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NEW AD CAMPAIGN FOCUSES ON SF'S HOMELESS CHILDREN

Outdoor Ads to Highlight Growing Problem and Ways to Help

September 19, 2005 -- The park bench at night is dark and foreboding, yet dangling overhead is a colorful baby mobile that you would typically find above a crib in a nursery. The copy on each ad simply reads, "San Francisco is home to over 4,000 homeless children" and advises viewers to contact the web address www.childrenofshelters.org.

It is just one of the images that appears in a new, outdoor advertising campaign debuting today, sponsored by Children of Shelters, a San Francisco-based non-profit organization whose focus is dedicated to improving life for the estimated 4,000 plus homeless children living in San Francisco. In addition, children's toothbrushes and rubber ducks with the COS message will be placed in fountains and water fountains throughout the city.

"The campaign is designed to draw attention to this growing situation," explains Jenny Le Coq, executive vice president of Children of Shelters [COS]. "Most San Franciscans believe that the homeless are adults standing on corners with cups, but in reality the fastest growing segment of homeless are children and families. As the City becomes more expensive to live in, the safety net for at-risk families is getting thinner and thinner. We hope these ads will encourage people to regard the homeless problem in a new way."

Debuting in September are four executions developed and produced by the San Francisco office of DDB Worldwide and photographed by local photographer Dwight Eschliman. They will appear on bus shelters and bus tails donated by Viacom throughout the city.

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“Children of Shelters is a wonderful cause that we need to make more people in our city aware of,” says Lisa Bennett, Chief Creative Officer at DDB Worldwide San Francisco. “Our hope is that this campaign strikes an emotional chord and causes people to react in a positive way.”

According to a report coordinated by A Home Away from Homelessness and sponsored by the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, children make up 4,050 of the estimated 15,000 homeless people in San Francisco County. These children are twice as likely as other children to be in poor health and four times as likely to experience delayed development. “The family shelters do the best they can to take care of the basic needs of the children, but their resources are stretched,” says Jenny Le Coq. “COS’s job is to offset the cost of the intangible needs of the kids – those things that help them establish a sense of self-esteem and self-worth which is so hard to maintain when your living situation is tenuous.”

Children of Shelters was established in 1995 with a simple mission: to improve the quality of life for children in local homeless shelters. Its 30-member, all-volunteer board coordinates programs and fundraising to supplement the services provided by five family shelters in San Francisco: Compass Family Shelter, Hamilton Family Shelter, St. Joseph’s Family Shelter, Raphael House, and the Richmond Hills Family Center.

“The services we provide help homeless kids be kids again – summer camp tuition, school supplies, tutoring, music lessons, learning assessments and many other opportunities to broaden their framework outside of the shelters. We want the kids to see the possibilities outside of homelessness,” explains Le Coq. “The saddest moment for us is to see a girl that we helped as a youngster back in the shelter as a teenager with a baby. We’ve got to do all we can to break the cycle and give these children hope for their future.”

The COS campaign will run from 6-8 weeks in San Francisco. Consumers can direct questions or donations to www.childrenofshelters.org.

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Children of Shelters Outdoor Ad Campaign

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