



What's It Like to be Homeless?

An Education Curriculum for Children and Teens

Presented by



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What's It Like to be Homeless?

Homeless children are just like any other kids, except they do not have their own home. They have worries beyond their years—they worry that they will never have a stable home, they worry about where they will sleep at night, they worry about their parents, and they worry that their friends might find out about their situation. They often have to skip meals and they do not have proper medical care. Some children might even see violence within their family.



Many children who are homeless live in shelters. Shelters differ from place to place but they can be a room in a church or temple, school, or civic building. A homeless shelter is a scary place for children. Despite the dedication of shelter volunteers and staff many shelters are noisy, too hot or cold, and crowded. A shelter is not a comfortable place to sleep. Children sleep in the same room as their parents, and sometimes even people they do not know. Bathrooms must be shared, often with everyone staying at the shelter. Children find it difficult to find a quiet place to do homework. It is often difficult to even go to school when living in a shelter.

Shelters are usually designed to provide homeless peoples with a few weeks of emergency housing. As more families find themselves without a home shelters must meet the demand and work to provide long-term housing for families with no other options. Once a shelter is full for the night, remaining families must live in cars, campgrounds, or on couches of friends or relatives.

Why Do People Become Homeless?

There are many reasons to explain why a family can fall into homelessness:

- Not many affordable housing options
 - Low-cost units have been converted into condominiums or luxury apartments
 - Businesses and the government are building fewer low-cost units
 - The government is making it more difficult for low-income families to qualify for rent assistance programs
- Job loss
- Low paying jobs
- Illness or a death in the family
 - The high cost of medical care can wipe out a family's savings when someone becomes seriously ill or dies
- Natural disasters
- Family Trouble
 - Many mothers and children become homeless when they are forced to flee their homes to escape domestic violence
 - Problems with drugs or alcohol cause many families to become homeless

When there are more families than homes, finding a home is like a game of musical chairs: the music stops and someone is left standing because there are more players than chairs. With housing, the people left standing are those with the least money.

In the last 40 years the number of low-cost housing units has decreased in the United States despite a growing number of working poor families.

Young People on Their Own

Some homeless children live without their parents or other adults to care for them. These young people may be homeless because of:

- Problems with parents or stepparents, or parental abuse
- Family money problems caused by high rents, low wages, lack of health insurance, or loss of welfare benefits

When is a Young Person Considered Homeless?

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as:¹

- Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children who are:
 - Sharing housing with other people due to a loss of housing
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, etc. due to a lack of adequate alternatives
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters
 - Abandoned in hospitals
 - Awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youth who's nighttime residence is a place not designed for a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, transport stations, etc

Homeless student's rights under the McKinney-Vento Act are as follows:²

- Immediate school enrollment and full participation in all school activities, along with access to programs and services
- Children and youth experiencing homelessness to remain in their school of origin
- Transportation to and from school of origin
- Rights and protections specifically for unaccompanied youth
- To dispute an enrollment decision and if resolved, to be admitted to the school enrollment is sought
- Appointment of a local homeless education liaison in school districts to ensure equal services

Homelessness Hurts Families

Most children who are homeless live with their mothers. The constant stress of finding food and shelter causes many mothers to struggle with illness and mental health problems. While fathers may be in touch with their homeless children, they usually do not live with them. Many of the fathers do not have steady jobs; they may have physical or mental health problems.

How is Homelessness Harmful to Children?

Children who are homeless fall sick more often

Children who are homeless get sick four times as often as children in middle class families. They have:⁵

- Twice as many ear infections
- Four times as many asthma attacks
- Five times more diarrhea and stomach problems
- Six times as many speech problems

Children who are homeless have more problems in school¹

Federal law requires that all children, regardless of their housing situation, have a right to free and appropriate education. These laws allow children who are homeless to attend the same school they went to before they became homeless.

Often school administrators are not properly educated on laws protecting homeless children or they are unaware that a student is homeless. This makes it easy for these children to fall through the cracks of the education system.

Despite the law (specifically the McKinney-Vento Act for Homeless Children and Youth), many children are denied their right to an education for a variety of reasons:

- Some schools will not allow students to register without school and medical records.
- Some schools will not enroll students who do not have a home address.
- Students who are enrolled in school might not have transportation from a shelter to school
- Finding a place to sleep and food to eat, along with the rest of the daily struggles of homelessness, can cause schooling to be pushed aside.

Homeless children who are fortunate enough to maintain regular attendance:⁵

- Have gaps in their education
- Have difficulty learning and focusing
- Are often 1-2 grades behind in reading and math
- Must repeat a grade twice as often as their classmates

Cost of Living in DuPage County³

Average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in DuPage County: \$1058/month.

Wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment: \$20.34/hour.

Minimum wage in Illinois: \$8.25/hour.

Work hours to afford two-bedroom apartment on minimum wage: 99/week.

Resources in DuPage County



www.bridgecommunities.org



<http://www.dupagehomeless.org/>



<http://dupagepads.org/>



<http://www.familyshelterservice.org/>



<http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org/>



<http://www.peoplesrc.org/>



<http://www.chadhousing.org/>



<http://www.helpaveteran.org/>

Lesson Plans And Activities

Lesson Plan for Grades K-3

FLY AWAY HOME

Author: Eve Bunting

Publisher: Clarion

Video: Reading Rainbow

(P=Primary, I=Intermediate, P-I= both levels)

Theme:

Homelessness results from a variety of situations, and opportunities exist for people of all ages to make a difference in seeking solutions.

Program Summary:

The feature book is a touching story of a homeless boy and his father who move from terminal to terminal in an airport, trying not to be noticed and discovered. The boy expresses frustration about being homeless, yet he has hope for the future.

In the video, children whose families have been homeless share how this happened and how it felt. The narrator encourages us to make a difference in our communities. Viewers meet a boy who volunteers at City Harvest, an organization which gathers prepared food for distribution to the homeless, and the girl who began Common Cents, an organization whose members collect pennies and use them to buy items for homeless shelters.

Topics for Discussion:

(P-I) Before viewing, explore with the students the concept of “What is ‘home’?” What is needed in order to have a home? Who makes up a home?

(P-I) Obtain a copy of the book and read it to the students. The story presents opportunities for students to engage in some critical thinking: What do we know about large airports that makes them possible living space for homeless persons? Would all airports serve equally as well for the homeless? Why or why not? Why do the boy and his father dress in blue? What new problems will be created when it is time for Andrew to start school? What is the significance of the bird in the story?

(P-I) The boy and his father try to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible in the story. Consider other places. Besides an airport, what could be a “home” for a homeless person; places where large groups of people pass through who are preoccupied with their own lives? What would that person have to do in order to remain unnoticed in that setting?

- (I) Discuss the variety of situations that might cause a family to become homeless. Include in the discussion the understanding that living without a home is short term for some people, but may be long lasting for others.

- (I) After viewing the video, discuss different emotions that the homeless young people on the video were experiencing (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, joy, envy, etc.) Have students identify circumstances under which these emotions might surface.

Curriculum Extension Activities:

(P-I) Create a semantic map of the word “home.” Begin with “home” as the center of the map. Brainstorm words connected with home and write them on lines radiating from the center. Have students justify their choice of words by explaining why certain words come to mind when they think of “home.”

(I) Have students collect newspaper and magazine articles related to homelessness. Using information they gather, have students devise a plan for raising the awareness of people in their community about the issue of homelessness. Some examples are to organize a food collecting drive for the local food bank; collect mittens, hats, new underwear for children; collect quarters for using at the laundromat; have students collect pennies as a donation to a homeless.

(P-I) Have students research what types of agencies exist in your community to help the homeless. Invite an administrator from a homeless shelter to speak to the group about regulations, facilities, and needs of the shelter. Organize a fundraiser to collect money or items that the shelter can use to assist clients.

Adapted from
READING RAINBOW TEACHERS GUIDE
Program #116 – Fly Away Home
2005GPN/University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Lesson Plan for Grades 4-12

Time: 1 hour or more

- Materials:**
- Facts about homelessness from pages of this Curriculum Resource Book to familiarize leader with facts about homelessness.
 - One or more books from the Resource List (page 26)
 - Appropriate age level resources from the National Alliance to End Homelessness website: www.endhomelessness.org (select "Fact Sheets for Kids" and choose your groups' age level, and print out the appropriate pages)



I. Facts About Homelessness and Discussion

- A. Share with the students facts about homelessness.
- B. Read or have a student read one of the selected books to group.
- C. Discussion questions:
 - What are some of the reasons people become homeless
 - Have you ever met a homeless person?
 - How can you tell if a person is homeless?
 - Do you know about any nearby shelters?
 - If someone told you they were homeless what would you say?
 - If you were homeless, where might you live?
 - If you had nowhere to live, where would you go to school?

II. Activities

- A. "My House" – page 15
- B. "Where Do You Live" – page 14
- C. "Musical Chairs" – page 16-17

III. What Can We Do To Help? – pages 28-29

Activity: What Would You Take?

Grade Level: All

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Pens and paper
Backpacks (optional)

Introduction: Discuss why people become homeless

Discuss reasons people might need to vacate their home or apartment.

Activity: Present the following problem to the group:

1. You and your family must vacate your home.
2. You have only 10 minutes to choose what to take with you.
3. What you choose must fit into your backpack.

Start timing and have participants write down what they would choose. After 10 minutes elapse, process as a group:

- What did you choose to take? Why?
- What did you leave behind? Why?
- How did it feel to make your choices?
- How will you do without the things you left behind?
- Where will you get the things you need but no longer have?

Discuss more facts about homelessness with group.

Discuss ways to help the homeless.

Collect the things you discovered in the activity that you need and donate them to a homeless shelter:

- Travel shampoo, lotions, soap
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- Band-Aids
- Combs & brushes (new)



Activity: Where Do You Live?

Grade Level: 3rd – High School

Time: 1 hour or more

- Supplies:
- 2 or more large cardboard boxes (ask grocery store or an appliance store to save)
 - Tempera paints or poster-size markers
 - Paper and pencils
 - Flip chart or large paper

- Activities:
- Have students divide into 2 groups.
 - Each group imagines they are a homeless family and the box is now their “home”.
 - Assign the following tasks:
 - Group 1. Your box will become your house.
 - Group 2. Your box will become a car in which your family will live.
 - Have each group assign someone to be the recorder and someone to be the reporter for their group.
 - Each group will discuss and write down the challenges of living in their new “home”.

Discussion Questions:

1. Is there room for everyone?
2. How do you sleep?
3. Where do you brush your teeth, bathroom, shower, etc?
4. Where do you do your homework?
5. Where do you eat?
6. Can your friends come over?
7. Where do you go to school?

- Have the groups reconvene and share their experiences. The reporters from each group report back to the large group while the leader writes on the flip chart.

Questions to ask large group:

- What were some of your feelings about being homeless?
- How do homeless families face their situation and solve the challenges they experience?
- What did you learn from this exercise?
- How can we use the lessons learned from this exercise to bring awareness about homelessness to others?

Activity: My House

Grade level: K-5

Time: 15 minutes

I like my house because:

My favorite room is:

My favorite things in my house are:

When I think of the word "home" these are the things I think of:

Activity: Musical Chairs

Grade Level: 1st-6th

Time: 30 minutes

- Materials:
- Two rows of chairs placed back-to-back, one less than the number of participants
 - CD player with music CDs
 - Copies of the following scenarios cut into individual slips.

#1 I'm 10 years old. My brothers are 6 and 7 and my sister is 2. It's just my mom and us kids. Landlords tell my mom they will not rent to families with more than 3 children. My uncle lets us sleep on the floor in his apartment. My brothers and I can't go to school because they say we don't live in that school district. Why can't I go school like other kids?

#2 I'm 8 and my mom is a single mom. She works in a Laundromat and only makes \$8.25 per hour. The owner lets us sleep in the Laundromat at night because we don't have enough money to rent an apartment.

#3 I am 12 years old. My dad hurt his back last year and can't find a job. We have lots of medical bills. My mom works at Jewel, but doesn't earn enough for us to have our own apartment. We had to move out of our last apartment because we couldn't pay the rent. We live in our car now.

#4 My dad left us last year. I'm 9, Jennifer is 2 and the baby is 6 months old. The landlord told us we had to move out. My mom wants to work, but she has nobody to watch us so she can go out and look for a job. We live in our car. Sometimes my mom leaves us alone at McDonald's so she can go to an appointment. I try to do my homework there.

#5 I'm 7. My mom, my sister, and I live in our car. It's pretty crowded in there with all our clothes and everything. We have to find a different place every time we need to use the bathroom. I'm in school now, but I hope my friends don't find out that I live in our car. My best friend Matt wants to know if he can come over to play at my house. What am I supposed to tell him?

#6 I'm in eighth grade. We've moved so many times, I've gone to 10 different schools. I'm not a very good reader, and I have a lot of trouble understanding math. I get mad a lot at school, and I'm always in trouble. You'd be mad, too, if you didn't get to stay in one place long enough to make friends. I just wish we could have a house with a backyard where I could play. Then maybe I could catch up at school and have my friends over.

Instructions: While music is playing have students walk around the chairs. When the music stops, have students find a chair on which to sit. The student left standing is the “homeless person”. Have that student choose a scenario and read it to the rest of the group. Repeat until all the scenarios have been given out.

Discussion: Have group process their thoughts and feelings about the situations they heard about.

Talk about ways the people in each scenario could find help.

Discuss ways the students could help people in similar situations.

Activity: The “Haves” and “Have Nots”

Grade Level: 4th Grade and Up

Time: 30 minutes

Goal: To build the highest structure possible using only paper.

Materials: Sufficient supply of papers varying in size and sturdiness. *Suggestions:* construction paper, computer paper, newspaper, cardboard, cardstock, etc.

Instruction: The object of this activity is to expose the participants to the reality that everyone has a variety of resource given to us in life and it is what we do with our resources that determines how we succeed.

The group should be divided into teams depending on how many different types of paper are available. Each team is given one type of paper. A timer is set up with an amount of time in which the groups must make their structure (the time limit may vary depending on the age of the participants.) Time is the only rule. The most important lessons in this activity are how the teams work with what is given to them and how they work together as a team to solve the problem.

The leader should act as if all of the materials are equal and fair. Let teams know that there will be a prize for the winner.

Discussion: After the activity, the teams come back together as a large group. Each team discusses what the process was like for them. The leader should encourage the group to discuss feelings of frustration, pride, accomplishment, resentment, etc.

Questions:

- How did it feel to be the team with the worse materials?
- What was it like to watch the team with “better” building materials? Did it make you want to give up or try harder and be more creative?
- How did the team with the best materials or the better ideas for building a strong structure feel?
- Did any team help another team? Did teams share ideas with other teams? Why or why not?
- What were your frustrations working within your team?

- How does this activity relate to real life? What resources does your family have that make life easier for you? Which resources do you take for granted? (Do your parents own a house? A car? Did they go to college? Do you always have enough to eat? To wear?)
- Think about others who might not have as many resources as you.
- How would it affect you if you shared some of what you have with those who have less?
- What could you do to help others?
- Is having more always better? Why or why not?

Follow-up:

What could we do as a group to help others who are less fortunate?

Activity: Who Do You Trust?

Grade Level: 5th Grade and up

Goal: To gain awareness of how a person experiencing difficulties such as homelessness and poverty might feel.

Materials: Blindfolds

Instruction: The object of this activity is to expose participants to the idea of trust. Divide the group into pairs. One partner is the leader and the other the follower. The follower puts on the blindfold. The leader then takes the follower on a “journey.” The group leader reminds participants to notice what they are feeling during their “journey.” Have participants switch roles and walk the “journey” again.

Discussion: Have participants talk about the differences between being the leader and the follower. Ask the questions below.

Questions:

- How did it feel to not know where you were going as a follower?
- What was it like having to do what the leader wanted?
- Did you trust the person who was leading you? Why or why not?
- How was it different being the follower versus the leader?
- Which did you prefer? Leader or follower? Why?
- Who had the most power and control?
- Was there any way to equalize the roles?
- Who had more responsibility?
- Was the leader helpful or controlling?
- Who are the people in your life that you rely on the most?
- Do you like being dependent or independent?
- If you were homeless, would you be more like a leader or a follower?
- Who would you have to depend on if you were homeless?

Helping others: What could we do to ease the burden felt by homeless persons?

Activity: Homeless Families Scavenger Hunt

Grade Level: Middle School/High School

Time: Several Hours

Your team is a homeless family living in _____(city).

Your team must decide on who the members of your family are and the ages of the children.

Your goal is to find the following items and return "home" by _____(time).

Find the following items:

- _____ 1. Train/bus schedule.
- _____ 2. Listing of apartments for rent in your town. (**bonus points for the cheapest apartment)
- _____ 3. Can you get a library card without an address? Find out: _____.
- _____ 4. Where can you read the newspaper for "free"? _____
- _____ 5. Job "want-ads."
- _____ 6. Address for the local food pantry _____.
(**bonus points for more than one)
- _____ 7. Employment application for a job. What is the pay rate? _____.
How will you get to work? _____
- _____ 8. Free museum brochure.
- _____ 9. Phone number of county human services _____.
- _____ 10. Phone number of township offices _____.
What services and assistance do they provide?
- _____ 11. Where & How can you apply for a free e-mail account? _____.
Where can you check your e-mail?
- _____ 12. Where would you find cardboard boxes to build a shelter? _____.
- _____ 13. Where could you go to exercise or workout? _____.
- _____ 14. Where could you take a shower without being thrown out? _____.
- _____ 15. Where could you receive your mail? _____.
- _____ 16. Where do you brush your teeth and use the bathroom before school?
- _____ 17. Collect sale coupons for the grocery store.
- _____ 18. Where do you apply for food stamps? _____.
- _____ 19. Address of the health clinic _____.

- ___ 20. Information about opening a checking account. What is the minimum \$ to open an account? _____
- ___ 21. Used car dealer ad.
- ___ 22. Where could you buy a cheap bike? _____.
- ___ 23. Where is the nearest thrift store(s)? _____.
- ___ 24. Where is there a public telephone? _____.
- ___ 25. Where are the shelters for homeless people? _____.
- ___ 26. Where can you wash your clothes? What will it cost? _____.
- ___ 27. You have \$10 to feed your "family." Remember:
- You do not have anywhere to cook food;
 - Will the food you purchase fill you up?
 - What is the nutritional value of the food?
 - **Bring food back to starting place;**
 - **Get a receipt;**
 - Spend wisely, be creative, and include tax.

Extra challenge: **Bonus points for collecting coats, shoes, blankets!

RULES:

1. You may complete this list in any order you wish.
2. The whole group must stay together.
3. Number 27 is REQUIRED.
4. Your team bag includes a pen, paper, and \$10 for food.
5. Your driver is a chauffeur; not part of your team.
6. RETURN TO YOUR STARTING POINT BY _____(time).
7. Be careful, have fun, and remember you represent your _____(group).

Activity: Privilege Monopoly⁴

Grade Level: High school and up

Time: 30 minutes-3 hours (game can be shortened)

Goal: This game places participants at different privilege levels and works to teach the participants about systematic poverty.

Materials: Monopoly games—a large group will be divided into groups of four to play the game.

Rules:

1. The hat goes first. When it is your turn, roll both dice and move the appropriate number of spaces.
2. You get another turn if you roll doubles. If you roll doubles three times, you go to jail.
3. You must exit Jail in 1 turn. Once you are in jail you can either use a Get Out of Jail Free card or you can pay \$50
4. All money gets paid to the bank (You DO NOT get any money for landing on Free Parking, it is just a resting spot in this game)
5. You only need to buy three houses to upgrade to a hotel. Hotel property price is the same as what is on the property card.
6. If you land on a property not owned, you might be able to buy it (check your piece rules). If you land on a property already owned, you must pay the owner.
7. A property without houses or hotels can be sold to any player as a private transaction at any time for any amount the owner can get.
8. You can sell houses and hotels back to the bank for half price.
9. As long as a property you own doesn't have houses or hotels, you can mortgage it to the bank. You get the mortgage value printed on the Title Deed card. Once it is mortgaged, you can't collect any rent for the property until you pay the mortgage plus 10% interest. If someone else wants to buy the property from you, you can sell it as a private transaction at any price you agree on. Then, the new owner can pay the mortgage plus 10% interest to start receiving rent for it.
10. No player may borrow money from another player.
11. No player may dispute a decision of the banker (the hat).

To find the winner, add up: all cash, purchase price of property, utility, and railroad owned; houses and hotels valued at purchase price.

Rules for the Shoe

1. You can buy the following properties: Purple, Light blue and Pink (plus Railroads and utilities)
2. If you ever roll a 6 (on either die), you must go directly to jail.

Rules for the Hat

1. You are the banker. You must keep personal funds separate from those of the Bank.
2. You manage all the property cards and collect the money when these cards are purchased. When the other players buy property, remember that:
 - The **car** can buy any property EXCEPT green or blue
 - The **shoe** can ONLY buy purple, light blue, or pink properties plus railroads and utilities
 - **You** can buy any property you wish
3. You also collect all fines and taxes and you give out the \$200 salary to each player as he/she passes Go.
 - You think that the shoe is lazy and doesn't always deserve \$200. Occasionally, only give him/her \$150. If the shoe complains, threaten to take away his/her property.
4. Help keep an eye on the **Shoe**, if he/she ever rolls a 6 (on either die), he/she must go directly to jail.

Rules for the Car/Thimble

1. You can buy any property you wish EXCEPT **green** or **blue**.
2. Help keep an eye on the **Shoe**, if he/she ever rolls a 6 (on either die), he/she must go directly to jail.

Discussion:

- How did it feel to be your player?
- Did you notice the inequality between the players?
- What emotions did you feel during this game?
- Were you able to overcome your disadvantage?
- How does this relate to the real world?
- Do you notice disparity in your daily life?
- Do you do anything to combat this?
- What can you do to combat this in the future?

Activity: Calculate It!

Grades: 3rd -12th

Time: 15-30 minutes

It costs a family about \$1,000 rent per month for a 2-bedroom apartment in DuPage County.

Family #1	Family #2
\$ The starting wage for a job at McDonald's is about \$8.25 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?	\$ Suppose you have a better paying job and make \$14 per hour.
\$ How much will you earn in a month?	\$ How much will you earn in a month?
\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your taxes, food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.	\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your taxes, food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.
\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.	\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.

Calculate It! Answer Page

It costs a family about \$1,000 rent per month for a 2-bedroom apartment in DuPage County.

Family #1	Family #2
<p>\$ The starting wage for a job at McDonald's is about \$8.25 per hour. How much will you earn if you work a 40-hour week?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$330.00</p>	<p>\$ Suppose you have a better paying job and make \$14 per hour.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$560.00</p>
<p>\$ How much will you earn in a month?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1,320</p>	<p>\$ How much will you earn in a month?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$2,240.00</p>
<p>\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your taxes, food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$320</p>	<p>\$ How much will you have left over after you pay you rent? This needs to cover your taxes, food, clothing, child care costs, medical bills, gasoline, car payment, etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1,240</p>
<p>\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move in with relatives or friends; - Share our apartment with others who are also working to share living costs; - Move into a shelter; - Get a second job; 	<p>\$ If you do not have enough money left over to pay your bills, what will you do? List below.</p> <p>Using possible answers in the left column, discuss other possibilities, i.e.: what bills won't be paid; what will happen if you need to go to the doctor; how will you pay school fees; etc.</p> <p>How would your expenses and options for housing change if you had more than one child?</p>

Resource List

Books

Bunting, Eve. Fly Away Home: A homeless father and son live in an airport.

Da Costa Nunez, Ralph.

-Cooper's Tale, 2000

-Sailey's Journey, 2002

-Our Wish, 2000

Van Doren, Pat. Where Can I Build My Volcano? Pat Van Doren 1999.

Hubbard, Jim. Lives Turned Upside Down: Homeless Children in Their Own Words and Photographs. Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Rosen, Michael J. HOME, A Reading Rainbow Book, Harper Collins, 1992.

Gunning, Monica, A Shelter in Our Car. Children's Book Press, 1994.

Testa, Maria, Someplace to Go, A. Whitman & Co., 1996.

Chalofsky, Margie et.al. Changing Places: A Kid's View of Shelter Living. Gryphone House, Inc. 1992.

Websites

www.bridgecommunities.org

Bridge Communities

www.naehcy.org

(National association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth

www.endhomelessness.org

National Alliance to End Homelessness (see "Fact Sheets For Kids")

www.homelessed.net

Illinois resources for McKinney-Vento Act for Homeless Children & Youth

www.hud.gov/kids/hthsplsh.html

HUD homelessness awareness page

www.earthsystems.org/ways/

54 Ways You Can Help the Homeless

<http://nch.ari.net>

National Coalition for the Homeless

www.kidscanmakeadifference.org

What kids can do

Videos

"Fly Away Home" from Reading Rainbow – check your library

"Our Own Four Walls", homeless kids talking about their experiences:

www.hearusnow.org

"Sleep Out Saturday Rally" – www.bridgecommunities.org

How can we help Families who are Homeless?

Children who are homeless have a lot of courage. Every day they try to overcome the fear and sadness of losing their homes. Homeless mothers love their children. They are committed to holding their families together through the troubles of homelessness. **The strength of homeless families should inspire us all to help in any way we can.**

Some Ways You Can Help

Volunteer:

- *Work at a shelter. Call local shelters to find out ways you can help.
- *Invite people experiencing homelessness to a community event, worship service, etc.
- *Organize or assist at an event at a shelter such as a holiday party.
- *Offer to provide child care.
- *Volunteer at Bridge Communities' Learning Resource Centers.

Contribute:

- *Collect toys, books, games, and clothing for donations.
- *Hold supply drives for diapers, quarters for the laundromat, school supplies, etc.
- *Create survival kits that include shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, etc.
- *Raise funds for a program. Have a walk-a-thon, or yard sale and donate the proceeds.
- *Become aware of your language. Minimize language that refers to homeless people in derogatory ways. By using expressions such as, "people experiencing homelessness" rather than labels such as "bum," "transient," or even "the homeless," we remind ourselves that people who are in such situations are people first – just people who are going through a difficult period in their lives.
- *Raise money for summer camp scholarships or to help pay for a tutor for a homeless student.

*Support a homeless family or person (perhaps your church is already sponsoring a family).

*Donate food to a food pantry.

*Collect hats, mittens, and coats.

*Collect quarters for the laundromat. Donate to homeless families.

Advocate:

*Write letters to your elected officials about the issue of homelessness.

Continue to educate yourself, your family and your community:

*Share what you find out about homelessness with those around you.

*Talk to children about homelessness.

*Follow your local news.

*Take advantage of teachable moments. When you see others acting in insulting ways toward someone who is homeless, share your compassionate and informed view on the difficult circumstances and obstacles facing people experiencing homelessness.

*Teach your friends about homelessness.

Whatever you do, don't let the insights you gain stop with you!

Religious Education Applications

Grade Level: K-12

Time: 1 hour or longer



There was no room at the inn. Luke 2:1-20

Materials: The information about homelessness in pages 2-6 in this Curriculum Resource Book. The leader can become familiar with facts about homelessness, activities, and suggestions for helping the community.
A Bible.

I. Facts about Homelessness and Discussion

- A. Share with the students facts about homelessness.
- B. Read Luke 2:1-20
- C. Discussion questions:
 - What did Mary and Joseph do when there was no room at the inn?
 - Who befriended Mary and Joseph?
 - Where do people stay when they lose their homes today?
 - What is Jesus calling you and our community to do in response to the Gospel?

II. Activities

- A. "What Would You Take?" – page 12
- B. "Where Do You Live?" – page 13
- C. "My House" – page 14
- D. "Musical Chairs" – page 15-16
- E. "Calculate It" – page 24-25

III. What Can I/We Do to Help? (refer to pages 27-28)

- A. Contact shelters in your community and ask about ways you might help.
- B. What does our church do to help the homeless?
- C. Collect disposable diapers, baby wipes, baby food and formula.
- D. Collect school supplies for the children in a shelter or in transitional housing.

Religious Education Applications

Grade level: 7th-12th

Time: 1 hour or longer

***Whatever you do for the least brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me.
Matthew 25:35-45***

Materials: Information about homelessness from pages 2-6 of this curriculum resource book to familiarize leader with facts about homelessness, activities, and suggestions for helping in the community.
A Bible.

I. Facts About Homelessness and Discussion

A. Share with the students facts about homelessness (from pages 3-7)

B. Read Matthew 25:35-45

C. Discussion questions:

- Who is my brother or sister?
- What is Jesus calling you and our community to do in response to the Gospel message?

II. Activities and “What I/We Can Do to Help: (refer also to pages 27-28)

A. “When I was hungry...you fed me.”

- Keep a list of all the snacks you eat in one week. Figure out how much money you spent on those snacks and give that amount to your church’s food pantry.
- Keep track of how much food you and your family throw away for one week.
- Write down how much money is spent on fast food for a month. Multiply that amount by 12 to get an approximate total of how much is spent for the year.
- Participate in the holiday food baskets that are given through the food pantry at Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter.
- At Christmas time, support the work of the Salvation Army by donating money as they ring their bells outside local stores.

- B. When I was thirsty...you gave me something to drink.
- We take for granted the convenience of running water. On a designated day, whenever you need a drink of water or need water for cooking, go to the faucet outdoors. Drink only water, no pop or juice, for that day.
- C. When I was a stranger...you welcomed me.
- There may be a new family that has moved into your neighborhood or church. Bring a dessert over to their house and introduce yourself. Invite them to join you after church when the community gathers for coffee and donuts.
 - At school, observe the new students. Invite a new student to join you during lunch to meet some of your friends.
- D. I was naked...you clothed me.
- Organize a coat drive in October. Collect coats, hats, scarves, mittens, and boots for families who can't afford to buy those items. Donate them to the food pantry.
- E. I was sick...you took care of me.
- Perhaps a neighbor has been sick or is too old to shovel their snow or cut their grass. Volunteer to do that for them and refuse any money for your services.
 - Organize a day when all the youth volunteer their services to anyone in the parish who needs help with yard work in the spring. Any money raised can be donated to purchase flowers or trees around the church, school or public building.
- F. I was in prison...you visited me.
- Most of us are not able to visit someone in prison. A group could collect books and donate them to the county jail. If there is a juvenile facility in your area, perhaps you could donate sweatshirts and pants.
 - Older people living in nursing homes sometimes feel forgotten. Organize a day to play BINGO or other games with the seniors. Bring prizes to hand out. Have a group sing-a-long.

Religious Education Volunteer Opportunities for the Church Food Pantry

JANUARY: Organize a “Souper Bowl” collection of different kinds of soup. Have a competition between grades or groups of children. The group that collects the most wins a candy “Super Bowl” ring.

FEBRUARY: Write a valentine that can be included in the food pantry box of food. Donate \$1.00 that you earned so the family receiving the box can purchase their own candy.

MARCH or APRIL: As a family, purchase a meal for the Easter food basket. Include an Easter card to the receiving family.

MAY: Include packets of flower and vegetable seeds in the boxes of food given at the food pantry. Also, packets can be given to members of your church for planting in their home gardens and harvested for the food pantry.

JUNE, JULY, and AUGUST: Bring the fresh fruits and vegetables you grew in your garden to the food pantry to share.

AUGUST: Collect school supplies for families coming to the food pantry or for families in Bridge Communities’ transitional housing program.

SEPTEMBER: Collect jars of peanut butter and jelly.

OCTOBER: Include a bag of Halloween candy and a bag for the children to take trick-or-treating for food pantry donation boxes.

NOVEMBER: As a family, purchase a meal for the Thanksgiving food basket.

DECEMBER: As a family, purchase a meal for the Christmas food basket.

ANYTIME: Collect items for CHILDREN’S BIRTHDAY PARTY BOXES for homeless families. Include cake and frosting mix, plates, napkins, candles, gifts and games.



About Bridge Communities

Bridge Communities is a dynamic, holistic, grassroots non-profit organization committed to transforming the lives of homeless families through meaningful partnerships with community-based agencies and individuals. The programs of housing, mentoring, employment, and education counseling focuses families toward a goal of permanent housing and self-sufficiency.



The problems Bridge Communities addresses are homelessness, underemployment, unemployment, skill deficiencies, lack of education, parenting issues, and debt management. The objectives of the Bridge Program are:

- Secure an improved employment status therefore increase earned income
- Reduce debt and improve credit rating
- Teach clients how to better utilize resources through life-skills mentoring
- Improve the client's and their children's educational opportunities
- Secure permanent housing upon completion of the program

Bridge Communities has helped hundreds of families achieve self-sufficiency and permanent housing. Comprehensive surveys show that 90-95% of families develop the knowledge and skills necessary to maintain permanent, stable housing and employment, stabilize or decrease their debt, and improve their education level.

The mission of Bridge Communities is to transition homeless families to self-sufficiency by working with partners to provide mentoring, housing, and supportive services.

Bridge Communities, Inc. Value Statements

Through the help of our program partners and supporters, Bridge Communities provides free transitional housing to 131 homeless DuPage County families each year. During the two years each family spends in our program, they are able to save money, learn budgeting skills, and obtain better employment, so they can live self-sufficiently once they graduate.

Each of our core values applies to everyone involved in Bridge Communities – clients, mentors, Program Partners, volunteers, donors, board members, staff and community.

Mission: The mission of Bridge Communities is to transition homeless families to self-sufficiency by working with partners to provide mentoring, housing, and supportive services.

Vision: Our vision is a community where all families are healthy, financially stable, and living in affordable housing.

Values: Each of our core values—Partnership, Empowerment, Integrity, Respect, Hope—apply to everyone involved in Bridge Communities – clients, mentors, program partners, volunteers, donors, board members, staff and community.

Resources Cited

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2. National Center for Homeless Education at Serve, The Educational Rights of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness: What Service Providers Need to Know, https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/briefs/service_providers.pdf
3. National Low Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2018: Illinois, <http://nlihc.org/oor/illinois>
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