

2008

14th ANNUAL  
CENTRAL OHIO  
HOMELESS  
STAND DOWN

October 21, 2008  
Veterans Memorial  
Columbus, Ohio

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Dear Friends,

This year’s Central Ohio Homeless Stand Down was a very successful event, serving 846 homeless veterans and citizens. That’s nearly 200 more people than last year’s event. We could not have pulled it off without the tireless dedication of our volunteers, service providers, contributors, and committee and board members.

I am proud to present the first Stand Down after-action report, where we have tried to capture more statistics and improved plans to make our event even better for years to come. The report details our committee’s efforts to streamline operations and improve the delivery of services to the homeless community. As the board and committee concepts are new to the planning this year, we have also included a *Recommended Operations and Improvements for 2009* section. This area of the report summarizes the many ideas we received from participants and volunteers on how we can make next year’s Stand Down the best yet.

As always, thanks for your support!

Sincerely,



Richard Isbell  
Chair, 2008 Central Ohio Homeless Stand Down  
“A Hand Up, Not a Hand Out”

**AFTER-ACTION REPORT**

# AFTER-ACTION REPORT

## 2008 CENTRAL OHIO HOMELESS STAND DOWN

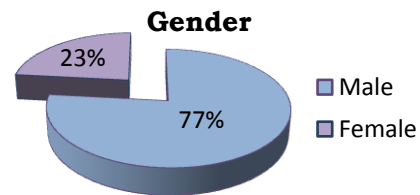
The 14th annual Central Ohio Homeless Stand Down held at Veterans Memorial on October 21, 2008 was a great success. There were a number of changes instituted this year, including a check-in procedure for all guests. During the process, the guests answered a few questions and volunteers determined their veteran status. They were then asked to proceed to provider areas including veterans assistance (as applicable), family and community services, legal aid, medical, haircuts, and lunch. As they exited Veterans Memorial, participants also received canned nuts and various other non-perishable food items. Also new this year was a survey of all participants, volunteers and service providers in order to make the event better for future years. The results of the surveys are presented here.

Hand-counter numbers produced the following results:

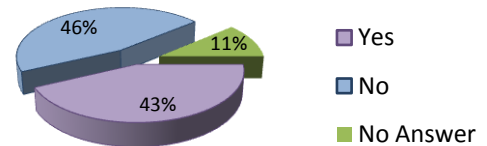
- **Front Door.....846**
- **Medical.....412**
- **Provider Area.....682**
- **Veteran Area.....476**
- **Legal.....77**
- **Haircuts.....272**

There was varied response to the intake questionnaires, with 789 completed. The difference between the number of customers arriving through the front door and the number of intake forms completed was 57. The discrepancy could be blamed on a number of factors including guests coming in more than once, volunteer miscounts, or forms that were not filled out. There is roughly a 7 percent variance.

Approximately three-fourths of customers were male, while 43 percent of all guests were veterans.

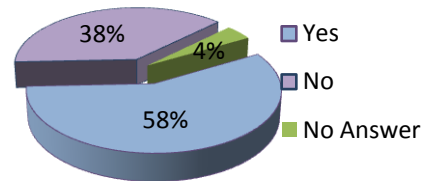


### Are You A Veteran?



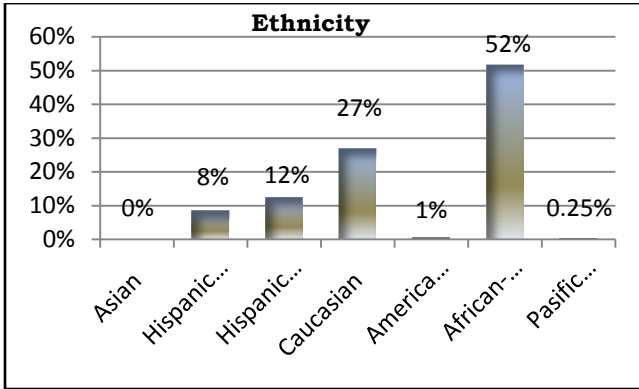
There was an influx of new customers this year, with the highest percentage of respondents reporting that 2008 was their first visit to the event.

### Is This Your First Time At Stand Down?

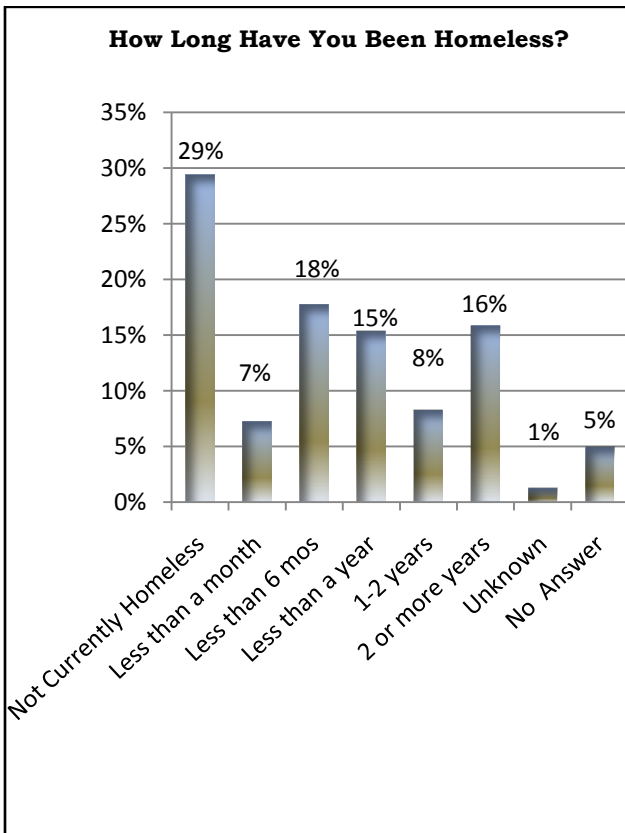
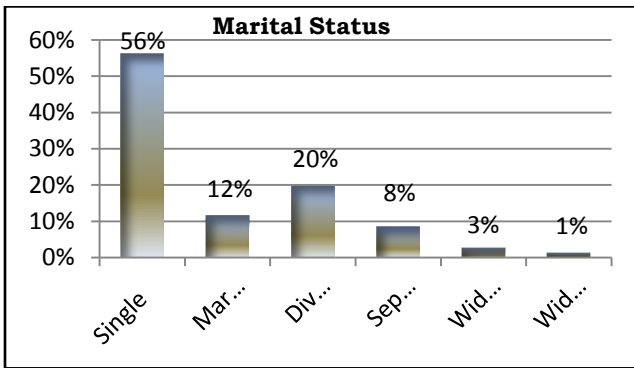


The ethnic breakdown this year consisted of 52 percent African-American, 27 percent Caucasian and 20 percent Hispanic.

# AFTER-ACTION REPORT

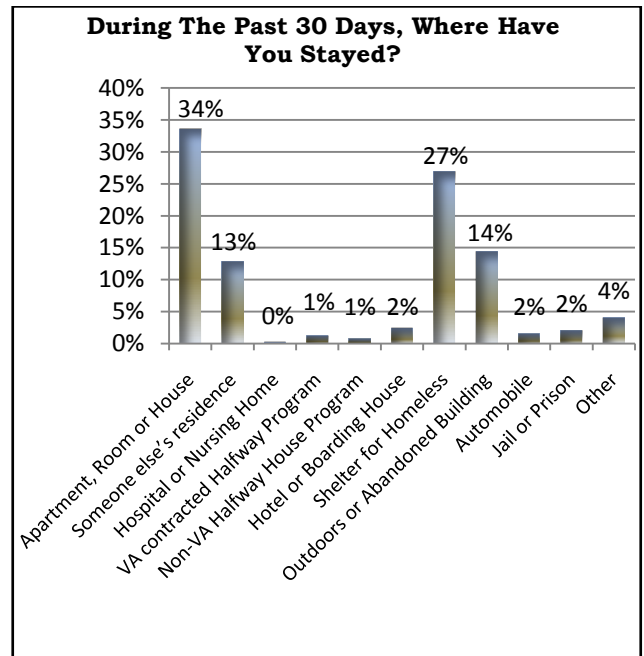


A majority of customers this year reported a single marital status.

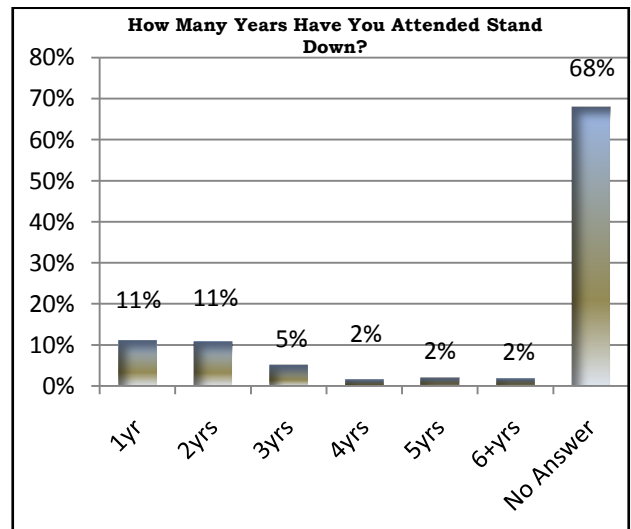


The number of respondents who reported that they were not homeless at the time of the event was 29 percent (232 responses). This may be an important aspect to focus on in 2009, which is to develop a definition of homelessness and ensure the event is catering to those it was meant to serve.

The highest percentages of customers who reported their living situation stated they resided in an apartment, room or house, or in a shelter in the 30 days preceding the event.



The number of years that customers have attended the event was 22 percent for one to two years.



# AFTER-ACTION REPORT

New this year was a separate survey for customers, volunteers and service providers. Each was asked a series of questions following their participation in the event in order to improve operations in future years.

## GUEST SURVEY

<b>Customer Satisfaction Survey</b> (670 total – all questions were not answered)		
Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
<b>1st Stand Down?</b>	481 (78%)	134 (22%)
<b>Easy building access?</b>	610 (96%)	27 (4%)
<b>Convenient hours?</b>	583 (98%)	9 (2%)
<b>Good selection of food/beverages?</b>	472 (92%)	40 (8%)
<b>Friendly lunch service staff?</b>	366 (97%)	12 (3%)
<b>Quick service in lunch line?</b>	654 (98%)	10 (2%)
<b>Took advantage of services offered</b>	519 (94%)	33 (6%)
<b>Get enough clothing?</b>	393 (67%)	193 (33%)
<b>Will you come back in 2009?</b>	556 (95%)	28 (5%)

The following are abbreviated comments from the event's guests:

**In your opinion, how can we improve our Stand Down Program?**

- More perks for vets
- Better organization/Less crowding
- More variety in sizes of clothes
- More than once a year
- More Volunteers
- Separate lines for vets/non-vets
- Chairs/Wheelchairs for elderly/disabled
- Bus passes/Transportation
- Clothes and Blankets for all
- Single line for entry
- Stand Down tee shirts
- Hand out numbers
- Eye Exams
- More coats and personal hygiene items
- Involve assc. Members of Vietnam Vets Assc.

**Other Concerns:**

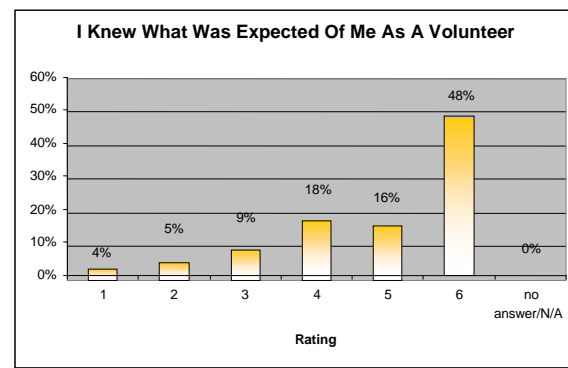
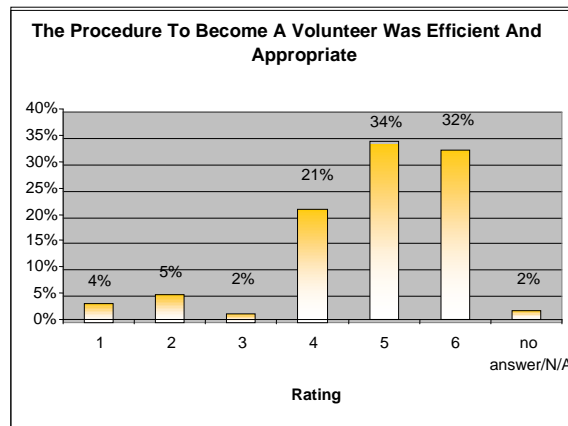
- Uncooperative
- Separate entrance for vets and wheelchairs

- Very Good!
- Long lines
- More clothes
- Increase awareness to vets
- Injuries from crowds
- More organization needed

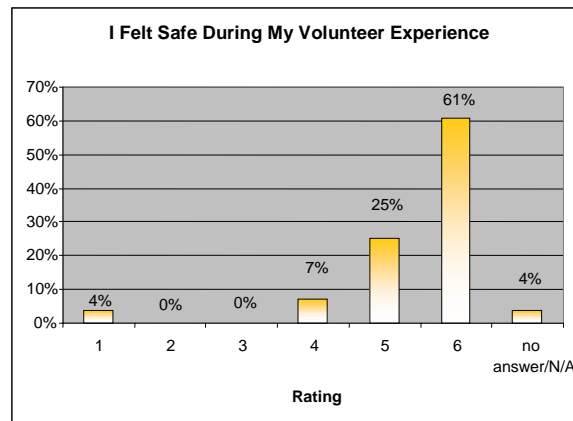
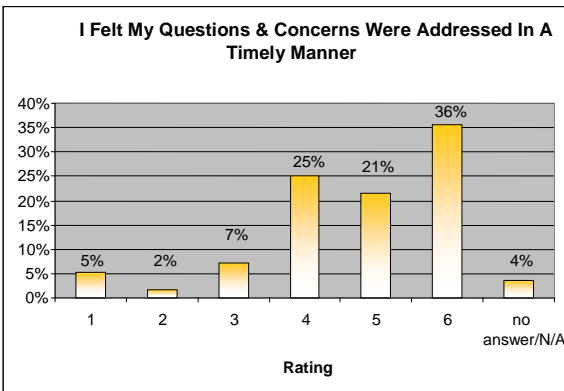
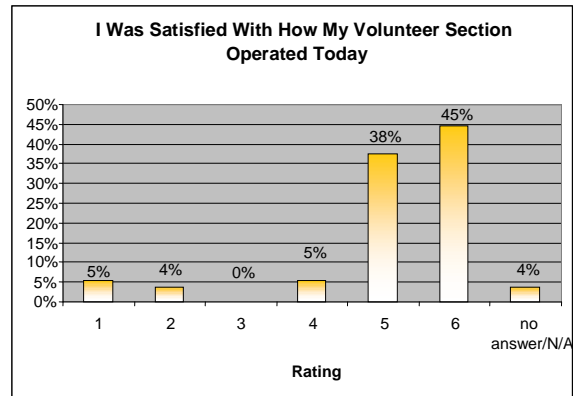
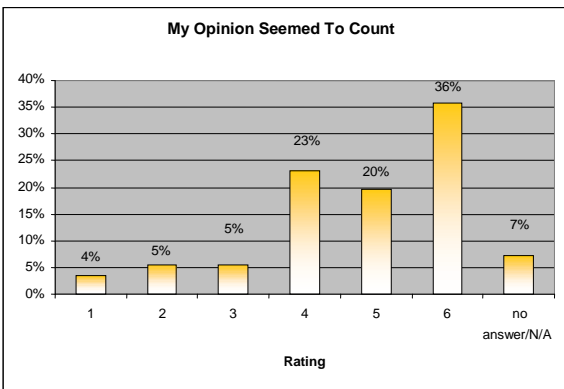
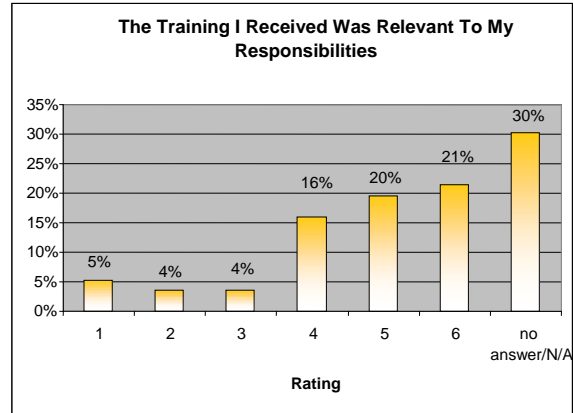
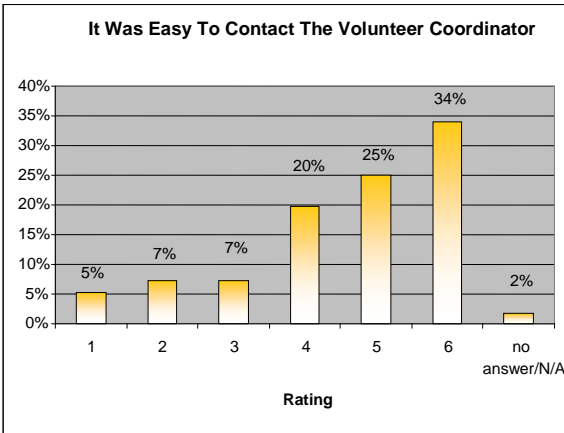
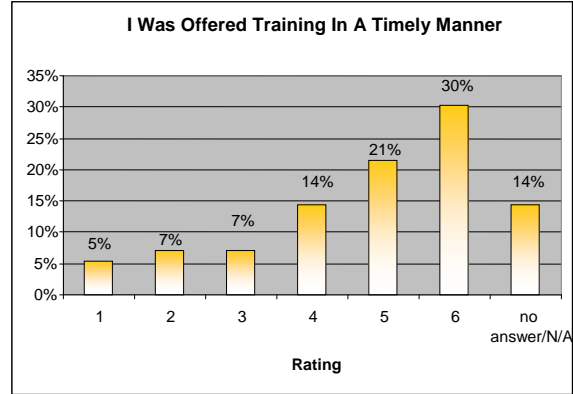
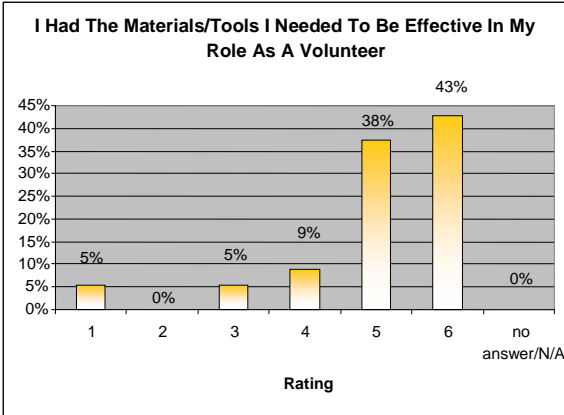
## VOLUNTEER SURVEY

Of 129 total volunteers for the event, there were 56 surveys returned. That translates to a response rate of 43 percent. There were 14 questions for volunteers to answer, as well as an area for comments. The answers were chosen from the following table:

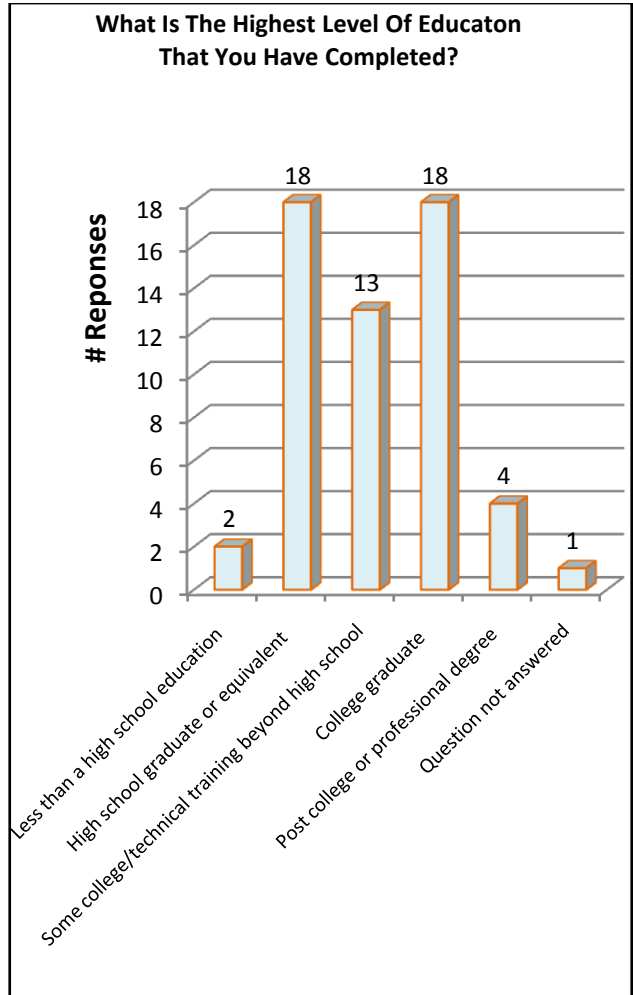
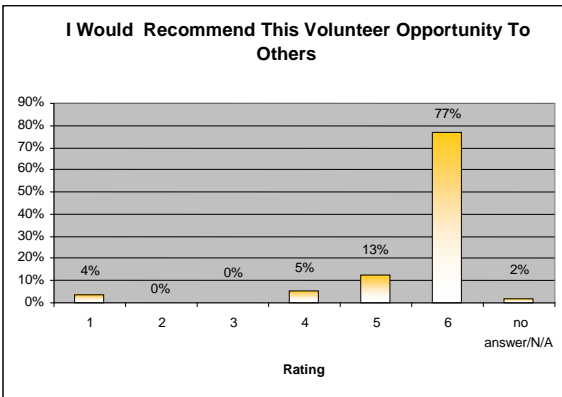
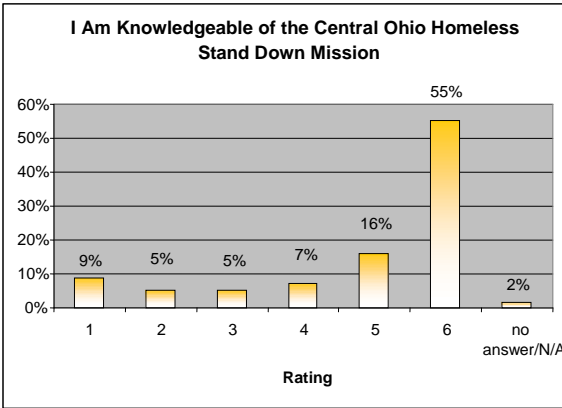
<b>1= Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>2=Disagree</b>
<b>3= Somewhat Disagree</b>
<b>4=Somewhat Agree</b>
<b>5= Agree</b>
<b>6=Strongly Agree</b>
<b>No Answer or N/A</b>



# AFTER-ACTION REPORT

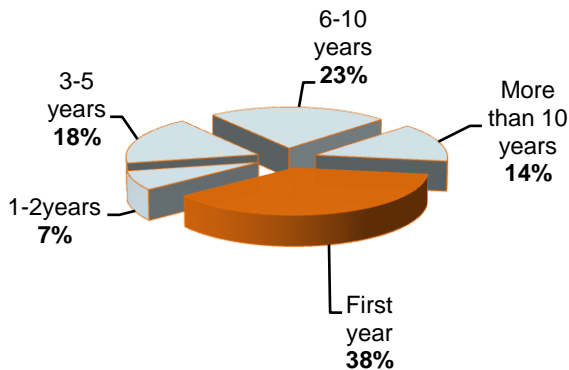


# AFTER-ACTION REPORT

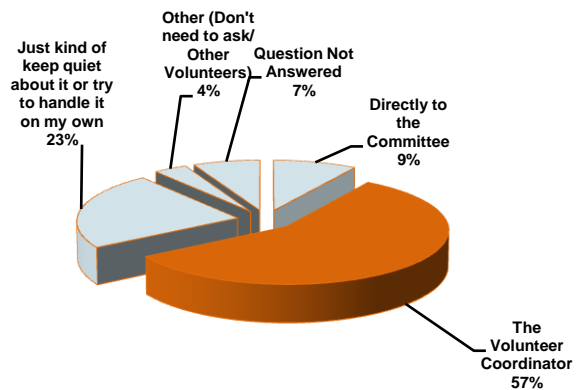


Volunteers also answered questions regarding retention, demographics, communications and marketing:

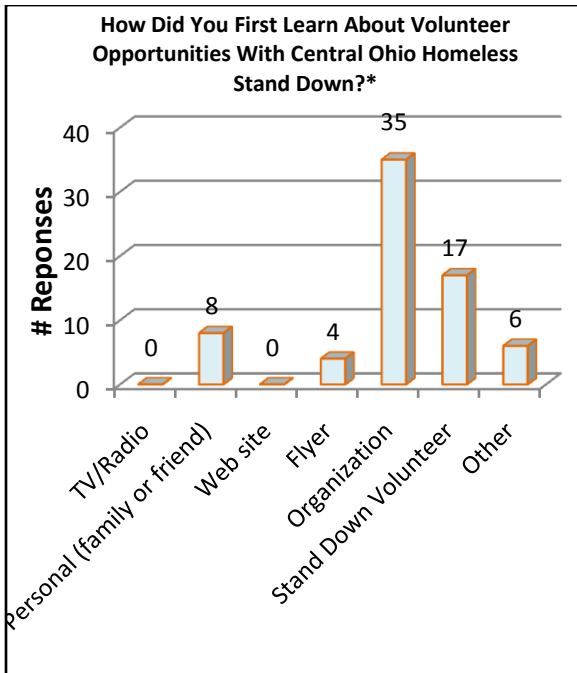
### How Long Have You Been a Stand Down Volunteer?



### How Do You Relay Your Questions or Concerns?



# AFTER-ACTION REPORT



\*Respondents may have checked more than one source

Volunteers were also asked to provide comments on improving the Central Ohio Homeless Stand Down for future years.

**The committee continues to need active volunteers. In your opinion, what could we have done differently to make volunteering easier for you and others?**

- 1) Need to furnish water and coffee!!
- 2) Need volunteer name tags
- 3) Identification of volunteer staff would help. Either by badge/shirt or something. Also, had many who came to vote...only were not questioned at gate.
- 4) Instructions need to be given beforehand
- 5) A concise list of what would be expected at the Stand Down to accompany the response letter sent out.
- 6) Send extra sign up forms to individuals who have volunteered before.
- 7) Send the volunteer forms out earlier
- 8) I think that we should be friendlier & more concerned for our veterans & homeless. We should be more considerate of their situation. They may not be able to get on their feet without assistance. Be more understanding of their concerns & needs. Don't be mean to them just because they are homeless. Some of them can't help they are homeless. This is only an opinion but still should be taken seriously. Thank you. ---Ladies Aux t VFW 3764
- 9) People still wanting something to eat but kitchen closed at 1:30pm. No handouts, etc. at 2:00pm. All areas

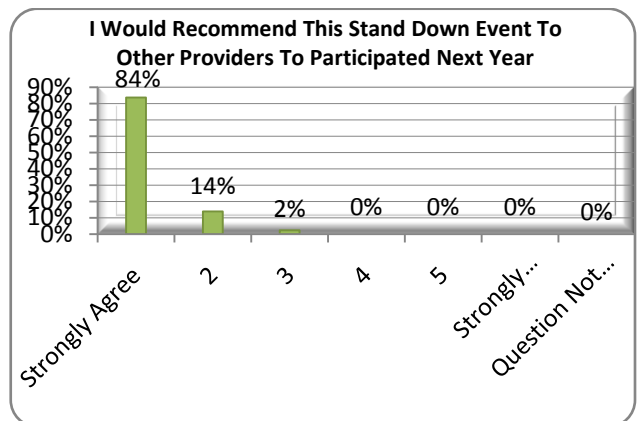
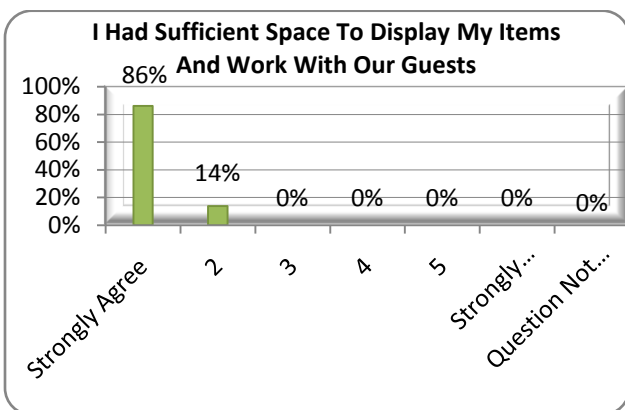
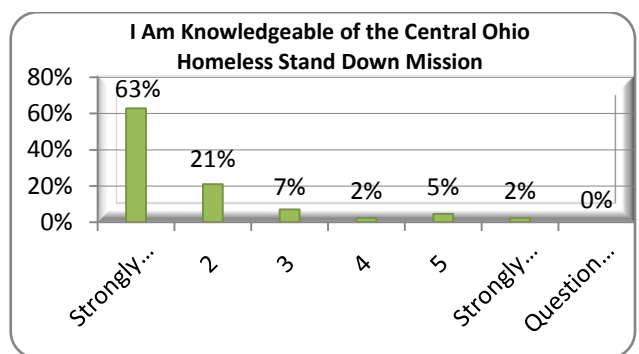
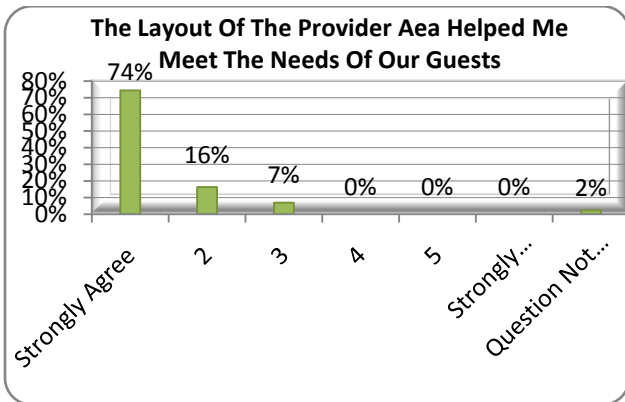
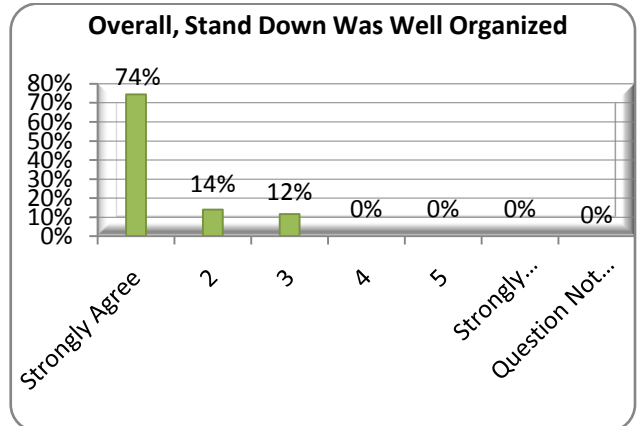
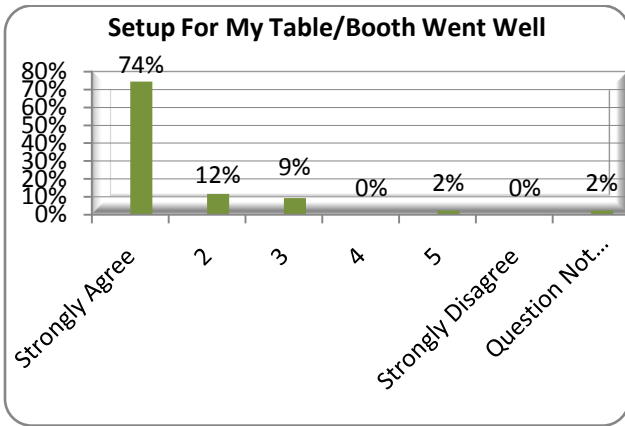
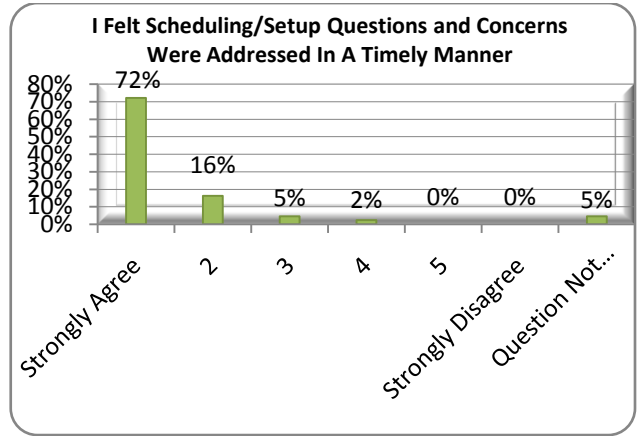
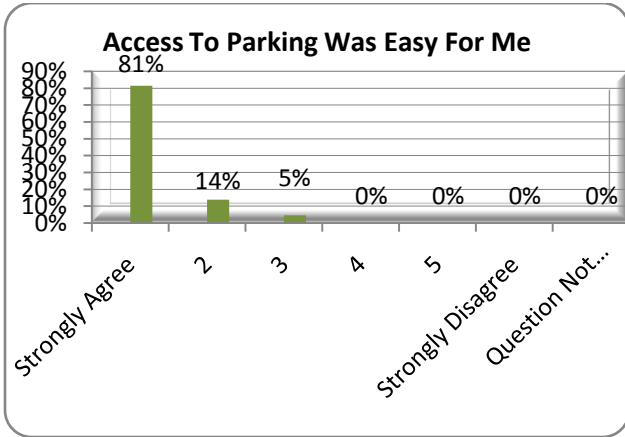
- closed down by 2:30pm!
- 10) Have barriers to section off work areas.
  - 11) I thought for this committee to be their first year, they did a good job. I am going to stay in contact with Dan Willis, John Roszkowski and Rick Isbell
  - 12) I think you all did a great job (Ladies Auxiliary VFW 3764)
  - 13) I believe you did an excellent job for your first year with little or no background experience.
  - 14) Was great!
  - 15) Everything went as it should. Enjoyed my time spent here.
  - 16) I would have brought in more jackets and blanket. I will know for next year. Thank you for doing this for our county vets!
  - 17) Thank you!!
  - 18) It's your first time it was great.
  - 19) Only permit veterans in one door and non-vets in another. Too many people at the doors screening people. New volunteers are ignorant & rude.
  - 20) Have 2 lines. One for veterans and one for non-veterans at the entrance at check-in. Get rid of the 3 women and one man and only use 2 at the doors. Start van pick-up again. Years past we were processing people until 2pm.
  - 21) Why are volunteers taking home boxes of clothes!
  - 22) Contact organizations before hand to see if they knew what was going
  - 23) Promote/publicize at all federal offices (DFAS/DSCC)
  - 24) Need more advertisement to organization!! Need way to identify each volunteer!
  - 25) Inform them to be set up the day before the event or set up early in the morning before the doors open. Some did others did not.
  - 26) Our American Legion Aux donated 23 bags of clothes...\$105 caps & gloves, blankets, etc. ---American Legion Aux Nmrt 376 Jerntion City, OH 43748

## PROVIDER SURVEY

There were 43 surveys completed by community- and veterans-service providers. There were 10 questions for providers to answer, as well as an area for comments. The answers were chosen from the following table:

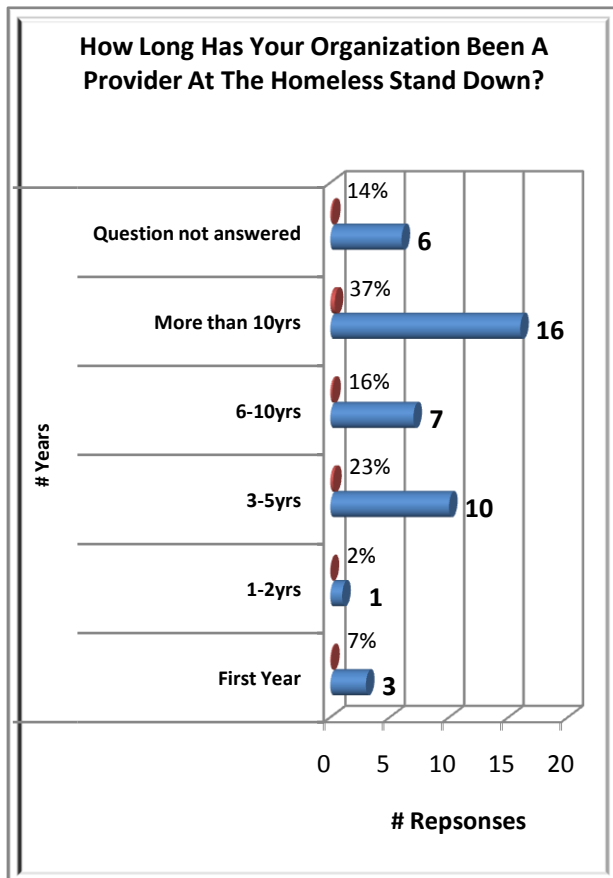
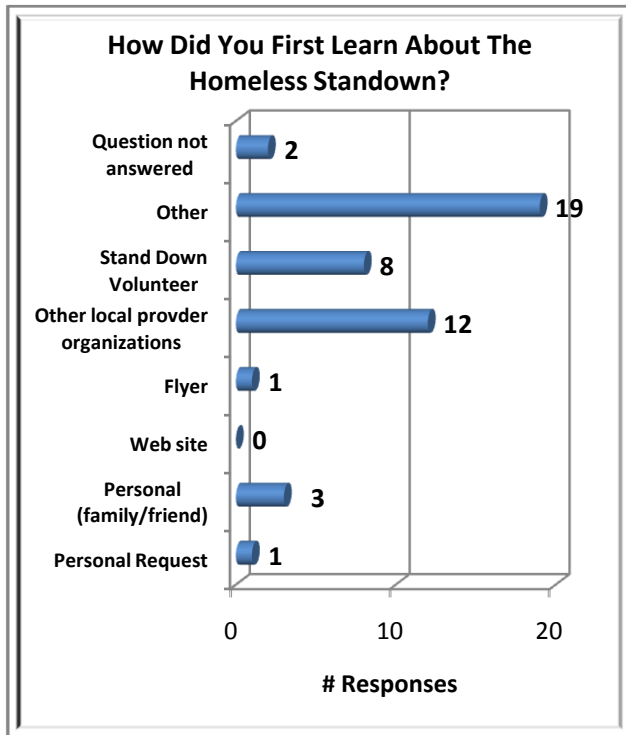
1= Strongly Agree
2=Agree
3= Somewhat Agree
4=Somewhat Disagree
5= Disagree
6=Strongly Disagree
No Answer or N/A

# AFTER-ACTION REPORT



# AFTER-ACTION REPORT

Providers also answered questions regarding marketing and retention:



Providers were also asked to provide comments on improving the Central Ohio Homeless Stand Down for future years.

### In your opinion, how can we improve our Homeless Stand Down Program?

1. Upon entering to assist with legal services, I was directed to an empty table on the floor instead of the legal services area. I wasted time sitting on the floor before I figured out where the legal services area was. It would be great to have a computer/internet access to look up clients criminal cases/warrants and provide them with more thorough advice!
2. Have internet computer available so that issues such as outstanding warrants can be reviewed on line
3. Recruit more vets.
4. Just continue to get more volunteers
5. Limit to documented veterans who are homeless
6. Separation of vets and non-veterans events may allow services to each group to increase because there will be greater focus.
7. Have Stand Down for veterans only! Have as separate Stand Down for non-veteran homeless/needy. It is easier to focus on the needs of veterans when there are only veterans to deal with.
8. Continued improved organization efforts
9. More information in other counties about what the Stand Down has to offer. More advertisement & flyers.
10. Promotion and advertising better, more corporate sponsors
11. More promotion of event with the community.
12. More press.
13. Encourage more media coverage of the event, both before it and during the event.
14. Have a complete list of VA and non VA organizations that are present.
15. You all do a great job. You would know better than I would on needed changes.
16. Better info on website would be helpful.
17. Difficult finding our table--- other than that, everything went well.
18. List of areas where organizations are.
19. More space between neighboring booths.
20. Grouping like minded service providers in the same grouping of tables. Need more vets
21. Be clear on what organizations should provide. Lots of sugary stuff for a population @ high risk for diabetes, heart disease, etc.
22. More food
23. Provide new homes for free!
24. Provide bus tickets for persons who live far from Stand Down.
25. It is a very nice program, don't change it.

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26. It was great
27. In years past, volunteers have received T-shirts. They have not had T-shirts in the past few years. Entertainment might be cool, not necessarily the karaoke.
28. Try to get attorneys with family law knowledge
29. Many ideas
30. I would like to sit on the Committee
31. Many homeless families & Vets in the southern parts of Ohio also, but many do not have transportation to this event.
32. Setup was a lot better this year.
33. The sound system is not great. Cannot hear at all. Very garbled.
34. Acoustics were such that I could not hear anything over the PA system.
35. Check-in was very chaotic. Clients are very confused this year! Lunch at 11:30 is way too late. Clients upset nothing to drink.
36. Do your medical facilities attend the event offer flu shots or mist for the participants or even the basic set of shots?
37. Great job!
38. Good this year.

## STORAGE OF ARCHIVES

The archives of the historian will be stored at the Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio Employment Resource Center at 567 West Broad Street in Columbus. The archives include completed survey forms, unused donated materials and supplies, signs, files, and any other items necessary to maintain continuity and to promote improvement of efficiencies in subsequent years.

Digital photographs of the event are also available and will be posted on the Stand Down Web site following its creation.

## ANALYSIS & SUMMARY

The consensus from surveys and anecdotal sources indicates a vast improvement in this year's Central Ohio Homeless Stand Down compared to previous years. The adoption of a committee and elected board of directors received positive feedback from the community, volunteers and providers. Among the committee's priorities for 2008 was to make the event more orderly and organized for all participants; improve the planning process; establish a set of standards for future committees; and to establish a sense of continuity for a successful event for many years to come.

Next year's committee will have more issues to tackle, but will be able to do so with a firmer foundation upon which to operate. Some improvements might include an operational definition for "homeless"; a slightly larger committee with consistent members in attendance at all planning meetings; and a clear explanation to the community, volunteers, providers, and especially our guests, of the meaning of Stand Down, its history, for whom it exists (homeless and homeless veterans), and the reasons why we must operate as we do.

Our event has the capability of becoming a national benchmark for Stand Downs, if we remember to plan, organize, manage and improve, and to always keep the goal of helping those in need at the forefront.

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The following outline is a collection of suggested improvements compiled from oral and written sources consisting of committee members, volunteers, providers and Stand Down customers. The attempt was to make the outline as specific as possible, providing position descriptions and detailed lists where appropriate. It focuses on breaking the committee into areas of responsibility in the form of one- or two-person teams to accomplish planning and operations goals, instead of the subcommittee concept.

It is important to note that the outline has not been approved by the committee, and is simply a list of recommended improvements from as many sources as possible to establish and maintain continuity, and to provide a starting point for discussion on future improvements to the event.

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## Central Ohio Homeless Stand Down Recommended Operations and Improvements for 2009

### 1. Board of Directors and Central Committee

- a. The committee will consist of no more than 20 members, whose attendance at every planning meeting is essential.
- b. The committee will elect a Board of Directors from its body at the year's first or second meeting, directed by the previous year's chair or vice-chair. The Board of Directors will consist of the following positions:
  - i. Chairperson
  - ii. Vice Chairperson
  - iii. Treasurer
  - iv. Secretary
  - v. Historian
- c. Members of the committee-at-large are expected to participate regularly in planning activities and direct the operations found in point two (2) of this outline.

### 2. Role of Board/Committee Members

- a. Assign one member to the following areas/responsibilities beginning as soon as possible in the planning stages. That individual establishes the number of volunteers required prior to the event and coordinates training, communications and management on the day of the event. All committee members in charge of an area/responsibility will create and submit to the committee a checklist (including deadlines) for necessary actions leading up to the event and necessary actions on the day of the event.
  - i. **Food**
    1. Establish a standardized contact list that can be reused for future events
  - ii. **Clothing**
    1. Establish a standardized contact list that can be reused for future events
    2. All clothing delivery takes place the day before the event
    3. Add more volunteers to prepare the clothing area
    4. Do not waiver from the planned clothing area set-up
    5. Accept and prepackage according to size (as applicable) only the following items:

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- a. Hat
  - b. Gloves
  - c. Underwear – briefs & t-shirts
  - d. Blanket
  - e. Coat/Jacket
  - f. Scarf
  - g. Hooded Sweatshirt
- iii. **Vets Memorial Liaison** – Meets and works with the facility’s manager and assistant manager and their staff (including the electrician) to establish requirements well ahead of time. This person serves as the contact for any last-minute or day-of-the-event facilities issues (more tables, chairs, set-up, curtains, dividers, power issues, etc.). Establishes an exact diagram, in conjunction with managers, of the floor plan to include precise measurements, distances, and numbers of tables, chairs, and separator curtains. In 2008, 360 ft. of pipe and curtains were required. The facilities staff maintains detailed files of past years’ Stand Downs. They are to be informed as early as possible regarding any changes to set-up or facilities requirements.
- iv. **Haircut Area** – Consult Vets Memorial electrician and facilities staff
- v. **Providers – Community**
1. Establish a standardized contact list that can be reused for future events
  2. Set up the day before the event
    - a. Provide a diagram so all providers are aware of their location
  3. Reiterate opening and closing hours; providers should be set up and in place at opening, and provide enough staffing to stay for the entire day (no closing down early)
  4. Create a letter outlining the following information and send as early as possible:
    - a. Appreciation that the organization would consider being a part of the event
    - b. Mission of the event
    - c. When, where, how long the event will be
    - d. Identify the number of tables, chairs or special requests (certain location, access to electricity, etc.)
    - e. Answer FAQs
    - f. State that goods and services provided are for the homeless only
    - g. List responsibilities as applicable
  5. Plan and diagram where each organization will be located
  6. Coordinate with the committee member in charge of signs and produce signs with the organization’s name and table number
    - a. Assign tables the day before the event
- vi. **Providers – Veterans Groups**
1. Establish a standardized contact list that can be reused for future events
  2. Set up the day before the event
    - a. Provide a diagram so all providers are aware of their location
  3. Reiterate opening and closing hours; providers should be set up and in place at opening, and provide enough staffing to stay for the entire day (no closing down early)
  4. Create a letter outlining the following information and send as early as possible:

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- a. Appreciation that the organization would consider being a part of the event
  - b. Mission of the event
  - c. When, where, how long the event will be
  - d. Identify the number of tables, chairs or special requests (certain location, access to electricity, etc.)
  - e. Answer FAQs
  - f. State that goods and services provided are for the homeless only
  - g. List responsibilities as applicable
5. Plan and diagram where each organization will be located
  6. Coordinate with the committee member in charge of signs and produce signs with the organization's name and table number
    - a. Assign tables the day before the event
- vii. **Volunteers**
1. Establish a standardized contact list that can be reused for future events
  2. Create a letter outlining the following information and send as early as possible:
    - a. Appreciation that the organization would consider being a part of the event
    - b. Mission of the event
    - c. When, where, how long the event will be
    - d. Answer FAQs
    - e. State that goods and services provided are for the homeless only
    - f. List responsibilities as applicable
  3. Security/Police Officers
    - a. Volunteer Guards – this concept worked well in 2008; station 1- or 2-person teams near restricted areas (two volunteers guarded the exit to ensure customers did not use it as an entrance).
  4. Identification of volunteers & customers
    - a. Procure t-shirts (one color) to identify volunteers
    - b. Procure t-shirts or polo shirts (one color) to identify board/committee members
    - c. Nametags/stickers
    - d. Create an iron-clad, no exceptions volunteer list; no one is admitted as a volunteer without being on the list
    - e. Wristbands – number wristbands and assign that number to each customer on the intake form
      - i. Instruct volunteers to put the wristbands on tightly (some wristbands were stretched and given to other customers)
      - ii. Instruct volunteers not to provide another wristband without checking for the customer's name
  5. Intake – Volunteers and Customers
  6. Establish a Lost & Found
  7. Create a Bag Check with multiple signs stating “Not Responsible for Lost or Stolen Items” – add security or volunteers
  8. Create a letter (also for use in e-mail) outlining volunteers' responsibilities; establish short job descriptions for review prior to training or arriving for the event

# AFTER-ACTION REPORT

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9. Volunteer Refreshments/Lounge
  - a. Bottled water, soda pop, coffee
    - i. Coolers, coffee maker, etc.
  - b. Snacks
  - c. Plates, napkins, cups (don't skimp on these items; surpluses can be used the following year)
  - d. Coordinate with the committee member in charge of signs to produce "Volunteers Only" signs
- viii. **Signs** – Establishes various requirements and procures a reliable producer for good, quality, reusable signs including but not limited to the following:
  1. Provider Tables
  2. Where lines should form
  3. Major FAQs
  4. Areas above stations – hanging signs
  5. "Volunteers Only"
  6. Water fountains or stations
  7. Restrooms
  8. Handheld maps for volunteers – produce a small diagram of the facility and its layout to be distributed to all volunteers. When asked where a particular area or service provider is, the volunteer simply points it out on the map or leads the customer to the desired location.
- ix. **Materials & Supplies** – Ensures providers bring their own supplies as necessary (Legal Aid showed up without pens in 2008) and the event is fully supplied with the following:
  1. Large plastic/paper shopping bags with handles (not trash bags, not grocery bags)
  2. Clipboards
  3. Tape
  4. Pens
  5. Paper covers for tables
  6. Boxes
  7. Copier (provided by Franklin County VSO) and paper
    - a. Keep the paper, ink cartridges, other supplies near the copier for fast change-out
  8. Boxes
    - a. For intake forms on every intake table
    - b. For all surveys
  9. Binders for committee members that contain all information necessary for operations
- x. **Surveys**
  1. Individual paper colors to differentiate among volunteer, provider and customer surveys.
- xi. **Communications – Web Site Only** – Plans layout and works with a designer to produce a professional-quality Web site. Serves as the contact to update, add and delete all information and data throughout the year.

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- xii. **Communications – Public Relations** – Produces a Publicity Plan document for review by the board and committee members including but not limited to the following:
  - 1. PSA for radio, TV, newspapers – separate PSAs target volunteers and customers
  - 2. Flyers, counter cards, posters
  - 3. Banner/Announcement on planning committee members’ Inter/Intranet sites: City of Columbus (Veterans Coordinator & Committee, Mayor’s Homeless Advocate); Franklin County VSO; State of Ohio DJFS; VA; VOA, various other VSOs, etc.
  
- xiii. **Donations**
  - 1. Establish a standardized contact list that can be reused for future events
  - 2. Keep a list of contributors and work with the committee member assigned to gratitude for thank-you letters
  
- xiv. **Gratitude** – separate from Communications due to its importance and preparatory work.
  - 1. Have pre-committee-approved thank-you letters for volunteers ready to go out the same week of the event
  - 2. Have pre-committee-approved thank-you letters for VIPs and businesses ready to go out the same week of the event
  - 3. Instruct committee members to report actions from individuals, organizations, businesses, etc., that later requires a thank-you letter
  - 4. Postage
  - 5. Envelopes and letterhead stationery
  - 6. Create certificates for volunteers
    - a. Track longevity and give special recognition to long-serving volunteers

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***Submitted December 2, 2008***

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