be out by 8 in the morning. When you check in you have to leave your cellphone with the staff member and you a provided a bed with clean sheets and a clean towel. There are washers and dryers available to do their laundry and many of the residents of the emergency shelter stay for more than one night so they can leave their belongings behind during the day. A meal could also be provided, depending on if the staff member that night chooses to bring something.

After taking a tour of the faculty and meeting with the administration it was found that our time with the shelter would be best spent completing various tasks, these tasks would involve something as simple as decorating for the Christmas Holiday to helping staff the emergency shelter.

7.3: Results and Discussion

The team found each experience working with Abby's House eye opening and rewarding. Even when the tasks assigned to us seemed so trivial, it was heartwarming to see how much the women at the shelter appreciated it. When we were decorating for Christmas, countless people stopped to say that the decorations looked great and thanked us for doing it. This made the team realize that we could do something so easy that could positively affect so many individuals.

The team was then invited to the shelter's Thanksgiving celebration. This is where many of us gained our best experiences with the shelter. It was remarkable to see how many people joined in the celebration and how the community at Abby's house has become family to so many. One of the stories that I think stuck out to us the most was of one woman; this woman had not seen her daughters for more than twenty years. She was even under the impression that her youngest daughter had passed away. However, she came to learn that her daughters have been in contact with each other for a few years and they had been searching for their mother. Within the next few weeks she was going to meet her daughters and with the youngest daughter it would be the first time they would meet. I do not think the team has ever seen anyone who had been truly happier or grateful ever before. This woman kept acknowledging Abby's House for that without the support network she would have never been able to see her daughters again. She has been in and out of the shelter for twenty years while battling with alcohol and other drug addictions and she was fully aware that without the basic

support provided by the shelter she would not have succeeded in the battle to stay sober. This

woman's story confirmed to us that Abby's House is an incredible faculty and without it many

people would not be able to get the help they need.

Chapter 8: Speed-dating

8.1: Strategy

Our group was trying to decide a way that we could get as many students as possible to not only be aware of the homeless problem in Worcester but also want to help support our cause.

There were a few logistical problems with getting a group of students to volunteer at Abby's House. First, was that a lot of the help that they need is during work hours. Our group decided that with the hectic WPI schedule we would not be able to get an adequate amount of students who would be available to volunteer. The second problem that we could foresee is that volunteers at Abby's House are required to undergo training to work at the facilities. We thought that students would not realize that volunteering at Abby's House would not be just a one-time event. Abby's House would be taking the time to train the volunteers; we did not wish to disrespect the time of the workers at the shelter with students who were not willing to make the commitment to return.

Therefore we decided to do an event on campus during the evening on a weekend when most students do not have commitments. We went through many ideas to try and decide what would bring the biggest crowd. A few of these ideas were to host a movie night to raise awareness, or host a 5K walk to raise money. The group, though all of these possibilities were great, could see problems with them, the movie night we believed wouldn't generate enough interest and the 5K wouldn't work simply because of the weather. We also wanted to do

something that had not been done on campus before. Therefore, we came up with the idea of speed dating. We thought that it was different than a dance but not extremely different that students would feel uncomfortable to go.

The group also thought that if we opened up the event to other college campuses, the event would be more appealing to students. We could generate more interest by advertising the event as a chance to get to know students who you would otherwise not get the chance to meet. We plan to focus a majority of the off-campus advertising at Holy Cross and Assumption. This is because the Woo Bus, a shuttle that runs between WPI, Holy Cross, Assumption and various shopping plazas, would be able to provide free transportation to WPI. If transportation is not an issue more students will have the opportunity to attend. Another reason to reach out to Holy Cross is that many of their students are already investing in helping out at Abby's House. Abby's House has had volunteers each year since it opened in 1976 from Holy Cross and the students really believe in the cause.

Another plan of action we have to advertise the event is to use social networking sites. On a site like Facebook we can create an event that we can invite people to, and we can put up a flyer of the event as well as more logistical information. Through Facebook can target students we know personally at other campuses and get them excited about the event; the students that we reach out to will be able to spread the word to the rest of their campus by

simply pressing a few buttons. This way we can maximize the amount of people who know

about the event.

We have strategically planned the event to be held two weeks before the already

scheduled Valentine's Day dance/Tango night. This way we can advertise the dance as well as

students would be encouraged by their peers to attend that way they can reconnect with the

individuals they met at speed dating. We also plan to generate funds, in addition to the

admittance fee at the speed-dating event, by hosting a raffle. With the donation request letter

we created we hope to be able to collect donations such as gift cards to restaurants, movie

theaters, etc. all go along with the dating theme. Since, all the items in the raffle will be in the

same theme as the event students will feel encouraged to buy a raffle ticket if they meet

someone they like.

8.2: Execution

Ultimately this event was not executed. We found that there was not much interest

with in the student body.

8.3: Results and Discussion

As we were promoting this event, we realized that the campus did not show as much

interest as we had hoped it would. Due to the lack of interest, it became harder to justify a

reason to promote on different campuses. When we discussed this idea to students in other

local colleges, we became aware that there was not an overwhelming response, therefore we

decided to not do the event after all. Although we still could have proceeded with event, we felt that we would rather focus our attention on other potentially successful events.

As we look back, there are a few things we would have done differently that may have been able to get this event off the ground. For one, we would have started promoting the event much sooner. If students would have known about the event a few weeks ahead of time, it may have given them a chance to really understand the purpose and given "speed dating" a change; even for the sake of having a fun night out. Secondly, we could have sent out a campus survey consisting of about three different events in order to gauge what type of events the students would have preferred. This would have given us a clearer idea of what the student body is looking for, and that would have led to a more successful event. Thirdly, if we would have contacted other school organizations that deal with similar issues, such Holy Cross's program, then we could have collaborated with them to achieve a better outcome. We strongly believe that if we would have taken these steps, we would have been able to not only raise more money for the "empowerment Fund" but also spread awareness on campus.

Chapter 9: Valentine's Day Dance

9.1: Strategy

Our IQP Professor, Hossein Hakim, does a Valentine dance every year in order to raise money for the empowerment fund. This year, we decided that we would incorporate this event onto our project in order to be able to raise more money for the fund, and also raise awareness around the campus.

Since this event would probably be the event that brought in the most donations from any other event we have done during the entire project, we decided that we would heavily advertise. We mass produced flyers in order to give them to every Residential adviser so they can put in on the bulletin board of their floors. By doing this we would hopefully reach all students living on campus. We also printed larger ones to place in the Campus Center.

Another idea that we had was to sell tickets to students at five dollars a ticket. The idea being, that even if they didn't go, we would still be able to collect money for the fund.

We also thought about making a Facebook event to be able to invite people, and also spread awareness. Facebook allows you to reach hundreds of people, by networking as a group, we would dramatically increase the number of people we can influence.

9.2: Execution

The doors opened at 730, and the dance classes started at 8 o'clock. We had made a large flyer to let the people coming in know that donates were accepted. The suggested

donates was fifteen dollars for non-students and one dollar for students. At the end of the

night there was a very large group ready to dance.

9.3: Results and Discussion

At the end of the night we ended up making about $645 in cash and about $145 in

checks. This is by far more than what our group was expecting to make on this event. Although

we knew that this event brought in many people that were interested in dancing, we didn't

realize how many people would actually show up and how many people would donate.

To improve the dance's attendances, we would have advertised more and ahead of

time. We didn't get a chance to place the fliers we made until the day before the dance. Also,

we would have followed through with selling tickets at the campus center. Because we were in

a time crunch we were not able to reserve a table in the campus center, therefore we were not

able to sell the tickets.

Having a Facebook event would have been more successful if we had posted it much

sooner. The event was created on the second of February, but the dance was on the eleventh

of February; this only gave us nine days to invite people. From the 153 people that were

invited, only 16 confirmed that they were going, and 135 never replied. Facebook is a great

networking site that can do great things with the right amount of time. We would have

probably been able to reach every sorority, fraternity, and club on campus if we would have

used Facebook more efficiently.

Overall we still think that this event was very successful. We thought that at most with

the dance we would have made about $400; we definitely made well over that number.

Chapter 10: Education and Awareness

10.1: Strategy

One of our goals was to inform the WPI student body on homelessness in America. We wanted to let people know that homelessness is an epidemic in our country, and that it happens in every city, and every state. No one is safe guarded from this, and it could happen to anyone.

Having a constant reminder by having sales or fundraisers was one way to let our message be heard.

10.2: Execution

At every event we had we let it be known that we were fundraising for homeless women and children. At the food sales we always started off by asking the customer if they would like to donate to homeless women and children in the Worcester area; this way they would know where the money was going to. For the Valentine dance we made sure to include that the proceeds were going to the empowerment fund to help homeless women.

10.3: Results and Discussion

We felt that we were able to let the student body know what our IQP was about. We always were upfront about the project and who is was going to benefit. Unfortunately, we were unable to have a precise number as to how many people we actually were able to reach.

A great idea that we thought of afterwards was having sent out a survey before and after the IQP. This way we would know how much the students knew about homelessness in Worcester before the project, and how much they knew about it after we had completed the project. This would have given us a good gauge as to how effective we were about educating the campus.

Chapter 11: Abby's Empowerment Fund

All of the money the team has been raising has been going into the Abby's Empowerment Fund at Greater Worcester Community Foundation, a fund set up by our advisor Professor Hossein Hakim. Professor Hakim has invested the donated money and the team had to decide an appropriate place for the interest earned each year to go.

Through all the work that the team had done with Abby's House it was obvious to us that the money should be put into the shelter. The mission of Abby's House is to provide a safe place for women to stay, regroup and rebuild. The team found that the amount of money we had to distribute would be the most beneficial to aid in the rebuilding portion of the shelter's mission. We wanted to create a fund that would help aid women in the shelter in becoming strong and independent individuals; the money available in the fund is intended to go towards education purposes. This would help the women pay for one-time fees associated with gaining an education; these fees could include tuition, books, laptops, and more.

The team worked with Katrina, the woman who primarily works to get grants and other funding for women in the shelter. With Katrina's input the team was able to create an application that would provide us an adequate amount of information to select women to reward the grant to. We had to be careful not too ask questions that would be too invading to the women's privacy however we wanted to get a understanding of how they intend to spend the money and why they earn it. With this in mind we were able to create the application shown below:

Application for Abby's House Empowerment Fund Grant

This fund gives out small one-time grants to help women with specific obstacles they are facing. Grant up to $1000 will be given. Examples (but NOT a complete list) of possible uses ate: housing deposits, childcare, education materials (including computers), job required clothing (if not available through the Abby's House thrift shop).

Name of Applicant: _____

Amount of Grant money requested: $_____

What do you need the grant money for?: _____

_____

How the grant money will help you? (You may write wore on a second page):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

By signing you confirm that the information provided is true.

Applicant's signature: _____ Date: _____

An Abby's House staff member must sign below and agree to act as your advocate.

Advocate's signature: _____ Date: _____

Figure 10- Application for Empowerment Fund

The next challenge regarding the fund was that the lawyers who worker for Abby's House and the lawyers at WPI had to meet to make sure that no legal issues regarding the fund would arise once it is set into place. Fortunately for the team the process with the lawyers had

started before we picked up the project. However, there were still some unresolved issues that needed to be taken care of before the team could proceed. Once the process with the lawyers are completed the team will no longer be working on this project, therefore there none of us will be able to select women to receive the funds. Therefore, we had to find suitable persons to take care of this responsibility. It was clear to us that we could have to ask two of the head women, Katrina and Jean who help run the shelter, be responsible for selecting the women and then we could have Professor Hakim approve their selections. Katrina and Jean know the women and each of their situations the better than anyone on the team would have, therefore they can best decide which women deserve the allocated funds.

Chapter 12: Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall our Interactive Qualifying Project was a success. Our goal throughout the fundraisers was to have an accumulative total of $2000, and we were able to raise $1650. We were also able to collect goods to donate to Abby's House that the women would be able to use on a daily basis. The most crucial part of our project was to bring awareness to the student body. Knowledge is power, and by giving the students on campus the knowledge they need about homelessness, they can understand the problems that are happening right now in their own community.

In order to raise direct funds and public awareness to support the homeless, we organized several events that included establishing a fundraising website, food sales, basic essential drive, volunteering in local organization, holding Valentine's Day dance and providing awareness. As a result, we successfully raised money and materials to assist the homeless directly. Also, we have educated both the Worcester Polytechnic Institute campus and the local community regarding homelessness.

We researched articles, books, and government publications regarding homelessness and understood the historical component of it. During our research, we notice that most books regarding homelessness were published at least a decade ago and the majority of them were published around 1980s. That's mainly because the visibility of street beggars and those

sleeping in public places increased substantially since 1980 (Quigley et al. 2001). These sources

provided a limited understanding of homelessness in its current state. The most recent sources,

census, government conference report and websites that contain the information we need are

mainly found online. Despite these limitations we gained a fundamental understanding of the

history, causes, current conditions, demographics, and social involvement of the homelessness.

In addition to the limited current book sources on homelessness, we also faced

challenges in the execution of some of our fundraising ideas. During our first food sale of

tamales, we found that many in the WPI campus were reluctant to try a food that we too far

out of their comfort zone. We modified our techniques for the next sale and sold tortillas

instead. We found that the campus responded more positively to this food. We also had

difficulties executing the speed dating fundraiser. We found that even though the idea sounded

appealing to us, both the WPI campus and other campuses in Worcester did not. As a result we

were not able to conduct the event.

For future studies and executions, we may suggest researching both academic and

political material about homelessness. We suggest visiting other libraries in the community and

taking the advantage of the Inter-library Loan to get more sources to gain a more well-rounded

understanding of homelessness. To create a better awareness to local community, we

concluded that a longer period of advertising and as well as cooperation with other institutions

will attract more people. As an important lesson we learned from our fund raising website, a longer duration of the action always gives better result. In addition, distributing business card and advertising the events to religious groups may be a good thing to do for next group to do because those populations are more like to make donation than regular people.

From the food sales, we learned that people are more likely to purchase food that they are familiar with but don't receive on a regular basis and also are likely to return for the next sale event. We may suggest the future group to hold the same food sale for multiple times in a row. That will allow the group to make the best benefits with least effort and costs.

The speed dating shows that we need promoting the event to potential population as early as possible to create enough awareness. Also, sending out surveys to students first and then designing the event may help a lot to attract more students into it. As we have concluded, we should contact other institutions and organizations who handled the same issues before, such as the College of Holy Cross, and to get some suggestions at the beginning. Similar to the Valentine's dance we held, advertising ahead of time and promoting the event to local community as early as possible is the key to achieve better results.

In conclusion, we both researched homelessness and raised substantial funds to support people in need. Resources from nonprofit organizations, federal and state governments are needed to give sufficient support to homeless. In order to achieve that, we need to promote the issue to public and create enough awareness in the community. Homelessness is a long

existing problem and different approaches and actions are necessary to help those people and

minimize homelessness in population. The most important lesson of all is that all of the work

that we have done must be continued, such as volunteering, maintaining the website

fundraising, and educating the community. We highly recommend the next group to continue

with what we have done and learn from what we haven't done. Homelessness is currently

remains unsolved, so more research regarding the issue and more creative programs are

needed for future.

Chapter 13: References

Axelson, Leland J., and Dail, Paula W., "The Changing Character of Homelessness in the United

States", Family Relations, Vol. 37, No.4, The Contemporary Family: Consequence of Change

(Oct., 1988), pp. 463-469

Baumohl, Jim. *Homelessness in America*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx, 1996. 187-200. Print.

    Burt, Martha R. and Cohen, Barbara E., "Who is helping the Homeless? Local, State,

    and Federal Responses", Publius, Vol, 19, No.3, The State of American Federalism,

    1988-1989 (Summer, 1989), pp. 111-128

Censky, Annalyn. "Poverty Rate Rises as Incomes Decline - Census - Sep. 13, 2011." *CNNMoney*

    Business, Financial and Personal Finance News. 13 Sept. 2011. Web. 14 Sept. 2011.

    <http://money.cnn.com/2011/09/13/news/economy/poverty_rate_income/index.htm?

    hpt=hpt1>.

"Changes in Homelessness 05 - 07 Map." National Alliance to End Homelessness. National

    Alliance to End Homelessness, 12 Jan. 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2011.

    <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2797>.

Clatts, Michael C., and Davis, W. Rees, "A Demographic and Behavioral profile of Homeless

    Youth in New York City: Implications for AIDS Outreach and Prevention", Medical

    Anthropology Quarterly, New series, Vol. 13, No. 3(Sep. 1999), pp. 365-374

"CMHA Documents." Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance. Central Massachusetts Housing

Alliance, 2011. Web. 13 Sept. 2011.

<http://www.cmhaonline.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=126&Ite

mid=185>.

Dalaker, J., "Poverty in the United States: 2000." Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2001.

Daskal, Jennifer. In Search of Shelter: The Growing Shortage of Affordable Rental Housing,

1998. Available from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 820 First Street, NE,

Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002; 202/408-1080

Domestic Violence and Homelessness National Coalition for the Homelessness. Web. July 2009

< http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/domestic.html>.

The Economic Policy Institute, Minimum Wage: Frequently Asked Questions, 2005.

www.epinet.org

Factors Contributing to Homelessness. Homeless Research Network, Inc. Web.

<http://homelessresourcenetwork.org/causes.html>.

"Facts and Figures: The Homeless." PBS: Public Broadcasting Service. JumpStart Productions, 26

June 2009. Web. 17 Oct. 2011. <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/526/homeless-

facts.html>.

Factors Contributing to Homelessness. Homeless Research Network, Inc. Web.

<http://homelessresourcenetwork.org/causes.html>.

Gottfried, Ted. *Homelessness: Whose Problem Is It?* Millbrook Press, 1999.

"Housing First, Ending Homelessness." Beyond Shelter. Beyond Shelter. Web. 17 Nov. 2011.

  <http://www.beyondshelter.org/aaa_initiatives/ending_homelessness.shtml>.

"How Many People Experience Homelessness." National Coalition for the Homeless. National

  Coalition for the Homeless, July 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2011.

  <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/How_Many.html>.

Hurley, Jennifer A. *The Homeless: Opposing Viewpoints*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven, 2002.

  Print.

"Introduction." Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance. Central Massachusetts Housing

  Alliance, 2011. Web. 14 Sept. 2011.

  <http://www.cmhaonline.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogsection&id=1

  6&Itemid=227>.

It Was a Wonderful Life. Dir. Michèle Ohayon. Perf. Jodie Foster. CineWomen, 1993. DVD.

The Economic Policy Institute, Minimum Wage: Frequently Asked Questions, 2005.

  www.epinet.org

Joassart-Marcelli, Pascale M., Musso, Juliet A., and Wolch, Jennifer R., "Fiscal Consequences of

  Concentrated Poverty in a Metropolitan Region", Annals of the Assocaition of American

  Geographers, Vol. 95, No.2 (Jun., 2005), pp. 336-356

Galbreath, S., "Assisting the Homeless: Policies and Resources. Journal of Housing, 43, 211-216,

1986

Lee, Don. "Record 46.2 Million Americans Live in Poverty, Census Bureau Says - Latimes.com."

Blogs Latimes.com. 13 Sept. 2011. Web. 14 Sept. 2011. <http://latimesblogs.latimes.co

m/natio nnow /2011/09/record-462-million-americans-in-poverty-census-bureausays.ht

ml>.

Levy, Jordan, and William J. Mulford. "Three Year Plan to End Homelessness in Worcester."

Publication. Print.

Quigley, John M., Raphael, Steven, Smolensky, Eugene, "Homeless in America, Homeless in

California", The Review of Economics and Statistics, Vol. 83, No.1 (Feb., 2001), pp. 37-

51

Roperts, Richard H., The Invisible Homeless: A New Urban Ecology, New York: Human Sciences.

1988

Rothman, Emily, and Allyson Baughman. "Evaluation Report." *Home Again Central MA*. Oct.

2009. Web. 1 Oct. 2011. <http://www.homeagaincentralma.org/CMS/Images/Home

%20Again%20evaluation%20report_9.pdf>.

The Associated Press. "Nearly 1 in 6 Americans in Poverty, Census Says." *Nytimes.com*. 13 Sept.

2011. Web. 14 Sept. 2011.

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2011/09/13/business/A

P-US-Census-Poor-Uninsured.html?_r=2&hp=&pagewanted=all>.

U.S. Conference of Mayors, A Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in American Cities:

2005, 2006, 2007, 2008.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "The Homeless," briefing paper prepared for

the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Government Operations, Washington, DC,

1984

Whitman, David, "Shattering Myths about the Homeless," U.S. News & World Report (March

20), 27-28, 1989

"Who Is Homeless?" National Coalition for the Homeless. National Coalition for the Homeless,

July 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2011.

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/who.html > .

Why Are People Homeless? National Coalition for the Homeless. Web. 05 Oct. 2011.

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/why.html>.

Woods, Daniel W., and John B. Williamson. *Think about Poverty in the U.S.: Problems and*

Policies. New York City, NY: Walker, 1988. Print.

Wright, J.D., "Healthcare for the homeless. Testimony before the U.S. House of

Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families", In G. Miller(Chair),

The Crisis in Homelessness: Effects on Children and families (p.5). Washington, DC.,

1987