

Suggested Activities and Events

We are happy to provide you with a list of ideas for events to host during your [National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#). Please feel free to develop new activities for your unique community or business. If you are looking for a different perspective, please consider looking through the lens of young people experiencing homelessness and incorporating The [National Campaign for Youth Shelter](#) into the overall theme of the week.

Popular Awareness Week Events

Organize a “One Night Without a Home” awareness sleep out in front of city hall or on a nearby college campus. (See the detailed description included on p. 20)

Organize Oxfam America’s Hunger Banquet or Dining Hall Fast in your community. (See the detailed description included on p. 27-28)

Educational Events

Host educational forums on hunger and homelessness. Invite speakers, such as individuals who have experienced homelessness, service providers, and community speakers to share their experiences. NCH can refer you to their Speakers Bureaus that operate in a number of states, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. You can also show videos and distribute fact sheets or other informational material (refer to the National Coalition for the Homeless’ website: www.nationalhomeless.org).

Organize a movie night with homelessness/hunger-related feature films or documentaries. Contact NCH for our recommendations. Request that attendees bring a non-perishable food item to donate. Have a local business or group donate popcorn and other refreshments.

Organize a book reading and discussion group. Contact NCH for our recommendations. Helpful hint: see if there are any local authors in your community who have written on hunger and homelessness who would be willing to host a book reading/signing.

Arrange a trip to an elementary school and read a children’s book on hunger or homelessness while having the teacher facilitate an age-appropriate discussion.

Ask religious institutions, such as churches, synagogues, temples or mosques, to focus their religious services on homelessness/hunger issues. Prayer breakfasts/meetings and candlelight vigils are also good ways to involve religious institutions.

Youth-Focused Events

Host a “Youth4Youth” event in which young people come together to learn about youth homelessness and to discuss how they can work to address it in the local community and nationwide. You can show a documentary or invite a speaker who has experienced, or is experiencing homelessness, in his or her youth to share stories and answer questions. Youth homelessness is often not seen or discussed and it is important for young people to realize that there are people just like them living in much more difficult circumstances. Finish the event with some action that demonstrates solidarity among young people.

Organize a sleep-out or homelessness simulation event in which participants are given a card that explains their circumstances to them. Have them go on a hunt around the to seek out medical resources, employment, identification, shelter, etc. to demonstrate the numerous struggle that homeless youth have to deal with everyday. Be sure to debrief following the event.

Challenge creative peers to develop resources (infographics, videos, charts, pictures, etc.) that can be used to educate your community about the youth homelessness crisis.

Community Building Events

Organize a potluck dinner in which community members bring in a dish for themselves and three other persons. Invite individuals who are currently or formerly homeless as guests in order to encourage community interaction.

Arrange a Community Service Day where people can volunteer at different local organizations and learn about their activities. Suggested contacts: food pantries, homeless shelters, and soup kitchens

Organize a Cardboard Brigade in your community. Miami-Dade County, FL successfully organized 40 cardboard brigades across the community, encouraging citizens and students to make cardboard signs and take to the streets, stressing the importance of ending homelessness and raising awareness.

Host an Open-Mic Night in a local coffee shop. Invite all community members to share poetry, prose, and thoughts on homelessness and hunger.

Organize a Food Stamp Challenge in which participants attempt to eat on a food stamp budget for a week or a day. During this week in 2013, 90 members of the IUPUI community participated in this challenge. To hear more about their experiences, follow this link: <https://sites.google.com/site/hungerhomelessness/home/snap>. Some Congressional members and elected officials have taken the challenge (<http://foodstampchallenge.typepad.com/>); invite your local government officials to take the challenge with community members.

Construct a community quilt. This is great for classrooms/students. Each person can contribute a square that relates to an aspect of homelessness and poverty that is meaningful to them. For more information, view this example from Yarmouth, Maine: <http://voicethread.com/#q.b1014788.i5411859>

Organize a "Living in a Car" event in which volunteers take shifts living in a car for 24 hours in a public area to simulate how some homeless live and to raise awareness. A great example can be seen at: <http://ow.ly/zvd2W>

Fundraisers & Drives

Please consider donating any funds raised this year to the **NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH SHELTER**

Organize a drive to collect non-perishable items such as food, hygiene products, clothing, blankets, books and toys. Involve community organizations in a competition to see who can collect the most donations. Helpful hint: Talk with local service providers to research what items are most needed in your community.

Designate one day for community members to skip a meal or embark on a fast. Instead of purchasing lunch that day, they can donate the money that they would have spent to hungry people in their community. Alternatively, participants can prepare a meal for homeless people.

Sponsor a benefit concert with local musicians.

Sponsor a bake sale or raffle.

Arrange a walk or a run. Have each participant collect sponsorship money; set a minimum, such as \$20 per participant. Encourage local businesses to donate food and drinks. Encourage local bands to provide entertainment.

Sponsor a gallery night by selling artwork created by homeless individuals. Donate the proceeds to local homelessness/hunger organizations or directly to the homeless whose artwork is being sold.

Organize an "Empty Bowls" fundraiser with an art department or local art center. Volunteers create ceramic bowls, which are then used to serve a simple meal of soup and bread. Guests at the meal give a suggested donation of ten dollars in exchange for the meal and the bowl, which they keep as a reminder of their experiences at the meal. The money raised is used to support hunger relief efforts. Empty Bowls is an ideal fundraiser to be combined with an educational event. Contact Empty Bowls at www.emptybowls.net/

Develop challenges associated with awareness events, such as collecting donations of the items that one brings to a sleep-out event (i.e. tent, umbrella, sleeping bag, tarp).

Advocacy Events

Think Globally, Act Locally. Washington, D.C. isn't the only place that lobbying is possible! Gather a group of students and homeless/formerly homeless individuals and visit your city hall, county commission, state legislature and/or a local office of your Congressional representative or Senator. Focus on educating your audience on issues concerning homelessness and what ideas you have to better the situation. Lobbying doesn't have to have a negative connotation; think about what you are doing as merely an educational, hopeful conversation. For more tips on lobbying effectively, see the lobbying Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section in this packet or on NCH's website: <http://nationalhomeless.org/taking-action/lobbying/>.

Have a booth where people can write to their Congressional representatives about the importance of programs for homeless persons. (See Bread for the World Offering of Letters description included in this packet).

Attempt to integrate policy agendas into events in order to provide participants with an agenda to write representatives about, adding a way for people to push for an end to hunger and homelessness at the source (economic and health care policies for example). This could involve some sort of skill clinic that represents the importance of training and apprenticeship programs needed to help homeless people enter the skilled workforce.

Register homeless and low-income people to vote.

Have people come together and discuss the issues surrounding homelessness. Then have them write their opinions in Letters to the Editor in their local, state, and national newspapers.

Large-Scale Events

Organize a carnival: Charge a couple of dollars for admission and/or collect canned goods as admission. Have local businesses donate food, drinks, and other goods or services. Charge very little for each, and donate all proceeds from the event to a local shelter. Have homeless or formerly homeless people attend and speak briefly. Have local bands perform. Have a booth where individuals can write letters to Congressional representatives.

Organize a conference: Invite homeless individuals, service providers and community leaders to give talks and workshops about the issues of homelessness and hunger. Integrate lobbying efforts, raffles or competitions and networking opportunities for local groups to collaborate and get more involved in addressing poverty in the community.

All of these ideas leave plenty of room for creative adaptation. Take one of these ideas and change it as you see fit, or combine components of multiple ideas.

Check out the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness' website for more ideas that are specifically geared toward college campuses and students, such as the Spare Change for Social Change initiative, and Swipe Twice for Hunger. <http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org>

As you build awareness in your community, make sure people know of ways that they can stay involved in the future. If people are particularly interested in the youth homelessness crisis, organize a trip to D.C. for the next Rally for Homeless Youth.