

For Immediate Release

MEDIA ADVISORY

LOCAL NONPROFIT RECEIVES AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE

Los Angeles Nonprofit that Educates Homeless Children to be Featured in One-hour Special Edition of ABC News' 20/20 on Friday, Sept. 4.

On the eve of his historic visit to the U.S., students, staff and volunteers at School on Wheels had the distinct honor and privilege to be part of a live audience with the pontiff, to be aired in a one-hour special edition of ABC News' 20/20 on Friday, Sept. 4.

On Monday August 31, over 100 people gathered at a secret location in LA to be part of a studio audience focusing on homeless issues. Little did they know that Pope Francis would be joining them too!

Pope Francis engaged via satellite with three different groups, including homeless men, women and children and those working with the homeless in Los Angeles.

The Pope was greeted with applause and cheers as he joined our group on a live feed from the Vatican. His words were filled with kindness and compassion and he listened intently to the stories from the audience as families and children told him about their struggles. One little girl told him she just wanted to have a house, and seeing her friends go through their front doors on her way to the shelter made her sad and ashamed about her family's situation.

He expressed deep concern for homeless children and said that, "We all need a friend to help us through difficult times." and that children in particular needed positive role models in their life.

"Pope Francis is only the fourth pope to visit the U.S. and it was a once in a lifetime experience to be part of an audience with the pontiff," said Angela Sanchez, former School on Wheels student and homeless children's advocate, who was interviewed after the event. Catherine Meek, Executive Director of School on Wheels, added:

"I want the Pope to know that one in every 30 children – one student in every classroom – in America experiences homelessness each year. School on Wheels is helping homeless children in LA and throughout Southern California every day. It is not only a moral obligation of society but an economic imperative for these students to succeed in school."

School has already started for most of our students in California and School on Wheels provides backpacks, school supplies and one-on-one tutoring to over 5,000 homeless students annually. The heart and soul of their program are their volunteers, who go to where the kids are; shelters, motels, group homes and public libraries and after school clubs to help them with their school work and provide positive role models and mentors. They are always looking for volunteers who can commit to an hour a week and like Pope Francis said, we all need a friend! Consider volunteering today and visit their website for more information - www.schoolonwheels.org.

For more information about this historic event you can check out ABC's news link here – <http://abcnews.go.com/International/pope-francis-holds-virtual-audience-americans-abc-news/story?id=33435436>

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ABOUT SCHOOL ON WHEELS

School on Wheels, Inc. is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1993 by Agnes Stevens, a retired teacher. Today, hundreds of volunteers work one-on-one with children whose homelessness prevents them from receiving the academic stability and help they desperately need. The heart of the School on Wheels' program is the volunteer tutors who come from all backgrounds and professions, with a shared goal - to reach out to a child, to teach, to mentor, and assist in his or her educational life.

The mission of School on Wheels is to enhance educational opportunities for homeless children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The goal is to shrink the gaps in their education and provide them with the highest level of education possible. Their program serves as a consistent support system to homeless students at a time of great stress and fear. School on Wheels brings the message to homeless students that they are cared about and important. They do this by offering:

- One-on-one weekly tutoring with a volunteer
- Backpacks, school supplies and school uniforms
- Assistance in entering school
- Help in locating lost records
- Guidance for parents in educational matters for their children
- Skid Row Learning Center
- Tutoring in six counties in Southern California, including Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

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