



Media Advisory
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Hotspots Help Homeless Move Out of Downtown

Front Steps and BBH Labs provided a way out of homelessness

Austin, (TX) – As the South by Southwest 2013 Interactive session wraps up, *Front Steps* reflects on the events of last year's session that brought focus to an innovative product helping both festival goers and the homeless here in Austin. Designed by *BBH Labs* in New York, *Homeless Hotspots* helped SXSWi attendees find data connections while out on the crowded streets of Austin where wireless data could be hard to come by.

Last year, 13 men and women participating in *Front Steps'* case management program at the *Austin Resource Center for the Homeless* were selected to manage the hotspot connections during SXSWi. Intending to fill both a need and bring more attention to the issues surrounding homelessness, *BBH Labs* built their idea on the back of the street newspaper, traditionally sold by homeless as a means of earning a wage.

Earning more than the Texas standard for minimum wage for 6 hours of work each day of the interactive session, hotspot managers were paid a daily wage in cash while a follow-up payment, dependent on the amount of data purchased through their device, was sent once the project came to a close on the last day of SXSWi.

"They're giving us the opportunity to work," said Mark West, one hotspot manager. "You're providing a service for the public. It's like an individual business."

Proving West's point and creating a sustainable result, *Front Steps* case managers were able to secure housing for 11 of the 13 participants as a result of the money earned through the partnership with *BBH Labs*. While the innovative technology may have sparked a wildfire of reactions, *Homeless Hotspots* helped provide the men and women a means of earning the money necessary to help move them out of downtown and into safe & stable housing.

One year later, those 11 individuals remain in housing, while one hotspot manager was able to reconnect with family out of state, and another still waits to be housed. While *Homeless Hotspots* was not present this year of SXSWi, *BBH Labs* and *Front Steps* are still proud of their accomplishments.

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