



The Working Alternative To Charity

Sunday Friends: The Working Alternative to Charity

When poverty takes root in an individual's life, it takes away their dignity and motivation—which often leads to helplessness, victimization, and inappropriate survival skills. These attitudes and problems are easily passed from one generation to the next. Most charities and social welfare agencies help poor families in the moment, but do little to help them over the long term. Sunday Friends offers a completely different alternative to charitable handouts. We help children and their parents earn basic necessities while they contribute to their community and learn critical life skills that enable them to create a secure future for themselves.

We've discovered a powerful way to "teach people to fish."

Sunday Friends works with families who have recently been homeless or are struggling to avoid homelessness. Twice a month, we spend a Sunday together in community service projects, educational workshops, and other learning activities for all ages. The topics we cover in-depth include English, writing, financial literacy, parenting effectiveness, health, nutrition, accessing community resources, and helping children succeed in school. Each person earns tickets for their contributions to their own families as well as to others. They can exchange tickets that day for basic necessities that have been donated to our "store," or save tickets in our "bank" for future purchases.

Our unique program accomplishes what traditional charities don't:

- Creates **opportunities to earn and learn** in ways that foster confidence, self-respect, self-reliance, and community spirit
- **Involves both children and their parents** to reinforce the lessons learned and strengthen the family as a unit
- **Operates consistent, continuous programs** to make sure new attitudes and skills "stick"
- Provides rich volunteer experiences where **everyone interacts as equals**, not as those of privilege caring for "charity cases"

Attendance is entirely voluntary; families come because of a strong desire to create a better life. As the old proverb goes, we are not giving people fish, but teaching them to fish for themselves.

We are now seeking major gifts for program expansion.

Sunday Friends has been at Lowell School since 2003, but we have reached the capacity limits of that facility. We are ready to expand to a new neighborhood to work with more families who urgently need the skills we teach. We are asking for seed donations for the new program: one-time gifts of \$50,000-\$100,000 or pledges of \$25,000-\$50,000 over a minimum of three years. It is vitally important that we have financial support in place before we take concrete steps toward expansion.

Sunday Friends is committed to attacking the root issues of poverty in our community. By supporting us, you will help more families regain hope, learn self-reliance, and secure their own futures.

The Working Alternative to Charity since 1997

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Sunday Friends Basic Facts

- Secular, 501(C)3 nonprofit
- Operating since 1997, previously in homeless shelters, now at Lowell Elementary School in San Jose (since 2003)
- Operates day-long programs twice a month
- Each program involves on average 110 children, 50 parents, and 110 volunteers
- Annual budget: approximately \$460,000, with \$296,000 in cash donations and \$189,000 in-kind donations
- Revenues: individuals 63%, businesses 24%, foundations 12% (no government funding)
- Cost structure: program 85.5%, administration and fundraising 14.5%
- Professional program evaluations conducted every two years, which have consistently demonstrated that we are reinforcing attitudes and life skills that are proven prerequisites to ending poverty

A Brief History

Fifteen years ago, a group of high school students and their mothers began volunteering at a family homeless shelter in San Jose. One day, one of the mothers—our founder, Janis Baron—noticed a lot of trash around the shelter, and asked a young resident to help her pick it up in return for stickers he could use in a craft project. Immediately, more children came running over to find out if they could earn stickers. The place got cleaned up in a jiffy and motivation was born.

Trash collecting on Sunday afternoons expanded to other service projects as well as educational activities. The stickers were changed into tickets that could be used to redeem basic necessities that had been donated, as well as toys and games. The volunteers saw a big increase in participation and enthusiasm. Parents got involved so that families could learn, earn, and give back together. Eventually, the program expanded and moved to a local school, where it now brings together more than 250 adults, children, and volunteers on two Sundays each month. Over time, they have found that a family's sense of self-worth, its stronger bonds, and the life skills learned in their workshops can help them break the cycle of poverty.

www.SundayFriends.org