

New bikes put smiles on faces of homeless students

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By Doug Oakley

STAFF WRITER

Being homeless in high school is tough.

But a new bicycle will help lessen the sting for 90 Alameda County youngsters this holiday season, said education officials who handed them out at 16 homeless shelters Monday.

The Alameda County Office of Education spent \$4,000 on new bikes and delivered 11 of them to kids at the Ursula Sherman Village, a homeless shelter for individuals and families, on Harrison Street in Berkeley.

"It's hard for the kids to go to school and fit in and keep the secret that they are living in a homeless shelter," said Taaj Avery, a teacher at the village, which serves about 30 children, most of them teenagers. "High school is tough. I had a kid here who wanted new shoes, so he painted his old ones."

Derick Granderson, 16, who has been in the shelter with his two younger siblings since August, didn't say much as he tested out his new bike. But he did have a smile on his

face.

"It's good, I'm happy," he said.

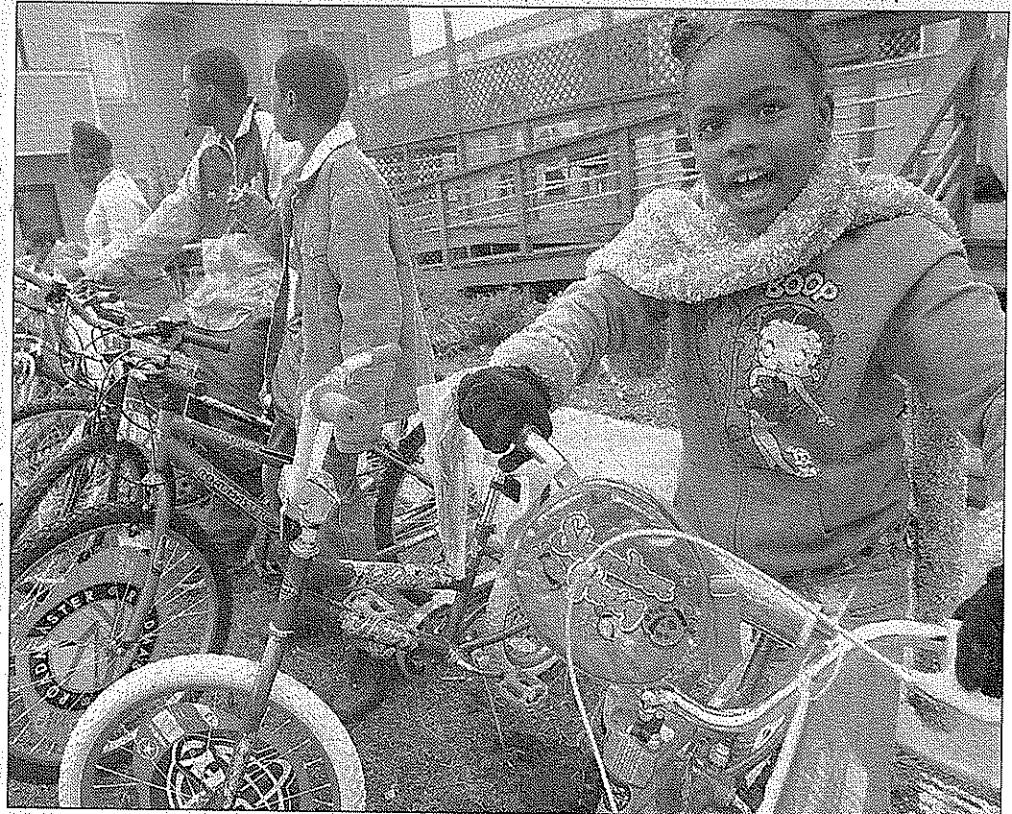
Sheila Jordan, superintendent of the county education office, who delivered some of the bikes Monday, said homeless kids need more than the basics such as food and shelter.

"As educators, we're involved in nutrition and exercise, and a lot of kids spend too much time behind closed doors or on the streets," Jordan said of her decision to buy the bikes. "And this provides transportation, too. But most of all we wanted them to have a happy holiday and be proud of having something brand new."

Although the county was able to get a good deal on the bikes from Walmart in San Leandro, the education office didn't have enough left over for helmets, Jordan said.

"If someone could step up with about 100 bike helmets, that would be great," she said.

Avery said the bicycles are nice, but the shelter also could use some blankets, sheets, towels, socks and hygiene kits. Donors can drop them off at 711 Harrison St. in Berkeley.



DOUG OAKLEY/STAFF

SAMIAYA DAVIS, 8, at right, celebrates after getting a new bike at the Ursula Sherman Village homeless shelter in Berkeley on Monday. Davis and 89 other homeless kids in Alameda County got new bikes courtesy of the Alameda County Office of Education.

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