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Big Ideas: Birthday Bash

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BIG IDEAS: Birthday Bash

*An SMU community
initiative of engagement
and service*

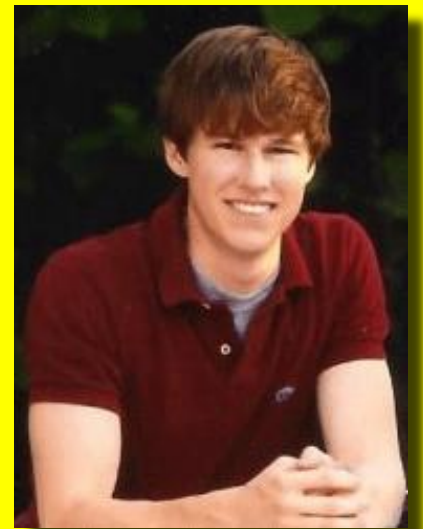
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Birthday Bash

Initial Mission: to give children without parents the opportunity to celebrate their birthdays with everything from cake and educational presents to noisemakers and balloons. However, the program is not about just giving the children gifts; it is also about spending time with them during their birthdays. With this one on one contact, the children are getting attention that they might not otherwise receive.

Current Goals

The goal of this program is similar to that of adopting a child for the Celebration of Lights. Students integrate with young ones to inspire them to strive for success. A mix of conversation and celebration ensure fun, motivation, and learning on both sides.

As opposed to similar programs, Birthday Bash encourages continuity in the relationships with the students and the children. SMU students will visit the selected home monthly to celebrate with the children who have birthdays during that month. The students' role is to offer encouragement and motivation for these children, who otherwise may lose initiative for their own future. College students are in a perfect position to mentor these children, more so than older social workers.

We hope to make this program an SMU wide effort where religious, service, and greek organizations come together for the good of the children.

Potential Orphanages, Programs and Shelters in the Dallas area...

Jonathan's Place



Jonathan's Place is a temporary home for abused, abandoned or neglected children from ages 0-17. The home has 14

bedrooms, with 2 beds in each room, and a 4-crib nursery. Jonathan's Place takes care of children's basic needs, including food, clothing and education, and advanced needs, including medical, dental and psychological.

Our role would be to work with the orphanage behind the scenes. Since the children stay for such a short period of time, relationships with them would be limited.

Presbyterian Children's Home

The Foster Care Program serves children from infancy to age 17 at the time of admission. The home is just like any big family's, very busy! The closest homes in Waxahachie and Duncanville hold 66 beds and serve both boys and girls. Staff serve as parents to provide a nurturing environment for children to practice positive behaviors and healthy family relationships. They are constantly recruiting volunteers, and our program has great opportunity for success here.



Boles Home

Boles Home is a facility that provides residential care in a homelike atmosphere for children and single-parent families. It is licensed by the State of Texas to care for boys and girls. Most children in care are between the ages of 10 and 17. Children are placed in the Home because their family has become unable to provide for their needs. This may be due to family factors such as ill health, other destabilizing occurrences, or excessive needs of the child due to emotional or behavioral problems. Single-parent mothers and their children come to the program in search of basic needs, safety, and stability while acquiring vocational training and skills in managing their family



Buckner International

Buckner International sponsors a number of after-school programs and child development centers serving at-risk children in the state of Texas. Programs are available in Dallas and Fort Worth. This would be a great way for us to incorporate our mentoring and educational ideas from our project into the already existing programs.



What have we learned?

- “Birthday Bash” is widely applicable to several different homes and programs across Dallas
- Our project can be easily tailored to meet each specific location’s respective needs
- In order for us to establish a long-term relationship with each of the previously mentioned homes, regular volunteers would need to go through some basic training to maximize the potential of the volunteer work, and the experience as a whole

Related Literature

- *A Place to Call Home: The Amazing Success Story of Modern Orphanages*
- *Alone in the World: Orphans and Orphanages in America*
- *Rethinking Orphanages for the 21st Century*

