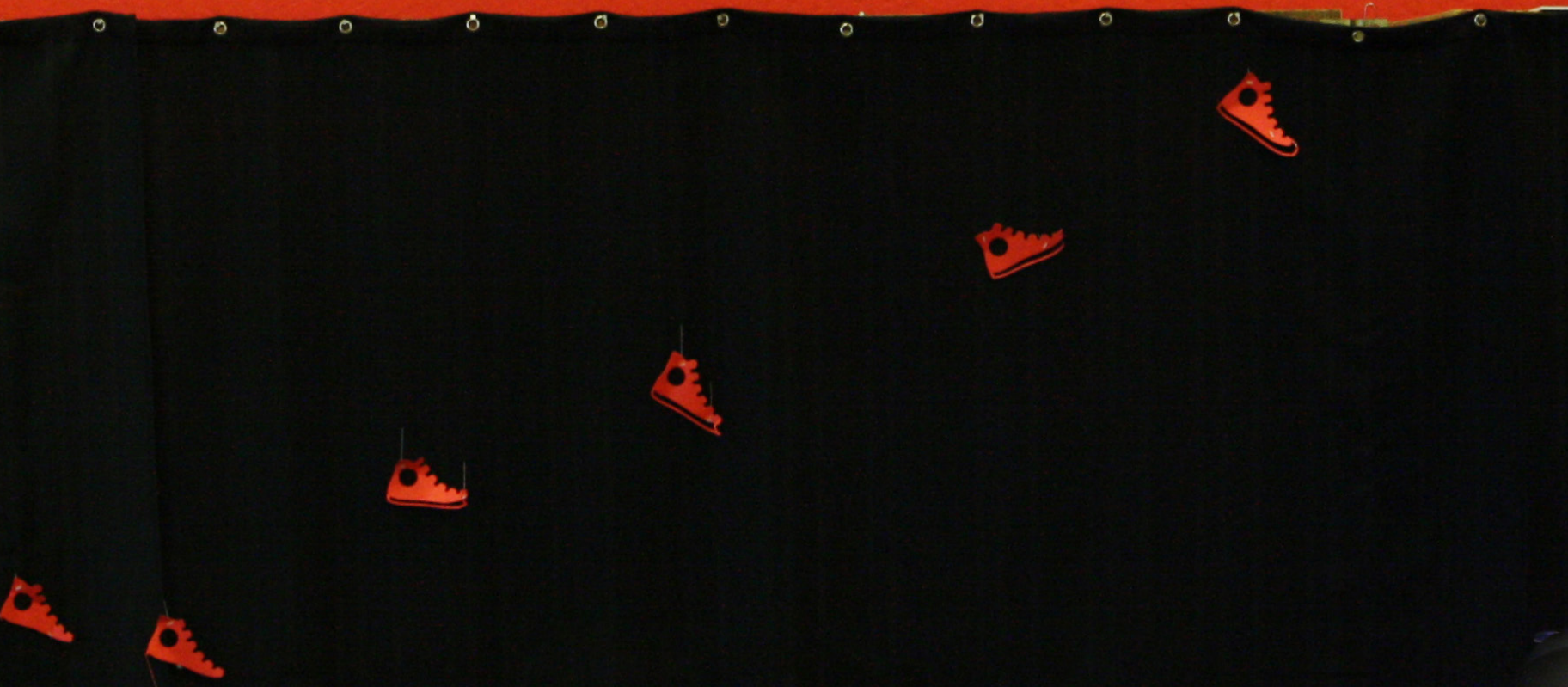


SOLES FOR THE SOUL

WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY
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You probably pick out your own clothes. Maybe you go to the mall, or maybe you just happened to find your older brother's hoodie that is much too big for you but you don't care because it's comfortable. Whatever you decide to wear, the most critical part is that you get to decide.

What if you didn't get a choice in what you wore? What if your family can't

afford new clothing so you only get hand-me-downs from your older siblings? What if you're a third grade boy starting at a new school and your only sibling is your older sister and she just outgrew her sparkly, pink, undeniably girly shoes? (Moos). For most people, the first day of school can be stressful, and first impressions are crucial. For



that boy in the third grade with the sparkly pink shoes, his sister's shoes no longer act as just a barrier between his feet and the ground, but a hurdle between himself and potential new friends.

This boy is only one of the thousands of low-income and homeless students whose families are unable to afford new clothes and shoes for school. According to the Homelessness Research Institute, 38% of the homeless population are families with children. Household poverty rates have only risen across the Bay Area over the years (Soursourian). The increase in poverty translates to an increasingly difficult



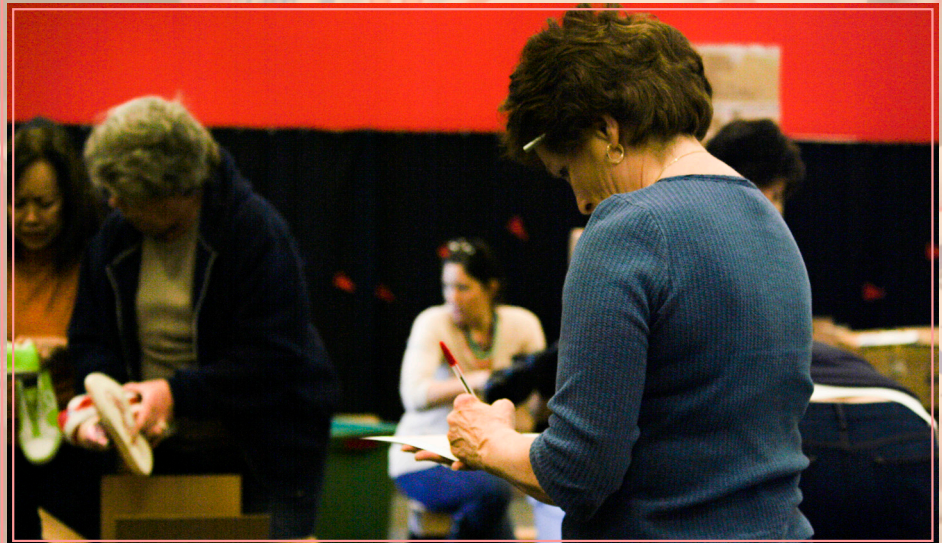


struggle for families to provide for their basic needs, let alone new shoes and clothing for children.

This is where My New Red Shoes comes in. Situated in the Sobrato Center for Nonprofits in Redwood Shores, they are an organization that serves low-income and homeless families in the Bay Area.

With the support of the community and volunteers, the staff at My New Red Shoes collect thousands of shoes to be given out as gifts at the end of summer, just before the first day of school.

Wrapped up in a hand sewn bag tied up by a shoelace, a pair of shoes is accompanied by a \$50 gift card to a clothing retailer, a school supply, and a personal note of encouragement for the receiver of the gift bag (Moos). The service that My New Red Shoes provides may seem ridiculous at first, begging the question: why are they spending money on new clothes instead of more important things like food or shelter? Even though new clothing and shoes may not be at the top of a homeless family's list of priorities, there is no denying that for the boy wearing his sister's old shoes, a new pair of shoes and a new outfit he chooses for himself will make a difference in his life.



Since their humble beginnings out of a garage, My New Red Shoes has grown exponentially each year. From serving 354 children in 2006 to 6,067 in 2013, they have impacted thousands of lives.

“WHEN WE LOOK AT THE NUMBERS OF JUST HOW MANY KIDS IN THE BAY AREA COULD USE THESE GIFTS. KIDS WHO ARE HOMELESS, OR KIDS WHO ARE VERY LOW INCOME, THE NUMBERS ARE OUTSTANDING-IT’S CRAZY HOW MANY KIDS NEED THIS. RIGHT NOW WE ARE PROVIDING A DROP IN THE BUCKET. IT’S A BIG DROP-IT’S 6,000 KIDS. BUT I THINK ITS A STRUGGLE AND A CHALLENGE FOR US TO COME TO TERMS THAT WE ARE NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE EVERY CHILD THAT NEEDS IT WITH THIS GIFT. THAT IS OUR HOPE IN THE FUTURE, THAT EVERY CHILD WILL BE ABLE TO START SCHOOL FEELING CONFIDENT AND FEELING READY TO LEARN.”

My New Red Shoes aims to provide 100% of children living in shelters in the Bay Area with the opportunity to start school feeling ready to learn and instill a sense of confidence in them through school appropriate shoes and clothing (Three Year Plan).





Heather Hopkins, founder of My New Red Shoes, was inspired by her mother's story. Unable to afford new clothes, Heather's mom dreaded going to school each day because she would never have anything new or special to wear (Moos). Her mother's experience of being unhappy with her clothes as a child motivated Heather to create an organization

that would provide children who feel the way her mother felt about her clothes with the opportunity

to feel confident at school the way Heather's mother never did (Keefe).

Every summer before school starts, My New Red Shoes distributes the gift bags to the children. The delight the children feel is apparent on their faces, and sometimes, even in their actions. The children who receive these gifts are so appreciative that some of them will even go to bed in their new shoes.





Without My New Red Shoes, some of these children feel so ashamed of their clothing that they will refuse to draw attention to themselves, whether that means detaching themselves from others or refusing to engage in classroom activities. Experts claim that inadequate clothing is one reason that leads students to have academic problems and skip school. In Santa Clara, a study of students who were homeless showed that 21% of those students named lack of appropriate clothing as their primary reason for not attending school. Not only is quality of education diminished because of poor clothing, but the existence of education itself as well.

Hand made with love
by Bethel
Happy First Day of School!
My NEW RED SHOES



My New Red Shoes' contribution to the community may seem to be limited by solely a pair of shoes and a gift card, but their impact is truly immeasurable. Not only do they make an impression on the lives of these children, but they also also inspires them to make a difference in the lives of other children in similar situations.

As a child of about twelve, Sheila Springs was briefly homeless. She recalled **“WHAT IT FELT LIKE WHEN PEOPLE LOOKED AT YOU AND KNEW YOU WERE HOMELESS. YOU DIDN'T HAVE THE BEST OUTFIT ON MAYBE, YOU HAD SOME WORN OUT SHOES...I DIDN'T LIKE FEELING LIKE I WAS BEING LOOKED DOWN UPON”** (Springs). As the



past president of the El Camino Chapter of International Association of Administrative Professionals, Sheila Springs contributed to the decision of choosing My New Red Shoes as an organization that the chapter wanted to support.

The impression My New Red Shoes makes is visibly definite through the volunteer process and the time, money, and effort that is invested is clearly translated into results. From inventorying and sorting shoes, to organizing supplies, to sewing gift bags, to drawing “First Day” encouragement cards, volunteers can see their work develop into a concrete product that will make a difference in someone else’s life.

A gift so seemingly small and materialistic as a new pair of shoes and the opportunity to buy new clothes for the first day of school may not appear to be the most important thing for children who live in poverty or are homeless. Nevertheless, My New Red Shoes strives to make a difference in these children’s lives in any way possible, no matter how small a deed.. In the words of Brittani Keefe, the Agency Services Manager, **“THAT’S OUR MISSION: TO GET SHOES ON KIDS’ FEET.”** Their ability to inspire, motivate, and produce overall change makes My New Red Shoes a fundamental organization to all those involved.

