



DREAMCENTER

**Adopt-A-Block
Program Guide**

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HISTORY & VISION OF ADOPT-A-BLOCK

*“We meet people’s needs in order to position ourselves to speak to their potential.”
– Pastor Tommy Barnett*

THE HISTORY OF ADOPT-A-BLOCK

While walking through Echo Park late one night, Pastor Matthew Barnett noticed that gangs, pimps, and liquor stores were the greatest forces of influence on the neighborhood because of their consistent presence in the community. Through this experience, he saw a need for a “church that never sleeps” – a church that would meet individuals’ needs twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

In order to begin meeting the immediate needs of the community – littered streets, messy yards, and lonely children – The Dream Center would begin adopting blocks. Through Adopt-A-Block, the physical needs of individuals and families are met on a consistent basis, building a foundation of consistency that leads to relationships. The goal of meeting these needs and building relationships with the people in the community is ultimately gaining the opportunity to speak into people’s potential, as well as lead the individual one step closer to Jesus.

After the first three years of Adopt-A-Block, crime dropped 73% within the local community!



We have seen Adopt-A-Block change the atmosphere of numerous neighborhoods across Los Angeles – but it's success is not limited to large metropolitan areas. Adopt-A-Block has been implemented by churches, businesses, universities, and individuals across the United States, in cities, neighborhoods, and city blocks. Adopt-A-Block is effective anywhere because it is based upon the foundational principle of meeting someone’s needs in order to position yourself to speak to their potential.

STARTING AN ADOPT-A-BLOCK SITE

STEP ONE: PICK A CENTRAL LOCATION

The first step in establishing an Adopt-A-Block program is deciding on a central location from which to base your service to the community. This will be the location where your volunteers will consistently serve and meet the needs of the neighborhood on a weekly basis.

Your location should be easily accessible for those in the community, but should not be a nuisance. Make sure that your services and volunteers will not be blocking the sidewalk or stopping traffic. If possible, find a grassy area where you can set up activities for children.

The best Adopt-A-Block locations are those that will advertise themselves. In other words – try to center your Adopt-A-Block site in a location where many can see it. Not everyone in the community may be aware of the activities and services provided by Adopt-A-Block, but families will be drawn to the location as they see you serving – especially when you meet an immediate need.

If you're interested in serving a local Government Housing and Urban Development, you'll want to research all the details on what's allowed. Here is link to get you started:

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts

STEP TWO: SURVEY

Once you have established your Adopt-A-Block location, survey everyone within a three-block radius of your location. Find out what the most pressing needs are in the community. Do the majority of families need food? Clothing? Diapers? Make sure that the services you are providing are relevant to the people you are trying to serve!

As you survey the area, take the opportunity to inform everyone of the location you have chosen for the Adopt-A-Block site.

Once you have gathered your survey information, you will see that the most urgent community needs will be repeated. These needs are a great starting point for your Adopt-A-Block site.

Another benefit to surveying the community is that you can gather a list of those who seem most interested. Follow up with these families and invite them to the Adopt-A-Block launch!

STEP THREE: LAUNCH



The goal of Adopt-A-Block is to build relationships, and the key to success in this is consistency. From the moment an Adopt-A-Block site launches, it serves as a promise to the community that, rain or shine, you will be there to serve for years to come. Your commitment to the community will speak louder than your activities for the community.

Use the completed surveys to promote the Adopt-A-Block launch on foot in the community, over the telephone, or via email. Again, the surveys have already provided your starting point in terms of meeting the needs of the community. Immediate needs may include: food and clothing giveaways, activities for children, or even picking up trash.

At Mercy Drops Dream Center, our vision is to “find the forgotten, and help them build a foundation where they can flourish.” Meeting the immediate needs of the community is the fastest way to build relationships and gain influence to speak into people’s potential.

We also value partnerships with other organizations, businesses, and churches, and use every opportunity to cross-brand what we do. For example, if we are working with another organization to run an Adopt-A-Block site, we make sure to mention that it is “*In Partnership with ACME Corp.*”. We expect the converse to hold true from our partners as well. We believe that this is a very valuable way to show our communities that it is not just one organization that cares for them, but multiple!

STEP FOUR: EXPAND

As the Adopt-A-Block program at Mercy Drops Dream Center expanded, we added central locations outside of our local neighborhood. We now serve at central locations, or “sites” as we call them, across the city of Portsmouth. Adopt-A-Block sites vary – from El Amado, a small, Spanish-speaking community, to under-resourced neighborhoods, Downton Portsmouth/High Street, and even nursing homes.

Due to the variety of sites we serve, we can appeal to volunteers and groups of all ages and interests. For example, if a group wants to work with children, we will assign them to one of our under-resourced neighborhoods. On the other hand, a group that wants to work specifically with the homeless can go down to Queen/High Street.

Having multiple sites gives us the ability to serve most days of the week, as well as to have options that accommodate different schedules as well as special requests



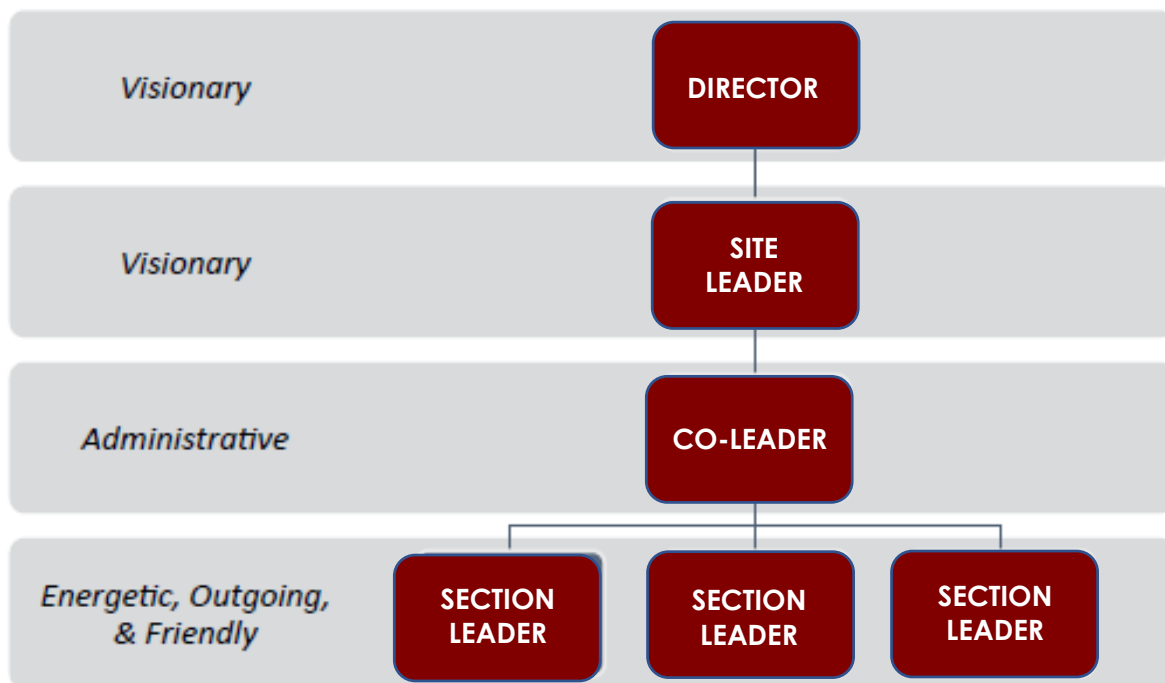
MAINTAINING AN ADOPT-A-BLOCK SITE

THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS CONSISTENCY

Perhaps the most important ingredient for maintaining an Adopt-A-Block site is consistency. If we are not consistent, then Adopt-A-Block loses its impact.

Consistency can be a challenge of its own in a program that is almost 100% volunteer-driven. However, consistency is possible, even when dealing with the most transitional volunteers, such as a Short Term Mission team. With consistency always as our goal, we designed the structure of Adopt-A-Block in such a way as to support an atmosphere of stability for each Adopt-A-Block site.

STRUCTURE OF ADOPT-A-BLOCK TEAM



STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

The Adopt-A-Block Director should be in consistent contact with the Site Leader in order to cast vision and direct the program. The Site Leader is then responsible for passing information from the Director to the Co-Leaders and Section Leaders, as well as communicating requests from the site to the Director. Constant communication will ensure the needs of the community are being met. Ways to facilitate regular communication are the Weekly Report, site rotations, one-on-one meetings every other month, and quarterly State of Block meetings with all site leaders.

SITE LEADERS

Site Leaders are passionate about the site and provide the vision to make events happen. Aside from overseeing site operations, the Site Leader's responsibility is to develop other leaders as well as facilitate relationships at the site.

CO-LEADERS

Co-Leaders support the Site Leader's vision and often assist the Site Leader administratively – ensuring events are legal, have funding, and are being promoted.

SECTION LEADERS

Section Leaders are supportive, enthusiastic, and take initiative in meeting people, working the clothing and food giveaways, and leading children's activities.

VOLUNTEERS

It is vital that Adopt-A-Block sites have the number of volunteers they need. Since consistency is always the goal of Adopt-A-Block, it is important that the long-term volunteers consistently visit the same site location time after time. All long-term volunteers at Mercy Drops Dream Center are assigned permanently to an Adopt-A-Block site. These long-term volunteers are the backbone of the sites, and their biggest role is building relationships with the families in the community.

Other volunteers may join Adopt-A-Block for only one day. These volunteers play an important role in meeting the needs of the community. They assist at the site by helping to pass out food, clothing, or other needs, praying for families, playing with children, etc. Some even bring their own donations!

EVENTS

ADOPT-A-BLOCK RALLY

The Adopt-A-Block rally is the hub for all Adopt-A-Block sites. All volunteers converge at their specific site to pray and prepare to mobilize into the community. We believe this is our time to go to God on behalf of the people before we go to the people on behalf of God. The Adopt-A-Block rally provides a place for local (first-time and one-time) volunteers to make friends and find the best way to get involved. It also provides an easy way to dispense information to all Adopt-A-Block volunteers – such as testimonies, new site launches, and upcoming events.

At the Adopt-A-Block rally, we also take the opportunity to educate volunteers about safety and to set the right atmosphere for the volunteers so that they can go out and set the right atmosphere in the community. We also make sure every volunteer is aware of Adopt-A-Block's "Why behind our what". This is a quick 5-8 minute devotion to encourage the volunteers.

DEVELOPING LEADERS

Although the majority of Adopt-A-Block volunteers attend the Saturday morning Adopt-A-Block events, Adopt-a-Block operates 5 days of the week. It takes a whole host of volunteers, interns, and others to lead Adopt-A-Block on a weekly basis.

In order to best equip those who have committed to Adopt-A-Block for the long haul, we have developed a leadership class to train up our leaders. This system involves reading and writing assignments, as well as assigning our leaders to shadow other Section Leaders, Co-Leaders, and Site Leaders to learn about their responsibility and leadership qualities. As with all other aspects of Adopt-A-Block, the goal of the leadership class is consistency.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Special events are a great way to create excitement in your community. In addition to bringing new energy to the site, the event will give passion and focus to your leaders and volunteers. Most importantly, special events and activities will attract new individuals and families from the neighborhood to your central location.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Each quarter, MDDC holds Leadership Training meetings to take our leaders and volunteers to the next level. Our meetings will take place the last Saturday in January, April, July, and October. These trainings are highly recommended for all leaders to attend so that we can be on the same page as an organization in regards to our culture, activities, and our why behind what we do!

APPENDIX

The following pages contain document samples and other resources used in the daily operations of Adopt-A-Block.

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APPENDIX I

A DAY AT ADOPT-A-BLOCK

10 MINUTES

Prayer – Going to God on behalf of the people, before going to the people on behalf of God.

10 MINUTES

Volunteer Sign In – Collecting first-time visitor information allows us to get volunteers plugged in and keep them updated with special events.

10 MINUTES

AAB Rally hosted by the Adopt-A-Block Director

- Welcome & Thank Volunteers
- Share Vision of Adopt-A-Block
- The Why Behind our What

2-3 HOURS

Change Atmosphere of the Community:

- Distribute Food & Needs
- Knock on Doors
- Pick up Trash
- Build Relationships

APPENDIX II

CORE BELIEFS

The strength of Adopt-A-Block is its ability to build strong, lasting relationships within the community. The relationships, built upon consistency, will allow you to speak into the potential of an individual or family. Soon, you will begin to see the atmosphere of the entire community change!

In addition to visiting the sites with love and consistency, Adopt-A-Block leaders and volunteers serve with a few other principles in mind:

“Outreach,” not “Down-reach” –

As a result of this mindset, the Adopt-A-Block team views those at our sites as family, not as those who are less fortunate.

Don't Relate, Revolutionize –

Although many of our volunteers are unfamiliar with urban culture, each one is able to show love in order to change the atmosphere of the community and speak into an individual's potential.

We Get To Serve –

It is essential that your attitude is in the right place. Serving is not about you - it is a privilege!

Be A Responder –

At your site, you will continually see needs that need to be met. Do not just point out issues – solve them!