

Need Statement

His Little Feet was created out of a simple but glaring need- the lack of well-fitting shoes for children experiencing homelessness. As one of the only organizations in Southern California that solely provides new footwear to children experiencing homelessness, the demand is high. His Little Feet partners with specific agencies serving youth in our city's poorest neighborhoods. We take extra care to learn the child's size and wish-list, ensuring a young person receives exactly what they desire, which also offers dignity, respect, value, and pride. This is the reason, since 2014, His Little Feet has distributed nearly 20,000 pairs of shoes to underserved children and young adults ages 1.5-18 across 30 agencies in Southern California- to stomp out poverty one pair of shoes at a time.

For a family or child suffering neglect under the poverty line, buying new shoes three times a year is unrealistic, yet this is the frequency of which pediatricists suggest re-sizing a child's foot, as it grows incredibly fast, especially before the age of five. It is no wonder poorer youth wear improperly fitted, used, or damaged shoes. Research shows that a child wearing the rights shoes has significantly higher self-esteem which directly results in improved school attendance and better grades and provides safer mobility and health benefits. Adversely, improperly fitting shoes leads to a myriad of health issues: pain and discomfort in the feet, legs, and back, ingrown toenails, fatigue, joint and muscle stress, and knee problems. Toes rubbing together is especially dangerous for diabetics (of which 20.5% are under the poverty line). Those with lower incomes spend a significantly higher share of their earnings on health insurance premiums and out of pocket expenses (10.4%, compared to 3.5% of higher incomes). Truly, providing something as small as a pair of shoes does make a difference, potentially for the span of person's life.

His Little Feet's organizational goal for 2023 is to provide 2,000 pairs of shoes to youth ages 1.5-18 years old experiencing neglect and extreme poverty. Through the avenue of new shoes, we seek to open the door to physical health, confidence, athletics, and healthy peer relationships. Partnering with agencies that also serve underprivileged youth (primarily in the foster care and child services system) in the greater Long Beach area, allows us to keep costs low and focused, and expand the continuum of care and spirit of collaboration Long Beach *Mayor's Fund* is built upon.