

# Emerald Star Project: Homeless Veteran Packing Party



Naomi Osterman & Siena Bowen

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# Planning and Communication

## **How We Chose Our Event and Organization:**

Right off the bat, we knew we wanted not only 4-H, but also our outside community working together and participating in an event that would brighten someone's day. With this in mind, we came up with helping homeless veterans through care packages. By opening the packing party to the public and 4-H, people can come together as one community and join in on an activity, rather than blindly donating money online. Once we knew what we wanted to do, we found a shelter called Operation Dignity that was enthusiastic about our event and agreed to distribute donations to their local vets. After establishing our ideas, we set about advertising our event, selling t-shirts, making decorations, and collecting donations so that we could finally execute our event.

## **Communication: Clubs & Community**

Advertising our event was of huge importance when it came to the event running smoothly. Since it was open to the public, we wanted to make sure information was posted on multiple platforms for people to see. First, we created a flyer for our event using a template on the state 4-H website. We also added our event to the county 4-H calendar to notify other club leaders. Social media proved to be very helpful when it came to selling our shirts as well, because we could upload pictures and links of our shirts and flyers to Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook. We also sent out multiple emails to our club about either joining a volunteer group to help us set up (as well as get leadership points for record books) or stopping by just as a participant. When our efforts on social media seemed futile, we ended up directly texting our friends and family members to see if they could purchase a shirt or attend our event. This method proved handy, because it appeared that singling out people increased our chances of getting donations or raising money for Operation Dignity. Our last reach of communication was with our schools. We would bring flyers to class to have our teachers hang on their doors, and would give a small explanation of the event to classmates to invite them to join us. Unfortunately, very few of our schoolmates came out to help on the actual day of the event, but there wasn't very much more we could have done in terms of communication.

## **Communication: Local Businesses**

We knew the bulk of our donations would have to come from local businesses willing to donate, so we began sending out letters. Our formal business letters offered information and details on our event, ourselves, 4-H, and the shelter we were supporting. Two weeks later, we personally followed up with each business with a flyer. It was a bit discouraging at first, because quite a few businesses required that we apply for donations through a corporate office, which we

were unable to do because of a lack of time. Other common obstacles included trying to meet with store managers during their available hours (which proved very difficult amidst long school schedules and sports), as well as trying to return calls from stores. Luckily, we quickly fell into a daily schedule of answering calls during brunch, lunch, and after school, and picking up donations before or after school, and on the weekends. All in all, we made out fairly well with donations due to our active and large-scale communication.

# HEAD • HEART • HANDS • HEALTH



## CCC 4-H Emerald Star Project

presents

# Homeless Veteran Packing Party!

- Hosted by Siena Bowen (17) and Naomi Osterman (17)
- Come make tie blankets, assemble care packages, and write letters to homeless Veterans!
- Benefits non-profit organization Operation Dignity in Oakland
- Shirts available here:  
[www.booster.com/ourveterans](http://www.booster.com/ourveterans)
- Open to everybody!

Support  
our Vets!

## When

Saturday, September 9, 2017  
1:00 pm - 3:30 pm  
Snacks and water provided!

## Where

Danville Grange Hall  
743 Diablo Rd.  
Danville, CA  
94526



Contact: [siena.bowen@gmail.com](mailto:siena.bowen@gmail.com) or [naomi.jess3@gmail.com](mailto:naomi.jess3@gmail.com)

UCCE Contra Costa County 4-H Office  
75 Santa Barbara Rd, 2nd. Floor  
Pleasant Hill, CA, 94523  
925-646-6543  
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University of California  
Agriculture and Natural Resources | 4-H Youth Development Program



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Dear Costco,

We are 4-H members of Tassajara 4-H Club in Contra Costa County. We are one of a few other groups in our county that are planning a service learning project to benefit those in our community. This project is called an Emerald Star Project which is similar to an Eagle Scout Project. 4-H is a worldwide youth-run organization that focuses on developing agriculture awareness and familiarity, as well as important leadership and citizenship skills.

Currently we are planning a project designed to benefit homeless veterans and to help our community become more knowledgeable about our heroes. We expect to accomplish this goal by hosting a packing party in September for families to assemble care packages for homeless veterans through an Oakland organization called Operation Dignity. This event will be held at the Grange Hall in Danville on September 9th, 2017. We will have multiple tables prepared for volunteers to come in and assemble care packages (filled with toiletries/snacks/first aid), tie no-sew fabric blankets, and write cards and make drawings for the veterans. We will also sell t-shirts before the event that will be passed out on the actual date of the packing party.

We would like to invite Costco to support our efforts to help inform families and show our veterans how much we love them! We hope to assemble over 500 packages total for Operation Dignity. The estimated cost of supplies for our project is \$345. Some items that would be beneficial to the success of this event are cardboard boxes (for transport), gallon size ziploc bags, granola & protein bars, small combs & brushes, small water bottles, pens and blank cards/thank you cards, razors, band-aids, chapstick, sunscreen, feminine hygiene products, toothbrushes & small toothpaste, travel size deodorants/shampoos, socks, antibiotic creams/first aid kits, and individually packaged nuts and trail mixes.

As a business that supplies toiletries, snacks, and socks, we thought you would be interested in our efforts to expand the knowledge of our community and support for our veterans.

We have a plan to publicize this project as we proceed and we will be happy to recognize your business's contribution in our promotional materials and in later reports on the project, and through other communications to the public.

Should you wish to make a contribution to this important project taking place in our community please contact us. Or, we will follow up with you soon to discuss any questions you might have or to discuss your possible support. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Siena Bowen  
Naomi Osterman  
Tassajara 4-H

## Looking for Volunteers!!

Sun, Aug 6, 2017 at 5:53 PM

Hi Tassajara!

I hope you're all having a fantastic summer! For our Emerald Star project, we are hosting a packing party for a homeless veterans shelter on September 9th at the Danville Grange! (Care packages, cards, no-sew blanket making). If you are interested in being a volunteer to help make the event run smoothly let us know, we'd greatly appreciate the help! Volunteers would be needed the day of the event only. The packing party will run from 1-3:30 and any time you could drop in to help would be awesome! I've attached a flyer of our event so you can get an idea of what will be going on that day. We're happy to answer any questions you may have about being a volunteer or the event. Remember in addition to having an awesome time you could also get citizenship and leadership points for your record book!)

Lastly, we are selling t-shirts to help support Operation Dignity! If you'd like to purchase one to benefit our veterans here's the link!

[https://www.customink.com/fundraising/our\\_veterans](https://www.customink.com/fundraising/our_veterans)

Thank you!

Naomi Osterman and Siena Bowen

## Homeless Veterans Packing Party!!

3 messages

Tue, Aug 29, 2017 at 4:06 PM

Hi Tassajara!

Just a reminder that our packing party event is just around the corner! Come to the Danville Grange on September 9th at 1:00pm to make care packages, write cards and make no-sew blankets for homeless veterans of Oakland! If you'd like to come to help support our veterans please RSVP using the sign-up genius link below.

<http://www.signupgenius.com/gp/409094DA5A829A0FE3-homeless>

Thanks and hope to see you all soon!  
-Naomi and Siena

## [tassajara4-h] Homeless Veteran Packing Party Today!

1 message

Sat, Sep 9, 2017 at 9:36 AM

Hey Tassajara! Reminder to join us at the Grange from 1-3:30 today to assemble care packages, write letters, and make tie blankets for homeless vets of Oakland. After all their sacrifices, this is the least we can do in return. Snacks are provided for your hard work!

This is a county-wide Emerald Star event hosted by Tassajara 4-H club presidents Naomi Osterman and Siena Bowen.

# Budget and Fundraising

## **Budgeting**

Before we bought anything, we took note of prices and how many packages we wanted to make. The amount of total care packages depended entirely on if we could afford the same amount of items for each package. After carefully researching the costs of our desired items from multiple stores, we created a loose budget that could help us estimate how much money in donations we needed to purchase supplies. It was difficult to create the budget at first, because we knew we could only base everything on how many businesses donated, and how much money they decided to give. Once we made our list, we finalized it in a formal budget outline. Over the course of this project, we've been collecting receipts and records of our purchases in order to get the most accurate data for the "actual amount" column of our budget. Overall, we raised a little less than our estimated income (which could have been avoided with more advertising of shirts and a larger outreach to a wider range of businesses), and spent a bit over our estimated expenses (which could have been avoided through better research of realistic costs of items we needed).

## **Fundraising (Booster)**

As an added bonus, we set up a booster to help support Operation Dignity financially. After creating a design that we were both satisfied with, we launched it about a month before our event. We used a few different strategies to help make this go smoothly: by posting information about it on social media and speaking to friends, teachers, and family members, we were able to sell enough shirts for the order to process. Also, we reached out to members of our 4-H county to spread the word about our event and our shirts. We thought the shirts were a nice touch to the event because it allowed people another way to offer support to the veteran community, even if they were unable to make our event. The shirts also served as a small reminder for attendees of their time and service at the packing party.

## Emerald Star Budget

Items	Budget Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Notes
<b>ESTIMATED INCOME</b>				
Donations for supplies	\$75	\$490	\$285	businesses/individuals
Fundraising (t-shirts)	\$600	\$102	\$498	Booster
<b>TOTALS</b>				
	\$675	\$592	\$783	
<b>ESTIMATED EXPENSES</b>				
Pens & cards	\$10.00	\$37	\$27	
Care package Items	\$300.00	\$372	\$72	
Boxes	\$15.00	\$0	\$15	
No sew tie blankets	\$20	\$81.00	\$61.00	
Printing	\$20	\$0	\$20	Teacher donated supplies
Grange Rental Fee	\$50	\$0	\$50	Waived by Grange Hall management
Poster	\$10	\$0	\$10	
<b>TOTALS</b>				
	\$425	\$490	\$255	



MENU



# Hosting the Event

## **Decorating and Set Up**

In terms of decorating, we decided right away that we wanted no donation money to go towards it. We brought 3 large American flags, handmade informational posters (for our Service Learning Project), a hand drawn welcome sign, and a poster listing all our sponsors. A month before our event, we sent out an email asking for a volunteer committee to help set up. We organized 4 stations composed of two tables each so people could cycle through each one. Our tables included a card-making station, a toiletry station for care packages, a snack station for care packages, and a space for cutting and tying blankets. Attendees would each get one quart sized sandwich bag to hold their care package and card, and a table was set up at the back of the room for finished products. Our club leader, Mr. Sroka, dropped off speakers and microphones so we could play music and make announcements.

## **Packages and Blankets**

At the beginning, participants were working on assembling packages and 2 no-sew blankets. One of our goals was to have people really take their time to write a sincere letter to the veterans. We helped to encourage this by setting out chairs for this station, having example sentences and phrases, as well as explaining that these veterans have put their life on the line and they are still battling the after-effects of war. As more people came in, we kept an eye on our stock and resupplied tables if necessary. The care packages were assembled quickly, leaving just the blankets and any leftover cards. The blankets took longer to make, so once the packages were finished, we all worked on completing the last of the tie blankets.

## **Attendance:**

In order to get a better idea of how many people would be attending, we created a SignUpGenius for people to RSVP on. At first, we had very few people sign up, so we began reaching out to youth groups, the 4-H community, and students at our high schools. It turned out that many people had planned on attending and simply didn't RSVP. In total, we ended up having around 30 people in attendance!

# Service Learning Project

## **Definition**

A Service Learning Project is defined as “combining service and learning objectives with the intent that the activity changes both the recipient and the provider of the service. It involves active learning - drawing lessons from the experience of performing service work”, according to the state 4-H website. Based on this, we knew we had to incorporate some aspects of learning into our packing party.

## **Informational Posters**

After weighing our options, we decided to create posters with facts and statistics about the homeless veteran/homeless community in general. We spent an hour researching, then compiled our findings into one document. Since we were planning on having four stations, we figured it would be best to have four posters as well. Knowing this, we divided up our information based on “Location”, “Stats/Facts”, and “Demographics”. Originally, there were just going to be two care packaging tables, not two separate stations, so we had made two Stats/facts posters at the time. Using poster board, construction paper, and markers that we already owned, we set to work printing out the information, cutting down the paper, gluing it to colored construction paper borders, and attaching everything to our boards. We recognized that two of our posters looked bare in comparison, so we found images relating to their topics and pasted them on the posters. Come the actual day of the event, we had put the tables more towards the center of the room, so we decided to hang two posters on the stage (near blanket-making), and the other two over the snacks table. When people were taking breaks, socializing, or just passing by, we’re happy to report that many of them stopped to view the posters and read about the homeless population of the US.

## **Operation Dignity Flyers**

Because all of our efforts were going into supporting vets through Operation Dignity, we figured it was only fair to share their message with our attendees. On the day of the event, we printed out 6 of their informational flyers and hung them around the Grange, taping them to doors, tables, and walls. Their flyers gave details on their mission - to end veteran homelessness in Alameda County, their impact, and listed opportunities for people to donate to or contact the association. These flyers could be very beneficial to readers because they could inspire someone to start their own service project, help pass on information about the homeless veteran dilemma, or simply offer a chance to donate to a good cause.

### STATS

- 8% of homeless are women
- Returning vets are twice as likely to become chronically homeless as regular americans
- Women vets are 4x as likely to be homeless as male vets
- 50% of vets suffer from disabilities
- Homeless vets are usually homeless for avg 6 years
- Non-vets are usually homeless for 4
- 10% of vets who need mental health treatment will receive services
- 1/2 of all homeless men and 1/3 all homeless adults have served in armed forces

### AND

### FACTS

- Military occupations and training are not always transferable to the civilian workforce making it difficult gain employment
- Shortage of affordable housing
- Livable income and access to health care
- A large number of veterans live with PTSD and substance abuse
- Lack of family and social support networks

### WARS FOUGHT

- World War II
- The Korean War
- Cold War
- Vietnam War
- Grenada
- Panama
- Lebanon
- Persian Gulf War
- Afghanistan and Iraq
- Anti-drug cultivation efforts in South America

## Location

### HOMELESSNESS MAP

### STATS

- 8% of homeless vets are women
- Returning vets are twice as likely to become chronically homeless as regular americans
- Women vets 4x as likely to be homeless as male vets
- 50% of vets suffer from disabilities
- Homeless vets are usually homeless for avg 6 years
- Non-vets are usually homeless for 4
- 10% are homeless on any given night
- 50% of vets who need mental health treatment will receive services
- 1/2 of all homeless men and 1/3 all homeless adults have served in armed forces

### FACTS

- Military occupations and training are not always transferable to the civilian workforce-making it difficult gain employment
- Shortage of affordable housing
- Livable income and access to health care
- A large number of veterans live with PTSD and substance abuse
- Lack of family and social support networks

# STATS

# FACTS

< and >

# OUR LOVELY SPONSORS

- Costco
- Trader Joe's
- Safeway (Danielle)
- Boswell's
- Safeway (Alamo)
- Ace Hardware
- Safeway (San Ramon)
- Office Depot
- Joann Fabrics

- Rieko Komishi
- Jose from CVS
- Melero family
- Mrs. Rosenthal
- Mr Villa
- Double R Barr Ranch
- All BOOSTER SHIRT PURCHASERS
- Osterman family
- Boven family
- Jackson family

## Demographics

- 11% of the homeless adult population are veterans
- 20% of the male homeless population are veterans
- 68% reside in principal cities
- 32% reside in suburban/rural areas
- 51% of individual homeless veterans have disabilities
- 50% have serious mental illness
- 70% have substance abuse problems
- 57% are white males, compared to 38% of non-veterans
- 50% are age 51 or older, compared to 19% non-veterans

#### Veterans Experiencing Homelessness

(in the Richmond Region)

73.4% report that they served in combat	2.8% reported being injured in a combat zone
38.3% report that they served in combat	22.5% reported being injured in a combat zone
39.6% of post-service homelessness are veterans	43.8% report having a "top secret" clearance
31.8% reported being homeless for more than 1 year	33.4% reported being homeless for more than 1 year

The average age of homelessness is 57 years old.

# Pictures



# Conclusions

## **What Went Well:**

We had a great outcome of people, all packages were completed, 6 blankets were made, and participants enjoyed both the music and meeting people from other clubs! If hosting this event in the future, we would use the Danville Grange again, as it comes with all the necessary materials such as tables, chairs, air conditioning, and a kitchen. Creating a flyer proved to be a very helpful idea (provided by our wonderful adult advisor), as it allowed us to share information about the event in a fun and colorful manner, rather than just relying on emails or text messages. Time-wise, we finished care packages within an hour, so all that was left was to complete the blankets and cards. This was pretty amazing, considering we only had 30 people show up, and they assembled so much in what seemed like so little time!

## **What Could Be Improved:**

If we were to hold this event again, we would start collecting donations earlier (i.e. a month in advance) to ensure we would be able to achieve our highest potential number of business donations, as well as give us a fair amount of time to apply for donations through the corporate offices of some stores. By getting a head start on donations, we would ultimately be able to buy more supplies, therefore allowing us to create more care packages and purchase more tie blankets. We also would have designed our shirts a bit differently to maximize shirt orders, as it seemed like many people would have preferred a simpler and smaller design on the front with a larger quote/picture on the back. As for advertising, we agreed that we wished we had spread our flyers around our schools more (for example, giving a small presentation to each class, handing out flyers, giving weekly reminders, etc.) to involve our fellow classmates in this opportunity.

## **Overall:**

This event turned out to be a success! We had a fantastic number of participants attend, a great outcome of packages made and blankets tied, and everyone seemed to be having a great time. We are both really happy with the way our project turned out and can't wait to drop off the packages and donations at Operation Dignity. This was an amazing opportunity for both of us to host, and we learned a lot about planning events and interacting with people in need.

Results:  
60 Care Packages, 6 Blankets and  
a great time!!



Additional Donations:

Socks

Shampoo/Soaps

Granola bars/Trail Mix