Project Charter: Maxine Lewis Memorial Homeless Shelter

**Organization Information**

Site: Maxine Lewis Memorial Homeless Shelter

Address: 750 Orcutt Road, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401-6736

Manager: Della Wagner

Number: (805) 781-3993

**Team Members**

Clincy Cheung

Joseph Dei Rossi

Daniel Gross

Thomas Kilkenny

McKenzie Kirkpatrick

Wyatt Levy

Jonathan Mintz

Javal Patel

Tyler Schelling

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**Project Overview**

 Our group has not had as much experience with our service organization as most groups have. Our misfortune and miscommunication have caused us to get turned away on multiple occasions and serve a total of zero hours between all the members of our group thus far this quarter. We have time scheduled for this Saturday, February 25, and plan on learning much more information about our organization than we already have. Through all of this misfortune, we are not hopeless. We all have previous experience from last quarter and, above all, we can use this experience of difficulty for the betterment of the organization. Both times that we went to the shelter, we got turned away due to unknowingly showing up at an incorrect time and arriving on a night when other volunteers had taken the spots we were supposed to have filled. This has given us the idea that more organization was needed not only of the facilities but also of the volunteering process. We purpose a website where volunteers can sign up for service hours ahead of time so no two groups of volunteers show up on the same night when only one group is needed. This website can also serve a channel of information about the best time to volunteer, another issue that our group ran into. This website could streamline the process of volunteering at Maxine Lewis. It would fix instances of multiple groups showing up and getting turned away and make the volunteering process more organized and evenly distributed. This would help the Maxine Lewis staff on a night-to-night basis by having more help and not wasting any. The ease of signing up would also encourage more individuals to volunteer. The overall benefit of this project to Maxine Lewis would be massive.

**Community Partners**

This service learning project will be a joint venture between the Materials Engineering Department at Cal Poly, the Maxine Lewis Engineers team, and the Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter proper. Maxine Lewis has been servicing the homeless population of San Luis Obispo for almost twenty years, filling fifty beds per night every night and serving a dinner meal for nearly 100 people daily. The purpose of the shelter is to provide a fair bedding system for the homeless from seven at night until seven the next day while providing many with the necessary amenities that would be expected, like showers and mail service. The groups that would benefit most from our project would be the shelter and the volunteers that wish to spend hours serving the homeless on any given night. This, in turn, benefits the homeless population because an organized shelter would run better and enable the homeless to worry about one less thing in their hectic lives. So while the only recipient of our project would be the Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter, the entire population that they aid would also profit.

**Stakeholders**

Our project of creating a webpage for the Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter will not only affect the clients at the shelter by providing a more consistent volunteer base throughout the week but will improve the organization of the management at the shelter. With a webpage in place, we will be able to help the staff at the shelter by providing an easy and simple way to keep track of volunteers throughout the week. This system will help with some of the problems they have with being understaffed since a lot of their free time in trying to manage volunteers will be freed up. A disadvantage to this though, will be the upkeep of the webpage. Although, we will be able to help get the ball rolling by setting up and establishing the webpage, staff will be needed in order to keep the website running. Overall, the positives greatly outweigh the negatives in this since the upkeep won’t be too hard or time-consuming to the shelter’s staff. The volunteers that wish to help out at Maxine Lewis will also be greatly affected. The ease to see when volunteering hours are free and available to be signed up for will greatly enhance the means of getting the right amount of volunteers at Maxine each day, without volunteer excess or scarcity. In general, the stakeholders that will be affected will be rewarded with little upkeep to our project.

**Framed Insights and Opportunities**

In our experience with the Maxine Lewis Memorial Shelter, we have received very little contact with the organization. This greatly influenced how we wished to go about our project with the shelter. Time after time we tried to get into contact with the management at Maxine Lewis, but never to any avail. The times we were able to get into contact, there were great miscommunications. Multiple times we were told that arriving at the shelter at roughly 7:00 or 7:30 P.M. would be fine, but, when we arrived to the shelter, we got turned away due to the sheer number of volunteers already at the site. These miscommunications have created problems with our community service hours because we haven’t been able to get appropriated time slots to show up at the shelter without being turned away. Being turned away to volunteer at a shelter isn’t something necessarily pleasing to those that wish to help out and this could be detrimental to the organization if they don’t take care of their volunteer base. Without volunteers that are ready to help the shelter at any time, this could affect how often volunteers come to help and, in turn, create an even more understaffed organization.

In order to keep the volunteers ready and involved in Maxine Lewis, we have decided as a group to develop a webpage for the organization that will make it easier on the management to know when they have volunteers coming in to help out. It will also provide a way for the volunteers to know when Maxine Lewis needs help during the night or when they are full and can’t take any more volunteers. This will help volunteers to not waste time by getting down to the shelter only to be turned away. The webpage will be set up as a calendar which will act as a list for volunteers to sign up and check what dates and times will be available.

Upon our first visit to the shelter, during our time with Della Wagner, the manager of the facilities, our group noticed a definitive need for a change in the organization method. The two sheds that the shelter possessed were underutilized. Any donations that the shelter received had been lazily through inside to get them out of the way. Due to a lack of paid employees, no one has really gone through it all to sort it all out. The management just simply has not had the time.

In order to keep the shelter’s supplies easily accessible and easy to find, our group has chosen to organize the contents of the sheds and create a system that would prevent further disarrangements as a second option. The first part could be taken care of anytime during the day like on a Saturday when an employee might be at the shelter. Creating a future system of organization could be as simple as designating certain areas for certain items. Such a method would ensure order and while keeping simplicity.

**Goals and Objectives**

* Goals
	+ Partner with the Maxine Lewis Memorial Center to solve their problems and improve the system already set in place.
	+ To get involved in the community outside of Cal Poly through a positive means.
* Objectives
	+ See the Maxine Lewis Memorial Center as a big picture, meanwhile understanding all of the smaller details to the best of our abilities.
	+ Earn 10 community service hours per member to understand the ins and outs of working with the agency.
	+ Create a list of possible problems and solutions that are experienced when working with the agency.
	+ Select a problem from the list and create a detailed, sustainable solution.
	+ Discuss options with the agency about the aforementioned solution.
	+ Implement the solution, whether it be through building a physical entity or developing a different system to run a portion of the agency.

**Outcomes and Deliverables**

 Our primary goals for the website are that the staff of Maxine Lewis will be able to keep better track of when volunteers are coming and know how many to expect on any given day. This way, they will be able to prepare better each day and not have to turn away volunteers on certain nights. This will also be beneficial for any potential volunteers because they will be able to use this website to contact the shelter and sign up for available volunteering spots. Also, we would probably need to spread the word of the website to their regular volunteers and whoever else we could. If it never actually gets used to its full potential, then our project would essentially be a failure. Hopefully, the shelter staff will be able to monitor and utilize the website on their own, because, if they are forced to rely on us, it will defeat the purpose of the website. We want to create something that can be maintained by the staff without too much trouble and will last for a long time to come.

**Duration**

The projected starting date of this project was supposed to be early January, but, due to communication problems, is now late February. The project will be started by February 25, 2012 when six members from the team will go to Maxine Lewis and volunteer for eight straight hours. During the first few hours the team will be helping with any miscellaneous work that needs to be done. Some members will work on organizing the volunteering hours and setting up a system that works well for the volunteers and the people working there. Between February and spring (early June), team members will be regularly going to Maxine Lewis to serve food or any kind of help that is needed by the organization. To make sure that the goals and objectives are accomplished on time, team members will have a group meeting every week to monitor the progress on our goals and objectives. A group member from the team will also call the manager at Maxine Lewis to check on number of volunteer hours logged and keep track of how close we are to accomplishing our goals.

**Team Membership and Roles**

* Clincy Cheung
	+ Web/Technical Expert
* Joey Dei Rossi
	+ All-Purpose Utility Man
* Daniel Gross
	+ Team Organizer
* Thomas Kilkenny
	+ Team Leader
* McKenzie Kirkpatrick
	+ Solar Water Heater Building Specialist
* Wyatt Levy
	+ Solar Water Heater Building Specialist
* Jonathan Mintz
	+ Team Orator
* Javal Patel
	+ All-Purpose Utility Man
* Tyler Schelling
	+ Team Organizer

**Planning Information**

* Design Plans for Website
	+ Step 1: Set up a mac.com website, so that Maxine Lewis has its own website manageable by the staff.
	+ Step 2: Create “Home”, “About the Shelter”, “Scheduling a Volunteering Time”, and “Contact Info” sections for the website.
	+ Step 3: The “Scheduling a Volunteering Time” would include a section for what times volunteers are needed. The page would also include an embedded Google doc for people to submit the times they are able to come volunteer for the shelter.
* Expectations/Constraints Due to Understaffing
	+ Management of the website while all the full-time staff is working could potentially be difficult.
	+ Confirming all volunteers on the sign-up sheet
	+ However, assuming that the website can be managed despite understaffing, there is an expectation that the staff at Maxine Lewis can keep in contact/confirm with all the people who sign up to volunteer at the shelter to make sure there are volunteers.