

Students raise money to help homeless

June 13, 2008

ENCINITAS — On June 14th, a group of 18 youngsters, deemed the Brain Highways Executive Project Leaders, will deliver more than 4,000 dollars of gifts to the San Diego Rescue Mission.

The gifts include a large screen television, DVD player, video games, kick scooters, gift cards, books, bus tokens, and a selection of the kids' favorite "brain toys." Once there, the group will also host a pizza and ice cream sundae party for the nine homeless families currently residing in the mission's long-term program.

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These executive project leaders are not your average fundraising group. Ranging from ages 8 to 12, some of the group has been labeled with autism, attention deficit disorder, and other learning disabilities. Each member of the group understands, firsthand, what it's like to struggle. But neither their young age nor their personal challenges have deterred them from the primary goals of the project: Raise money for the San Diego Rescue Mission and educate as many people as possible about San Diego's homeless families.

To date, the group has educated over 2,000 kids and adults with inspirational speeches at their schools, churches, and Boy and Girl Scout meetings. They have motivated hundreds of other children to earn money and donate their "paychecks" to the project. They have additionally operated self-employed businesses (e.g. dog bathing services, lemonade stands, violin performances at retirement homes) to earn even more money. As negotiators, they've stretched the project's donations by making notable deals, and on June 4th, hosted two fundraising talent shows.

"This project is the first time anyone believed I could be this kind of leader," 9-year-old Oscar Howe said. "It turns out—I'm actually really good at this!"

Before the executive project leaders leave the San Diego Rescue Mission on June 14th, they'll present a 30-foot mural of more than 500 signed "helping hands." Collectively, these hands represent the impressive cadre of kids, inspired by the executive project leaders, who have raised money for the homeless. The mural is also a visual reminder that all kids—even those saddled with some of today's most challenging diagnoses—can make a difference in our world.

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