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ABSTRACT

This guide contains suggestions for those seeking to establish library services for homeless children, help for computerizing a homeless shelter, and a discussion of the problems and rewards of establishing library services in a shelter. Steps to establishing services include: (1) clarifying the purpose of the effort; (2) doing the homework to have adequate background information; (3) developing a plan of action; and (4) keeping the focus on library services. Computerizing a homeless shelter, especially the library services, is not a simple proposition, with scarce resources and limited space almost always factors, but it is an effort definitely worth making. The "Tahoe Presentation," which is attached, is an exploration of the importance of library services to children in shelters. Books offer these children a chance to dream, and library services are one of the keys to a brighter future. Experiences with children in shelters illustrate the vital importance books can have for their emotional well-being and the importance an element of computer literacy can have for the school-age child. The DeKalb County (Georgia) Project Horizons is an example of a cooperative effort supported by the Atlanta City Schools, the Decatur city schools, and the DeKalb County Schools to ensure library services in homeless shelters. (SLD)

HERE'S HOW!

Practical hints for establishing library services in homeless shelters

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HERE'S HOW:
a practical guide for librarians seeking to establish services for homeless children

1. Before you do anything else, **clarify your purpose** in serving homeless families. You are not trying to be social workers, or to build houses. You are trying to provide library services.

It is important to articulate your goals and to write them down - and to keep them in view at all times. When you get into the shelters, it will be difficult to remain detached and objective. So figure out ahead of time why you are there, and who your target audience will be, then vow to stick to it.

2. Then, **do your homework**:
Identify the family shelters. This sounds elementary but may not be so easy. Homeless shelters come and go fairly quickly, and come in all varieties - some serve only male adults, others accept only women and children, while a few will only accept families with fathers.

And remember that each family shelter is unique. Find out how many families are accepted, how long their maximum stay can be, and the average number and ages of children.

Contact the shelter directors to arrange a visit. Your visit will probably be welcome, but should be planned with the director in advance. Arrange to see the facility, meet the residents and talk to the director personally.

Look around the facility. Until you really know what the needs are in a particular shelter, you cannot plan viable services. Are there any books or bookshelves? Is there an easily accessible space for play? Are parents or caregivers talking to the children?

Talk with the residents. This will be easier if you have planned an activity for the children - storytelling, reading aloud, a simple craft or game. Don't force yourself on the children, but provide the opportunity for them to participate. You will learn a lot about the children and the parents this way: do the kids know what books are? Do they seem familiar with the concept of listening to stories? Do the parents join in or walk away? Are some parents opposed to letting their children participate? Observe closely - all of these things will tell you what kinds of services are needed.

Talk with the director. Let her know that the library is considering services to shelters, and offer a few suggestions of services that might be offered - deposit book collections, storytellers, etc. Get her reactions and suggestions, discuss problems that she foresees. (A word of caution here: most shelters have only one paid part-time worker, and are staffed primarily with volunteers. They will be justifiably leery of anything that sounds like more work for them.)

Find out what other agencies and organizations may already be involved at the shelter. Do volunteers take children to ballgames and concerts? Is RIF's Project Open Book already operating in the shelter? Is the local school system providing school supplies, tutoring, after-school care, etc., through U.S. Department of Education funds?

Find out what other agencies in your community serve the homeless, or have related objectives. For instance, churches, Rotary groups, the local chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, health clinics, etc. Any or all of these agencies may have some interest or involvement in serving homeless families.

Now you know a lot about the needs of homeless children in your community, and about the ways in which those needs are being met. With this information, you can identify services which complement and enhance those which are already in place, and which best help meet your overall goals.

3. **Develop a plan of action.** So far, I haven't mentioned funding, but I will now. Once you know what you're going to do, you'll know where to go for help. Some of the organizations who are already involved with the shelters will be able to help you identify places to turn for in-kind services and volunteers. If you have bookshelves, book collections may be arranged through Project Open Book. You may be able to get computers donated through the local affiliate of the American Association of PC Users Groups.

Contact your local public school system. State departments of education are mandated under the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act to make federal grant funds available to local school systems for the purpose of facilitating the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless students in schools. While these grants can only be awarded to school systems, it is possible for the library to contract related services under these grants. It takes communication, flexiblity and determination to develop such a partnership, but the results can be very rewarding. The Resource List below is a starter list of potential resources, including how to pursue this funding.

4. **Keep your focus.** Amid fund-raising, coalition-building and program-planning, it's easy to lose sight of the goals. Refer back to your stated goals and objectives often, and remain committed to them in the face of the inevitable setbacks, roadblocks and frustrations.

HERE'S HOW:
A practical guide to computerizing a homeless shelter

Computerizing a homeless shelter is not a simple proposition. Arrangements and agreements must be made with shelter staff; space must be carved out of very crowded quarters; security for hardware and software must be assured; funding for the equipment, software and maintenance must be identified. And after all of this has been put in place, the children require constant personal assistance and supervision while using the computers.

1. Working with **shelter staff** can be a challenge. Most shelters employ only one part-time paid worker who directs the business affairs of the agency; everything else must be done by volunteers. Understandably, staff looks askance at the proposition of new projects, since these usually entail more work from them. In order to enlist their enthusiastic cooperation, you must show them the benefits of the proposal - for the residents, and for the staff. Their support will be needed in selecting an appropriate space and helping prepare it for use. They may also be needed to get permissions from the Executive Board or other governing agency. They cannot be expected to contribute much further beyond that, but without their cooperation in these matters, the project will fail.

2. **Space** is always difficult to find in shelters, and appropriate space for a computer lab is almost nonexistent. The space must have electricity (not always a given); it must be lockable to protect equipment from theft and damage; it must be dry (not by a window that is often left open in the rain). Fortunately, the PC's can withstand fairly wide fluctuations in temperature, and do not have to be in airconditioned environments!

There are a number of strategies to **overcome space limitations:**

- Where a lockable space is unavailable, put the computers on rolling carts which can be locked in a large closet when not in use.

- The computers can share space (with the nurse's station or other non-traditional space -- a workable solution as long as everyone stays healthy).

- If space is available but tables are not, the computers can even be placed on the floor, and put to use immediately by the children.

3. **Obtaining equipment** can be unbelievably easy if you have a local pc users group, such as the Atlanta PC Users Group which set up the Project Horizons labs. Ask around at your local software or computer stores and they'll put you in touch with potential agnecies. Like the Atlanta PC Users Group, they may be willing and able to solicit donations of old computers and computer parts, then repair and reassemble them into "new" computers to be put in the shelters.

The Atlanta PC Users Group donated 18 of these refurbished computers to *Project Horizons*, sent volunteers to the shelters to deliver and install the equipment, and even provided parts, software and maintenance! They have also contributed hundreds of volunteer hours in the shelters, teaching the children and adults to use the equipment and software.

4. **Establish your basic standards** for computer equipment early in the project. For most children's software, color monitors are a must. You'll need XT level or above to handle most programs. Other options, such as printers and mice, are wonderful but not necessary - and they may create more problems than they're worth: printers require paper; mice are fragile and often instigate tugs-of-war among the children.

We learned the hard way that hard drives are also necessary. Transferring programs onto the drive will allow you to keep software under lock and key - and offsite. This means that it can't be destroyed by un-knowledgeable staff and volunteers. It also simplifies access so that even computer-illiterate volunteers and staff can supervise the children.

5. A library staff person must **assume the main responsibility** for supervision and assistance of the computer lab, although you may be able to enlist volunteers from your pc users group and from other community organizations. Children and adults need help in selecting appropriate software, understanding instructions, becoming familiar with the keyboard and commands, and trouble-shooting. It's also necessary to maintain discipline and establish some guidelines for usage.

IS IT WORTH THE EFFORT?

The addition of computers to the shelters will not be without problems. Coordinating the acquisition, installation and maintenance of this equipment is time-consuming and sometimes frustrating. Just when you think everything's under control, a shelter will decide that the computer room is the optimum place for the nursery or the GED class or storage. Someone leaves a window open and the computer is drowned. The shelter staff loses the keys (to the whole shelter, including the computer room) and everything has to be re-keyed. But the rewards are definitely worth the trouble!

TAHOE PRESENTATION

"Books teach children to dream..."

Books also teach children to hope - to believe that there might be a "happily ever after."

Public libraries are in the unique and enviable position of providing the stuff of dreams and hope and "happily ever after." It is our responsibility to ensure that the children who need it most are receiving it.

There's certainly no one who needs dreams and hope more than a child in a homeless shelter. That child not only needs to believe in a positive future, but needs to be prepared for that future. Books can be the answer to both of those needs.

As you know, children who are surrounded by language, books, magazines and newspapers enter school prepared to learn and prepared to succeed. Children whose environment is devoid of these things enter school prepared to fail. It's that simple.

In 1983, Denny Taylor conducted an in-depth study which offered abundant evidence about the ways in which family interactions contribute to and support the development of literacy in children.

She found that children from literate families are exposed to the writing system at an early age. In an environment where reading and writing are constantly modelled and practiced, these children learn of reading as one way of listening, and of writing of one way of talking. These children are able to move from one literate environment - home - to another - school - with minimum difficulty and early success.

Unfortunately, children from homes where literacy is not an ongoing intergenerational activity seldom acquire those crucial attitudes, values and literacy experiences before they enter school. As a result, they enter school at a pre-literacy level up to three years below their natural potential and are "at-risk" for school failure. Many of them never catch up, and perpetuate the cycle of the family's undereducation.

None of that is surprise. But even to this group, this fact may be: in this country, the average age of a homeless person in 9 years old. And guess what: homeless shelters are NOT literate environments for children.

Shelters are primarily concerned with providing a bed to sleep in, food to eat, and clothing to wear. Everything else must be considered a luxury. So there are few books, very few toys, no crayons or paper. There are few opportunities for parents to share meaningful activities with their children. The environment of most family shelters prepares children to continue the cycle of failure.

It is easy to see that there are some voids here that must be filled. The children need access to books and magazines that they can keep and take with them to their next home. They need to hear stories being told and read aloud. They need the attention and time of caring adults. In short, they need library services.

In 1989, the DeKalb County Public Library began Project ' rizons to provide library services in homeless shelters. We wanted to create a print-rich, language-rich environment within the shelters to help encourage the acquisition of those values, attitudes and experiences that lead to literacy.

The methodology was simple. To provide the print-rich environment, we arranged to put deposit collections of donated paperback children's books in each shelter. These books were the property of the children - to be kept, loved, taken on to the next home,...and read over and over and over. In addition, Baker & Taylor provided deposits of used adult books - to enable parents to model reading behaviors for their children.

To provide the language-rich environment, a volunteer storyteller visited each shelter on a bi-weekly basis, telling stories, reading aloud, and encouraging parents to read with, talk to and listen to their children.

The services were badly needed. When we approached the children, inviting them to hear a story, it was immediately apparent that many of them did not understand the concept of "story." Some of them had never held a book, did not know how to turn the pages, had no frame of reference for "storytime." We had our work cut out for us.

Early experiences taught us to bring a wide variety of materials - song books, game books, picturebooks, joke books. We learned to be very flexible, ready to work with a two-year-old in the lap while reading aloud to a 5-year-old and a teenager. The residents and ages and interests change daily at one shelter, weekly at another, or monthly at another. The children are wild and acting out, or frightened and withdrawn, or apathetic, or distracted. There is only one constant: all of the children are desperate for the attention and time of a caring adult.

Because of the perpetual flux, there is no such thing as a "Typical Session." Typically, nothing is typical. But I <u>can</u> tell you some of our experiences, which will help you understand the need for these services, the power of the stories, and the long-lasting effects of the project.

Teeni and her little sister came to the Nicholas House transitional shelter with their mother about a year ago. Teeni was 3 years old, and she had never seen or held a book. Her communication skills were very limited - mostly the kind of grunts and whines and sounds you expect from an 18-mo-old.

But she was a human Curious George, into everything, wanting to see, wanting to touch, wanting to know. She totally disrupted storytime on her first day, running in circles and screaming and hitting the other children. But then Betsy, the storyteller, handed her a board book.

Teeni did not know what to do with it - she tried to eat it, and attempted to pull it apart. And then she watched what Betsy was doing with her book - turning the pages slowly and looking carefully at the pictures. Teeni copied that behavior. She sat for 15 minutes, slowly turning the pages of her board book, poring over the pictures. Long after storytime was over, Teeni sat enraptured by the book. Betsy took her on her lap, and read the book to her, discussing the pictures and asking questions. Teeni was in love. With a book. She took the book to bed with her that night, and the next time Betsy came, Teeni "read" the book to Betsy. She didn't have much language to work with, but she had obviously absorbed the meaning of the book.

This was not a one-time behavior. Teeni continued to love books, and began to show them to her baby sister, "reading" from the page as she had seen Betsy do. Her vocabulary began to grow by leaps and bounds, and soon she was speaking in full sentences. She demanded that her mother read aloud to her. And after two months, Teeni's mother, who had never valued reading and who had never shown a book to her child, was reading aloud to both of her children every day. She even began to tell other mothers how important it was to read aloud to their children.

Teeni is one of our proudest success stories. Not only has she been infected by the love of reading, but her mother has as well - and her mother is spreading the word to others. Kind of a missionary story.

We see this kind of effect often - mothers (and fathers) who become convinced of the value of reading to their children, and encourage others to join in. I attribute this to the enthusiasm of the children, of course. But also to the empowerment of the adult. As you know, parents who have brought their families to homeless shelters often feel very powerless - they feel that they have failed their children, that there is nothing that they can offer. But the simple act of reading aloud gives them back some self-respect - they realize that they have the ability to prepare their children for success in school and in life. That's pretty powerful stuff.

Reading and storytelling also have another kind of power. Many children in shelters build protective walls around themselves to shield themselves from the horrors of daily life. The walls might look like aggression, or withdrawal or apathy, but they are there to shut out the terrors. Unfortunately, they often shut out the help as well. Stories can break through those walls, and let in the possibility of hope.

One day I went to the Battered Women's shelter and found only two children there. One was about 8 - and he was a hyperactive, rambunctious, almost violent child.

The other boy was 5 - extremely withdrawn, unable to make eye contact, curled into an almost fetal position in his chair. Not an ideal audience for storytelling. The caregiver told me not to bother with the 5-year-old; he had never yet made eye contact or made a sound since his arrival the week before...

The story I chose to tell was a highly interactive one which could potentially harness some of the older boy's energy and attention while inviting the younger child to listen. As I told it, the older boy joined in with enthusiasm, but the other child remained in his fetal position, head down. Then his eyes met mine - ever so briefly - and closed again. With my heart pounding, I went on...and he looked up again, a little longer this time. On we went, with the story getting more and more silly and boisterous, and the small child becoming more and more caught by the tale. And then he laughed! A tiny laugh, to be sure, but joyful. His fetal posiiton relaxed a bit, and his eyes stayed open throughout that story, and the next, adn the next. The story had pushed back some of the darkness surrounding him, and allowed some light to shine through.

The story broke through a barrier, and I found out later that the crack in that barrier stayed down...long enough for a staff psychologist to make further progress.

Stories have power.

Tamara didn't know about stories, either. She was 4, and her two sisters and

mom had come to the shelter in a hopeless mood. The mother was aggressive and angry, and Tamara was belligerent and sullen. When Tamara came to her first story session, she sat scowling in the back, unwilling to be entertained or drawn into the story. But then Betsy told the story of Little Red Riding Hood. Tamara was all ears. She was so raptly involved in the story that Betsy was reluctant to get to the end. But Tamara simply asked for the story again, and again and again. The other children wandered off, and Betsy let them go. She just kept reading about Little Red Riding Hood and the big bad wolf, and watching Tamara's face. Tamara was plainly thinking, and thinking hard. Something was turning over and over in her mind. Finally, Tamara asked to keep the book, and Betsy gladly gave it to her.

Each time Betsy returned to the shelter for a solid month, Tamara asked for the story to be read at least 3 times. She began to smile frequently, and often laughed. And finally one day, she returned the book to Betsy.

"Do you want me to read this to you?" Betsy asked. "No." "Don't you want to keep the book anymore?" "No." "Is anything wrong?" "No." And Tamara walked away. But she came back later and sat on Betsy's lap. "You know, in that story Little Red was in bad trouble," she told Betsy. "But she was saved," Betsy replied. "Yeah. She lived happily ever after. I'm gonna live happily ever after, too." And she climbed down, chose another book, and never asked for Little Red Riding Hood again. Clearly, she had resolved her future, and it was full of hope.

You see, Project Horizons involves much more than reading to children. Yes, we teach children to love books, and teach parents to enjoy sharing books with their kids. Yes, we see marked increases in the incidence of independent reading and parent read-aloud sessions. We see children taking books to bed with them; we hear them begging the storyteller to come EVERY day; we see their eager faces when the box of "Keeper" books is brought out. We know that they are discovering the joy of reading.

But more than that...Project Horizons strengthens families through shared experiences and joy. Project Horizons empowers parents to help their children, and gives parents much-needed self-respect.
Project Horizons enables barriers to be broken. And it provides the stuff of "Happily ever after."

Over the five years that our project has been in service, we have learned a lot and expanded our own horizons. In 1992, grants from LSCA Title I and the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy allowed us to offer Building Blocks programs in three shelters. Building Blocks is an intergenerational program for parents and their very young children, ages 0-36 months, which introduces parents to the activities and materials which lead to the acquisition of language skills. During a Building Blocks session, parents and children play together as the librarian models the behaviors she wants the parents to emulate: she praises the baby, talks to the baby, describes actions to the baby, such as "you put the yellow block on the red

block." She helps the parents understand that babies need to hear language in order to learn to speak, and that language provides the building blocks for thought and for literacy. The play session is followed by "circle time," during which the librarian leads the group in interactive nursery rhymes, action rhymes, songs, poems and simple stories.

The Building Blocks sessions have proven to be extremely successful, helping parents learn to communicate more effectively with their children, and building language and cognitive skills. After the first grant funding ran out, we were able to continue the Building Blocks services through cooperative agreements with local school systems.

As you know, cooperative agreements are the name of the game in shelter services. With the help of the Atlanta PC Users Group, we have even established computer learning labs in seven of the eight shelters.

Why computers in homeless shelters?

While the need for homeless children to be surrounded by books and to share read-aloud experiences is an obvious one, the need for the computer labs is sometimes questioned. Isn't this a fairly luxurious - even superfluous - service, to provide in a homeless shelter?

I don't think so. In fact, the computers directly support the goal of *Project Horizons*, which is to provide the print-rich, language-rich environment which educators have found to be the best predictor of success in school. By providing access to educational games and learning activities, these children are given opportunities to explore the alphabet, words and word games. They can become familiar with the computer keyboard and simple commands, and their parents can practice job skills such as Lotus or WordPerfect. The computers help them attain literacy skills at the same time as they become computer literate.

We hear a lot about the Information Superhighway these days. Businesses, libraries and educational institutions are rushing to access the incredible array of electronic resources that are now available.

But it makes me wonder: What will become of the two in three households which do not have personal computers? Will these families find themselves stranded on muddy sideroads, watching helplessly as the information elite whiz past them on the superhighway?

Proponents of the Information Superhighway claim that this will not be the case. They believe that the superhighway will help to close the gap between the "haves and the have-nots," providing equal access to services that heretofore have only been available to the elite.

Others expect the opposite to occur: "Instead of having a widespread democratizing effect, with many more people having access to, say, free library services on their televisions, the future will bring a division between the rich and the wired versus the poor and the unplugged," claims a recent article in the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*.

Personally, I suspect that both claims have some merit. Through Internet connections at public libraries, the general public will have access to services that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive. But at the same time, those individuals who are not computer-literate or who do not own a personal computer will be at a distinct disadvantage in school and in the workplace.

These disadvantages are already evident. Many children now enter school not only reciting their ABC's but conversant with computer keyboards and simple commands. Their less fortunate classmates, however, may never have seen a PC or heard the word "keyboard." The gap between these children's "readiness to learn" may be as much as two or three years - a very wide gap indeed for a 5-year-old child.

The computerization of Project Horizons began approximately three years ago, growing out of our storytellers' experiences and observations. As I mentioned earlier, the storytellers often met children who had never seen a book or who had

never been told a story. The children responded eagerly to the books that were offered, and the stories that were told. The changes in their attitudes towards school, their ability to communicate, even their relationships with their parents, were compelling proof that our project was succeeding.

But the storytellers still overheard disturbing tales of traumas at school. While the homeless children were not labelled as such by the teachers or the school, their classmates nonetheless identified them as "different" almost immediately. The problem was not grubby clothes or lack of intelligence, it was lack of experience. One distinguishing characteristic recurred again and again: the homeless children were completely unfamiliar with computers, computer games, and computer terminology. Ignorance in this area was embarrassing to the child, who was already self-conscious, angry and scared.

The social stigma was accompanied by an academic one. Upon entering a classroom where the majority of the children were "computer-literate," a child unfamiliar with technology was immediately left behind. While other children were busily matching the yellow clown to the yellow balloon, this child was trying to find the enter key. He could not interact successfully with computer-assisted instruction or play the games; he had to be brought up to speed from ground zero. Many times, having already dropped behind grade level due to changes in schools, absences and lack of adequate study space, the homeless child found himself defeated by the new technology.

Well, Project Horizons was designed to create an environment which would help children succeed. In addition to books and storytelling, this means providing children in shelters with the same kinds of experiences and frames of reference as their classmates. We show them how to use scissors and paste; we help them learn their ABC's and 123's; we help arrange field trips to museums, libraries and cultural events. And so, having identified the pressing need, we began to provide computer labs where the children can learn their way around the computer keyboard. These experiences allow homeless children to enter school on a more balanced footing with their classmates, both academically and socially.

In each of the shelters, we also maintain a wide variety of books for the families to keep. Most of the books are provided through an agreement with Reading is Fundamental's Project Open Book program, but some are donated by local businesses and through community book drives. A total of approximately 35 businesses, schools, churches and service organizations contribute to Project Horizons each year. In addition, we are able to respond to special needs and requests through grants from the Nordson Corporation, The American Association of University Women, and the Falcons Wives Association.

The most important element of Project Horizons, however, is personnel. Working in the shelters is labor-intensive, requiring our staff to spend at least two evenings per week per shelter. The children are in desperate need of continuity, and crave the attention of a caring adult. For this reason, we now have 4 part-time shelter

storytellers dividing their time between the eight shelters. The salaries of three of these storytellers are subcontracted und r the U.S. Department of Education McKinney Act grants to Atlanta City Schools, Decatur City Schools and DeKalb County Schools. In this way, we can make sure that the children and their parents are receiving the one-on-one support they need, and that the storytellers are in a position to respond to the ever-changing shelter environment.

Developing and maintaining these partnerships has not always been easy, as you can imagine. We have been very fortunate to have David Davidson around to help smooth out all of the lumps and bumps. As you probably know, David is a master at perceiving alternative solutions, changing paradigms, and developing cooperative structures. These skills have enabled Project Horizons to continue and flourish.

You see, approximately three years ago, with the LSCA Title One funding under which Project Horizons had been operating coming to an end, I began to search for help in keeping our books and storytellers in the shelters. My search brought me to David, who helped me develop cooperative relationships with Decatur City Schools and DeKalb County Schools. Later, we also developed cooperative services with the Atlanta City Schools.

Each of these relationships is necessarily different, since each school system has different accounting needs, each shelter has different service needs, and each grant serves a different population. However, the program that we offer remains

essentially constant, no matter the source of funding. Under each cooperative agreement, the DeKalb County Public Library is contracted to provide library services to the family shelters within that school district. The contracted services always include a part-time storyteller who reads to the children, tells stories, maintains book collections, assists with the computer lab, conducts Building Blocks sessions and provides continuity and degree of predictability. In various shelters, the contracts also help support additional computer hardware and software, programming supplies and magazine subscriptions.

Working with the three school districts has allowed me to observe and participate in a variety of approaches to the development of cooperative projects, and to develop some fundamental precepts about what makes a cooperative project succeed - or fail.

In my experience, each member of a cooperative team must observe these three precepts in order for the entire coalition to succeed:

1. COMMITMENT

It is essential that all members of the coalition be focussed on and committed to the same goals. There must be a pervasive understanding of the purpose of the project, and of each agency's role in accomplishing that purpose. And, to use a hackneyed phrase, everyone must "Buy in" to that purpose. When that happens, cooperation is assured.

2. COMMUNICATION

Cooperation cannot exist without effective, ongoing, honest communication between all participants. For example, Decatur City Schools Anchor Project conducts monthly meetings of all cooperative agencies, during which we discuss our progress towards objectives, identify problems and develop truly cooperative solutions to these problems. Detailed minutes of these meetings are mailed to all agencies to update those who may have been unable to attend, and to help us all remember agreements and commitments. This works. We all stay "on the same page," working towards the same goal.

3. FLEXIBILITY

As you all know, working within the transient community demands flexibility and adaptability. Conditions change frequently, requiring adjustment of plans, reallocation of resources, and lots of patience and creativity. A strong coalition can rely on its members to recognize needs and to do whatever it takes to meet those needs. In working with the Anchor Project, I have observed the willingness of coalition members to change bus schedules, reassign staff members, share funding sources and give personal time to the project when needed. That's why it works.

The success of Project Horizons is the result of commitment, communication and flexibility. The DeKalb County Public Library is committed to serving all members of our community with quality materials and services. In order to do that

effectively, we must reach out, form partnerships, join coalitions and find ways to deliver our resources where they are needed most. There are many other public libraries across the country which are also eager to serve the homeless populations of their community, but have not yet identified the best approach. Yet they may be in the position to offer services which meet the needs of the children in YOUR community. I urge you to invite your local public library to your own planning table, and find out how their services might fit into an even more successful service approach for your community.

Because Project Horizons **is succeeding** - we're making a difference in the quality of children's lives now and for years to come. Because of Project Horizons, we now see families taking precious moments to share books and stories. We watch the joy on a child's face when he chooses his favorite book to keep.

We introduce children to books for the very first time, and share their excitement as they discover the world of literature. And we hear the new-found hope in a mother's voice when she understands that the simple, free act of reading aloud to her child can make a positive difference in the future.

Through Project Horizons, the DeKalb County Public Library is

- ☺ motivating parents to read aloud to their children
- ☺ motivating children to read independantly
- ☺ empowering parents to make a positive difference in their children's

future

and

☺ providing the gift of story...the chance to believe in "happily ever after."

Thank you.