



Paul Wellman

8 a.m. Monday morning the line of people outside the Casa Esperanza Homeless Center stretches down Cacique Street waiting for the services of the 5th annual Healthy Neighbor program

Medical Services and Survival Backpacks Help Homeless Population

Project Healthy Neighbors Aids Community for Fifth Year

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

By [Rebecca Bratburd](#)

The fifth annual Project Healthy Neighbors estimated that it will have given medical services and survival kits to approximately 500 homeless Santa Barbara individuals by the time the three-day health fair is over. It started on Monday, November 16 at the Casa Esperanza Homeless Center, and ends November 18.

The providers are seeing more homeless women and children than in past years, according to Ken Williams, homeless outreach social worker and coordinator. He said Project Healthy Neighbors is the only outreach organization to go to the front lines of homelessness and address it so directly.

Families Uniting to Nurture Dreams, or F.U.N.D., provided 500 backpacks with first-aid kits, hygienic items, sweatshirts, ponchos, beanies, socks, and other items to help people survive on the streets during winter months. Women's backpacks included products specific to women's hygiene.

Participants were required to receive vaccinations and medical screening before receiving a backpack.

Photo Gallery

Fifth Annual Project Healthy Neighbors at Casa Esperanza



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According to Ken Saxon, one of the founders of F.U.N.D., the backpacks served as an incentive for people to receive flu, tetanus, and pneumonia vaccinations. The backpacks each contained a card handwritten by a child. One bore the message, "Have a day that's as sweet and cheerful as cotton candy." Saxon said the cards were included to show that people care about the homeless, even when the homeless themselves lose hope.

Project Healthy Neighbors provided a range of critical medical services. As in previous years, the event supplied immunizations for seasonal flu, pneumonia, and tetanus. It provided HIV screening and tuberculosis screening, drug and alcohol counseling, mental health screening, and dental care. Rape crisis and domestic violence counseling were provided in addition to women's wellness services. Medi-cal and veterans' resources were offered. Souls4Souls donated shoes to the event. This year, swine flu vaccinations—and hair cuts—were added to the list.

Project Healthy Neighbors' cause is to prevent disease and death among the homeless population in Santa Barbara. Over 20 Santa Barbara health and social service agencies and 100 volunteers helped make the event possible.

Fifth Annual Project Healthy Neighbors at Casa Esperanza

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David Hanratty gets a routine TB test that starts with a skin level injection and follows with checking the arm's appearance for a reaction in a few days. [View photo »](#)



Outreach social worker Ken Williams discusses the sculpture that was created back in July 2009, a cactus plant with seventeen unique flowers marked with the names of the deceased homeless, now adorned with nine more white flowers to represent the current total of 26 to have passed away in Santa Barbara this year. [View photo »](#)



William Harmon, originally from Texas, finds a pair of size 12 boots that fit just right among the hundreds of donated shoes. [View photo »](#)



Stephen Bobkoski gets an H1N1 Swine flu shot from volunteering RN Patricia Burkard [View photo »](#)



Handmade cards are included with each backpack [View photo »](#)



Ken Saxon (left) with Families Uniting to Nurture Dreams, the organization that provided 500 backpacks loaded with essential needs items, takes time for a quick photo with a few fellow volunteers. [View photo »](#)



Each backpack contains a new sweatshirt, beanie hat, socks, gender-specific toiletries, a rain poncho, and a handmade card. [View photo »](#)



John Butney, Santa Barbara Ex. Dir. with the 10-year Plan to End Homelessness, (center) works the coveted-backpack table with volunteers from Midland school [View photo »](#)



Cherrie Guth with her new backpack [View photo »](#)



Fay Doe, owner of Underground Hair Artists, volunteers her services to Tina Martino. [View photo »](#)



Tina Martino gets a new style, one of 24 haircuts provided by Underground Hair Artists on Monday and 10 more on tuesday. [View photo »](#)



Tina Martino likes the new look [View photo »](#)