Wrap-around-Services...School Climate and Culture...at its best!

Hi everyone! I must share just a snippet of what this week was like at the Family Resource Center. I am so honored and proud to be a part of a collaborative network of which so many partners help to make a difference in the lives of our local homeless families.

Today was a prime example of how beautifully the lines of communication continue to flow amongst our schools and departments as well as with partnering agencies and service providers. Here's just a glimpse of how collaboratively we all create a warm, welcoming school Climate and Culture where our students want to come ready to learn and where our parents feel it's a safe, nurturing environment where they can leave their children as they go off to try to find work, a place to stay that night and food to feed their family.

The phone was ringing off the hook as emails rung into my inbox with emergency referrals from four different schools. What was amazing was how referrals and concerns came from a variety of departments...principals, secretaries, typist clerks, health aides, teachers, Special Education, Migrant and even a Sticks & Stones practitioner. Referrals were made to our after-school program and to Harmony at Home counseling. Our CSUMB interns stepped up to the plate offering families a snack and parents a warm drink. The love and concern they offered as they helped provide resources was outstanding to say the least. Our Medi-Cal Enrollment Specialist from the Health Department made sure all our families got enrolled for insurance. The District Attorney from the Truancy Abatement Program sent me several emails regarding intervention on behalf of a family. The Salinas Police Department and the Richmond Police Department played a huge role in supporting one of our families. Shelter Outreach Plus made room for a mother and her children experiencing domestic violence. Child Protective Services came to the aide of one of our distraught families. Referrals are made to the Kinship Center for extended family members who are raising up kin. The Veterans Transitional Center helped one of our dads begin the paperwork process for supportive services. Even one of our many community volunteers, who happened to be a veteran himself, called this same dad to offer support, prayer, empathy, encouragement and an invitation to share a meal in his own home. A few of our local churches also offered support and compassion. The Food Bank of Monterey County provided bags of food. A local truck stop calls and offers discounted shower vouchers for families in vehicles or on the street. Unexpected donations of shoes, diapers, underwear and XXL women's clothing show up only to be given out the very next day to those in need. Through the collaboration of calling many motels and everyone on emergency cards, we found a child who had been out of school for several weeks and got him back into class. Our phenomenal transportation department continually accommodates our families who live in vehicles or in tents under bridges. The list of community partners goes on and on. It is a team effort and every player is equally important in adding a supportive dimension unlike no other player.

(continued)

Clients, *a name of honor we give our homeless families*, called and showed up unannounced. Some were living in cars, RVs or motels. Some had nowhere to go at all tonight. One was borrowing electricity from the neighbor illegally via an extension cord for the fridge and stove, although they had no hot water! Another father showed up with his heart in his hands reaching out for help. In all the years I have been working with broken, ripped apart homeless families, I have never seen a father cry so uncontrollably hard without ceasing. His child sucked his own hand in dad's embrace as we all cried together. The trauma and grief was so heartfelt. The stories go on and on...some days almost unbearable.

As I reread this note, I feel a tear roll down my cheek and a lump in my throat. I am truly amazed and so very proud to be a part of Salinas City Elementary School District and to be a member of this community. None of us alone could accomplish what we have done together as a team...all of us unique in our own way.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for joining our efforts to bring a ray of hope in the lives of those who are experiencing such darkness. You have no idea what rippling effect your compassion and blessings have in the lives of our homeless...and beyond.

With sincere gratitude,

Cheryl

Cheryl Camany
Homeless Liaison
Teacher on Special Assignment

Family Resource Center
"Lending Families a Hand Through Information, Referrals and Programs"

110 South Wood Street, Room #K4
Salinas, CA 93905

Salinas City Elementary School District
840 South Main Street
Salinas, CA 93901

ccamany@salinascity.k12.ca.us
831-809-3636 (cell)