



HOMELESS AWARENESS WEEK TOOLKIT

November 2018

Resources presented by*:



**Adapted from the National Coalition for the Homeless "Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week Manual"*

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Introduction

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, people begin to consider all that they have and what they can afford to give. Many begin to donate their time, attention and resources to those less fortunate. It is a great time to educate or remind decision-makers, donors, the media, and the public about issues of homelessness and how they can support efforts to prevent and end homelessness in our state.

Homeless Awareness Week (HAW) is a national effort to raise public awareness about issues relating to homelessness that takes place annually in November. The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness (MCAH) promotes HAW throughout Michigan, providing technical support to assist local partners in developing events and generating local media coverage while also taking the lead in generating media coverage on a statewide basis.

The national campaign, sponsored by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness, is a more expansive effort titled “Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week.” In Michigan, we have elected to narrow this focus in a concerted effort to raise the public’s awareness of issues related to homelessness more directly.

This observance, which has taken place in Michigan for nearly 20 years, has received acknowledgement on an annual basis from the Michigan legislature and the presiding governors. This toolkit serves as a tool to inspire your community to get involved with Homeless Awareness Week!

Considering Hosting a Homeless Awareness Week Event?

Before you and your organization consider participating in HAW, consider why it is so important and what you hope to accomplish? Do you want to raise funds for an organization providing direct services in your community? Are you interested in engaging with the media on stories that relay facts and personal experiences of homelessness? Do you want your elected officials to have the most recent data and recommendations so they can enact policy-level change? Whatever your intent, you can make a real difference in elevating the topic through an activity during this week when so many are exposed to issues of homelessness.

According to Michigan’s Campaign to End Homelessness, over 66,000 people were counted as literally homeless in Michigan in 2016. Of this number:

- 14,472 were children (under 18)
- 3,952 were veterans
- 7,919 were seniors (aged 55+)

Bringing attention to the issue of homeless is something for which you can be proud. Your participation in this week will help build your community and leadership skills, while fostering a greater understanding and solidarity among your friends and peers. Events such as blanket drives and “One Night Without a Home” help people realize the difficulties that persons experiencing homelessness face on a daily basis. Approach a community leader or school administrator about participating in HAW. Together we can work to eliminate the myth that homelessness is someone else’s problem and embrace the reality that ending homelessness is possible.

Event Planning

Early planning is important; November will arrive before you know it! Begin by reaching out and enlisting interested individuals, and you may also want to contact organizations willing to participate and/or offer assistance. The more time you spend brainstorming, planning and organizing, the easier your week will go in November.

If this is your first time participating in HAW, remember that you do not need an event for each day. It might be better to focus on one or two well-planned, well attended events to increase your impact without increasing your workload. Homelessness cannot be solved in a week, but a creative, dedicated and timely effort will contribute greatly to the cause.

Build Your Planning Team

We recommend that you begin by seeing what is already happening in your community and identifying partners who can help plan and implement your ideas. Start by contacting:

- Your local Continuum of Care (CoC) leadership
- The Housing Assessment and Resource Agency (HARA) for your community
- Shelters in the area
- Other nonprofits interested in housing, homelessness, and poverty
- Faith-based organizations and institutions
- Universities, colleges, and high schools

If you don't know where to start, we can give you contact information (including CoC leadership and HARAs). Working together on a project, no matter how big or small, will make sure that you have all the best available information and resources to make your event a success!

Brainstorming

A small group of people can make up the main planning team, but you will undoubtedly need a larger support system. It is crucial that you are constantly recruiting individuals by promoting your events while obtaining input from people. Ask people what they would like to see and they will show up to your event. Homelessness touches many communities and groups, do not be afraid to reach out to a large coalition. For example, many school children go to school but do not have a home to return to. This may be a great selling point for collaboration with educational groups. Have a clear deadline for involvement and then nail down dates and times! Next, begin to think of what audience you will target for your event. Is it children, elderly, college students and/or policymakers?

Here is a sample checklist of some, but not all questions that you will need to answer:

- How many and which events should we plan for?
- When and where should the events take place?
- How many people should coordinate each event?
- Who should handle publicity?
- What is the best meeting time for everyone?
- What community organizations would help us by cosponsoring the week?
- Who is knowledgeable about organizing events within the community?

- What are creative ways to educate the public on the events and the issue?
- What is the local gain from our events?
- What would people experiencing homelessness like to see?

This sample checklist will help you begin organizing your Homeless Awareness Week. It will vary depending on your unique community, however, do not focus on the checklist itself but rather the purpose it serves. It is meant to help you prepare for HAW and any difficulties you may encounter.

Registration and Support

Please take the time to contact MCAH and let us know about your event! Having a complete list of all activities happening around the state allows us to help support your efforts, but it also gives us crucial information we can take to legislators. By illustrating just how many communities host HAW events, we are showing our elected officials that this is an issue that our communities care about and want to see more resources and attention paid to ending homelessness.

MCAH isn't the only one able to help you in your HAW planning though. There are organizations and individuals all over the state who have hosted successful events! Consider joining our HAW Peer Support Group on Facebook and gain access to your peers' advice and expertise.

Contact Jason Weller // jweller@mihomeless.org to register your event.

Request to join the Facebook group at: <http://bit.ly/HAWsupport>

Homeless Awareness Week Goals

Hosting an HAW event or activity will make an impact in your community. As you plan your event, take some time to identify what you want that short-term and long-term impact to be and who you want to reach.

Educate

In any endeavor, education is key. Being able to speak confidently about why you and your community should be concerned and take action on issues related to homelessness. Statistics are important. However, stories allow an emotional connection, which often increases participation. Make sure you know your target audience. Try not to lecture your audience! Instead, involve them in the discussion. Ask for their opinions!

Short Videos

These are great tools for educating yourself and the public about homelessness! The National Coalition for the Homeless has produced informative videos available on YouTube:

"Faces of Homelessness" video playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD6f2anyof-BkCJWq6St5Fg89ToyNijJg>

Created and updated by the National Coalition for Homelessness, this youtube collection features multiple videos that explain homelessness, often from those who have experienced it directly.

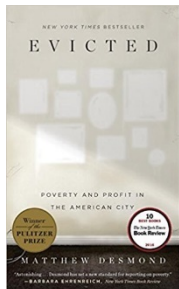
Invisible People: <https://invisiblepeople.tv/>

Vlogger Mark Horvath creates short videos featuring individuals currently experiencing homelessness, often asking “If you had three wishes right now, what would they be?” The answers give you a glimpse into the daily struggles of those living unsheltered, and are framed by Mark’s own lived experience with homelessness.

MCAH “How Housing Changed My Life” video collection: <https://vimeo.com/album/4770977>

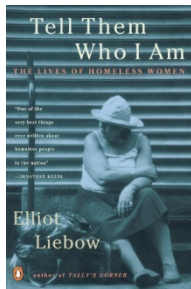
At a July, 2017 rally at the Michigan State Capitol, MCAH asked 9 individuals who had experienced homelessness one question: How did housing change your life? Their answers provide a roadmap for the resources we need and the impact our collective efforts make on the individual and family right here in Michigan.

Adult books on homelessness



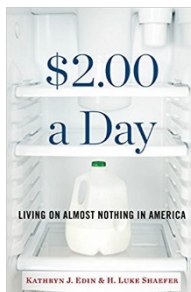
Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, 2016.

In Evicted, Harvard sociologist and MacArthur “Genius” Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Hailed as “wrenching and revelatory” (The Nation), “vivid and unsettling” (New York Review of Books), Evicted transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of 21st-century America’s most devastating problems.



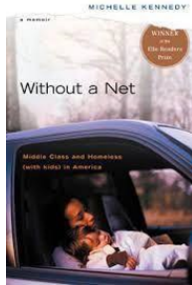
Liebow, Elliot. *Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women*, 1995.

Through this searing study of women in homeless shelters, Elliott Liebow disabuses us of the myth that the homeless are generally lazy and disinterested in altering their condition. Tell Them Who I Am places the reader squarely in the shoes of the inhabitants of a Washington, D.C. homeless shelter for women. Walking the reader through a day in the life of a homeless person, hour by hour, Liebow presents the obstacles placed in front of women who ache to regain the dignity they once possessed.



Edin, Kathryn & Shaefer, Luke. *\$2.00 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America*, 2016.

After two decades of brilliant research on American poverty, Kathryn Edin noticed something she hadn’t seen since the mid-1990s — households surviving on virtually no income. The authors illuminate a troubling trend: a low-wage labor market that increasingly fails to deliver a living wage, and a growing but hidden landscape of survival strategies among America’s extreme poor. More than a powerful exposé, \$2.00 a Day delivers new evidence and new ideas to our national debate on income inequality.



Kennedy, Michelle. *Without a Net: Middle Class and Homeless (with Kids) in America*, 2005.

At age 24, Michelle was suddenly single, homeless and living out of a car with her three small children. She waitressed night shifts while her kids slept out in the diner's parking lot. She saved her tips in the glove compartment, and set aside a few quarters every week for truck stop showers for her and the kids. With startling humor and honesty, Kennedy describes the frustrations of never having enough money for a security deposit on an apartment but having too much to qualify for public assistance.



Street Sense. *Street Verses: Poems by the Homeless Writers and Vendors of Street Sense*, 2007.

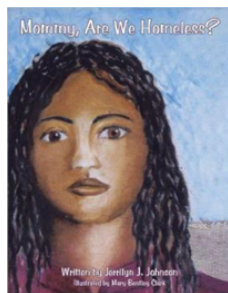
The poems inside this book come from the pages of Street Sense over the course of its first three years of operation. Homeless and formerly homeless men and women, many of whom also sell the paper, wrote all of these pieces. While some are directly about homelessness, many describe love, work, friendship, sorrow and pain. These poems reflect their deepest thoughts, creative dreams, complicated pasts and immediate needs.

Children's books on homelessness



Mommy, Are We Homeless? Winston-Salem: PSG Printing Services of Greensboro, Inc., 2003.

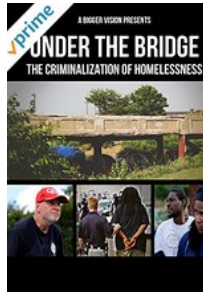
This is a story about a young girl whose entire life changes when she becomes homeless. She still goes to the same school, but she now lives in a shelter. She is unaware of the other children like her, until she meets a girl on the school bus one day. They talk and Molly discovers that she is not unique and she makes new friends.



Johnson, Jerrilyn J. *Mommy, Are We Homeless?* Winston-Salem: PSG Printing Services of Greensboro, Inc., 2003.

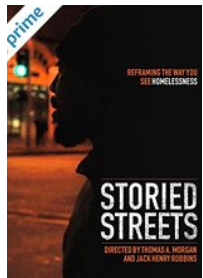
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Movies/Documentaries



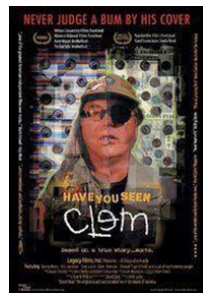
“Under the Bridge: the Criminalization of Homelessness” 2017

By the production team A Bigger Vision, Under The Bridge: Criminalization of Homelessness is a documentary film about one summer in Indianapolis, a tent city under a bridge, and the criminalization of homelessness in the United States.



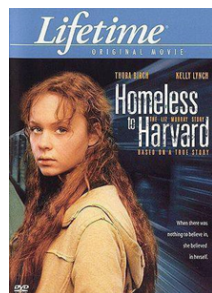
“Storied Streets” 2015

Storied Streets explores homelessness across America by telling the stories of those who live it every day.



“Have You Seen Clem: A True Story... Sorta” 2005

Jaymo, an aspiring filmmaker, suddenly finds himself homeless and living out of his car. Desperate to find a way out, he begins shooting a documentary about the overlooked homeless people in this sharply divided society. When he stumbles across a mysterious bum named Clem, Jaymo realizes that every homeless person has a cart full of secrets and a unique story of personal collapse to tell. Together they embark on a cross-country road trip meeting a cross section of forgotten homeless people that struggle to live on and find contentment on the streets of America.



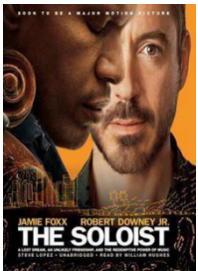
“Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story,” 2006.

At 15, Liz Murray finds herself living on the streets after her mentally ill, drug addicted parents falter in their attempts to keep their family together. Instead of crumpling, the troubled teen clings to hope and determination, and works her way up out of homelessness all the way to Harvard University. This three time Emmy nominated film is based on an incredible true story.



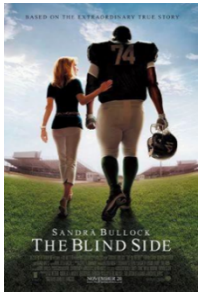
“Pursuit of Happyness,” 2006.

This film is a good tour-de-force showcase for Will Smith, who convincingly portrays a down-and-out dad trying to better his family’s life. A chain of circumstances left Gardner jobless and homeless at age 30, and he found himself and his son living a bathroom at a San Francisco train station. Despite the negative situation, Gardner continued to fight toward his goal of becoming a broker and would eventually become a self-made millionaire.



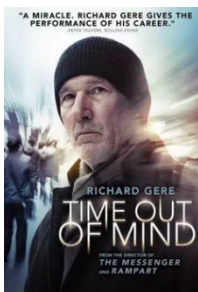
“The Soloist,” 2009.

In 2005, LA Times columnist Steve discovers Nathaniel Ayers, a mentally ill, homeless street musician who possess extraordinary talent, even through his half broken instruments. Inspired by his story, Lopez writes an acclaimed series of articles about Ayers and attempts to do more to help both him and the rest of the underclass of LA have a better life. However, Lopez’s good intentions run headlong in the hard realities of the strength of Ayers’ personal demons and the larger social injustices facing the homeless.



“The Blind Side,” 2009

Based on the true story of Leigh Anne and Sean Tuohy who take in a homeless teenage African American male, Michael “Big Mike” Oher. Michael has no idea who his father is and his mother is a drug addict. Michael has had little formal education and few skills to help him learn. Leigh Anne soon takes charge ensuring that the young man has every opportunity to succeed. When he expresses an interest in football, she goes all out to help him. They not only provide him with a loving home, but hire a tutor to help him improve his grades to the point where he would qualify for an NCAA Division I athletic scholarship.



“Time Out of Mind,” 2015

Richard Gere, starring as George, plays a homeless man in Manhattan, New York. He seeks refuge at Bellevue Hospital, an intake center for homeless men, where his friendship with a fellow client helps him try to repair the relationship with his estranged daughter.

Advocate

Advocacy is the act of showing public support with the aim to influence decisions in political, economic and social institutions. It will aid you in the recruitment of individuals for events, gaining public support and participation and ultimately influencing public policy in your community.

Advocacy can be an explicit goal for your event, but even if it is not, remember that the information you present can shape the minds of those who enact policy in your community. Make sure your information accurate and properly reflects the need in your area. Using reliable data, such as the Michigan Campaign to End Homelessness annual report (2016 data report coming soon) will make sure that your audience has the right facts.

Want to include specific advocacy asks in your event? MCAH has five public policy priorities that are the focus of our most recent advocacy campaigns. For more information about how to incorporate these into your activities, go to <http://bit.ly/MCAHPolicyPriorities> or contact Laurel Burchfield // lurchfield@mihomeless.org

- *Affordable Housing*: Individuals experiencing homelessness face unique obstacles accessing good, affordable housing. Communities may lack the number of necessary units, landlords can refuse to rent to these individuals and families, or the cost may be prohibitive. This can leave some with few housing options other than shelters or the street.
- *State IDs*: Having a state-issued photo ID can open a lot of doors for services when homeless. Unfortunately, many of these individuals do not have an ID or the documentation necessary to receive one. In a recent study conducted by MCAH, 92 agencies across the state reported assisting an average of 552 clients a month who were seeking an ID. Though there are programs and resources to aid in this process, they are not statewide or funded fully to meet the needs of this many clients.
- *Decriminalization of Homelessness*: Being homeless can make you a target. Individuals who are homeless are often victims of physical violence, subject to city ordinances that make asking for money or sleeping in public illegal, and face additional scrutiny from the police and criminal justice system. Often, this vulnerable population doesn't receive the protection necessary to keep them safe while they seek new housing opportunities.
- *Funding for Homeless Services*: Federal and state monies go a long way towards helping the agencies who serve homeless individuals. But this funding often falls short of providing the beds, extensive services, medical care and more that are required to truly meet needs. Protecting existing funding resources and providing new funding is necessary to make the long-term and permanent solutions we need to end homelessness in our state.
- *Health Care*: Individuals experiencing homelessness disproportionately suffer from mental illness and physical disability. All too often, jail or the emergency room are the best option for receiving medical care. Michigan expanded its Medicaid program in 2013, and between then and 2015 we saw a 51% increase in enrollment just among those who reported being homeless. Federal attempts to repeal the Affordable Care

Act or cut funding for health services would cause unnecessary hardships for these individuals, and many more.

Media Relations

An important component of HAW is publicity. The outcome of your event will depend largely on your ability to publicize leading up to the event. A good use of the media will get people in your community to start thinking about homelessness and inspire them to take part in the event during the week. In order to get the word out and involve the community as much as possible, you need to alert your local media early on in your organizing process. It is important to notify a wide range of community media sources and let them know about your event.

How to Utilize the Media

- Target multiple traditional media outlets in your community such as TV, newspaper and radio.
- Urge media to publish/run/air educational information as well as stories from people who are now or have previously been homeless, and social service agencies.
- Also, have your HAW events published.
- One week before HAW, step up the publicity to make sure that it is on everyone's mind. During the week, continue to work full force with the media to gather as many participants as possible for the events. Please see the sample news release we have included as a guide.
- It is helpful to be creative in advertising your activities. Some suggestions are T-shirts, posters, bookmarks, or door hangers.
- The graphics department at a local school or business may be willing to help you create flyers and posters for the events and fact sheets with information about homelessness.
- Great places to hang flyers and posters include: local restaurants, businesses, college campuses, and service organizations. Make sure to get permission.
- Social network sites such as Facebook are another great way to get the word out. "Create an event" and invite people. Continue to post about your event as a constant reminder.
- Distribute your information (fact sheets and overview of the week's events) to community organizations and ask them to help disseminate through their networks.
- E-mail can be a great reminder tool as Homeless Awareness Week draws closer. Urge each community organization to participate—promoting HAW within their organization, and sending at least a few representatives to each event.
- Another idea for publicity, which is inexpensive and effective, is to enlist students or community residents to announce Homeless Awareness Week and the events to their classes or at work. Professors and employers are usually very supportive of this idea and should not mind giving a couple of minutes of class time to promote Homeless Awareness Week.

- If you are on a college campus, using chalk on well-traveled sidewalks is another great way to publicize to a large number of people.

Social media

Traditional mediums are effective depending on your audience. However, with the growth in social media, users have become dependent on it to express their opinions and to get the latest news and trends. It is a way for people to communicate and interact online and a great way to reach a large audience.

Utilizing social media platforms is more complex than just posting! Follow these strategies for success:

- Content must be remarkable, interesting and add value. Everything you post will become content. Therefore, view every piece of content as a chance to increase engagement. Also, on average, posts with photos get 39% more engagement
- Timing will determine the size of your community. Pay attention to when your users are most active. Posting content during these times will increase awareness and engagement, also.
- Moderation will prevent your community from growing annoyed with your posts. This is why timing is very important. If you know when your users are most active, you will not have to post repeatedly; your community will do the promotion for you through engagement.
- Engagement allows you to build a relationship with your community and direct them where you want them to go. Respond to questions and concerns if appropriate.
- Ask your partners to post about your event and share your content to reach larger and new audiences. MCAH is always happen to promote HAW events on our Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/MIHomeless.org/>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/mihomeless>) sites!

You may want to assign this role to one or two individuals with experience using social media networks. If you are going to utilize this method of communication and promotion, be sure to monitor any feedback you may receive, especially questions. Other supporters may monitor your organization's habits on social media and begin to associate that with your organization. Also, more than one person may have the same question.

Suggested Activities

The ultimate goal of HAW is to raise awareness about issues related to homelessness. However, persuading people to participate in trying to end these issues is also important. Whether they participate by donating their time or money, participation is what will determine the true success of your efforts.

Below is a list of suggested events for HAW, but you should always adapt or create new ideas based on your unique community. If your idea is a great success, please let us know so that we can add your event to next year's toolkit!

Suggested educational events

- Host educational forums on homelessness. Invite speakers, such as individuals experiencing homelessness, service providers and community speakers to share their experiences. Show videos and distribute fact sheets or other informational material.
- Organize a movie night and show one of the movies listed above. Request a nonperishable food item for entry. Have a local business or group donate popcorn and other refreshments.
- Organize a book reading and discussion group. See if there are any local authors in your community who have written on homelessness who would be willing to host a book signing.
- Arrange to go into an elementary school and read a children's book on homelessness and have the teacher facilitate and age appropriate discussion.
- Homeless Saturday or Sunday. Have religious institutions such as churches, synagogues, temples and mosques focus their religious services on homelessness/poverty issues. Prayer breakfasts/meeting and candlelight vigils are also good ways to involve religious institutions.

Example: Out Wayne County Education Day and Landlord Breakfast



Education Day

Members from various Coalition member agencies will be visiting Wayne County High Schools and colleges to share information about what being homeless means and what it looks like.

Landlord Breakfast

Join the Out-Wayne County Homeless Services Coalition at the Landlord Breakfast to thank local landlords and property managers for their efforts in helping end homelessness in our communities. There will be speakers and information explaining how to connect with local supportive housing programs that are improving the lives of so many Wayne County residents every day. This is a great opportunity to network with other local landlords and property managers to discuss housing topics and share information about different programs offered by local professionals serving the community. A wonderful free continental breakfast will be provided.

Suggested Advocacy Events

- Pursue a resolution from local units of government in recognition of the observance, coordinate a formal “presentation” at a meeting, and invite the media for a photo opportunity.

In Michigan, official proclamations have been secured by MCAH for more than 20 years from the Governor and/or the House of Representatives. This can be easily replicated at the local level (see Sample Proclamation on page 22).

In 2014, [The Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness](#) kicked off a special initiative seeking the support and involvement of city mayors in recognizing and combating homelessness, especially among veterans and those who are chronically homeless. The following mayors have formally signed on to this challenge:

Mayor Christopher Taylor	Ann Arbor	Mayor DeAndre Windon	Highland Park
Mayor Mike Duggan	Detroit	Mayor Kenson Silver	Southfield
Mayor Karen Weaver	Flint	Mayor William R. Wild	Westland
Mayor Rosalynn Bliss	Grand Rapids	Mayor Rick Sollars	Taylor
Mayor Virg Bernero	Lansing	Mayor Dave Campana	Marquette

- Assist homeless and low-income individuals in registering to vote. http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,4670,7-127-1633_8716_8726_47669---,00.html or learn more about the National Coalition for the Homeless project: You Don’t Need a Home to Vote! <http://nationalhomeless.org/projects/vote/index.html>
- Have a booth where people can write to their Congressional representatives about the importance of programs for individuals and families who are homeless and at risk of becoming homeless.
- Think Globally, Act Locally – Washington, D.C. isn’t the only place that lobbying is possible! Gather local stakeholders 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 about issues relating to homelessness and talk about what can improve the situation. Lobbying doesn’t have to have a negative connotation, think about what you are doing as merely an educational, hopeful conversation.
- Have people come together and discuss the issues surrounding homelessness and then write their opinions in Letters to the Editor in their local, state, and national newspapers.

Example: How Housing Changed My Life Rally



In July, 2017, MCAH hosted a rally at the Michigan State Capitol, “How Housing Changed My Life.” This event brought together speakers with lived experience of homelessness to share their stories. Each storyteller not only presented how homelessness impacted them personally, but also how their community, agency resources, and federal funding helped them access and stay in housing.

Videos of each storyteller were sent to members of congress during a national advocacy effort regarding proposed budget cuts to HUD and housing services.

Community building events

- Organize a potluck dinner in which community members bring in a dish for themselves and three other persons. Invite homeless persons as guests in order to encourage community interaction. Remember to choose a neutral site for the dinner — a convenient place with no religious affiliation.
- 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.
- Host an Open Mic Night in a local coffee shop. Invite all community members to share poetry, prose, and thoughts on homelessness.
- Organize a \$2.00 a Day Challenge in which participants attempt to eat on only a \$2.00 a day budget for a week or a day. Some Congressional members and elected officials have taken the challenge; 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 Ms. Rhoads’ 4th grade class in Yarmouth, Maine: <http://voicethread.com/#q.b1014788.i5411859>
- Organize a time when community members can come together a create sleeping mats out of plastic bags. It’s a great way to recycle old plastic bags and create something

useful for unsheltered individuals. Watch a tutorial:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr_WHW_tGSE

- Organize collection of nonperishable items such as food, hygiene products, clothing, blankets, books, toys etc. at local business. Also inquire if the local businesses are willing to donate a percentage of their profits during the week to a local homeless service provider.

Example: Project Homeless Connect



Project Homeless Connect is a one day community oriented event to offer services to all those in need. Services range from typical social service providers to free haircuts and massages.

The goal of PHC is to make a statement that those who are in poverty and/or homeless are part of the community and should be assisted in times of need. The project works to gather local homeless service providers, local medical and dental providers, local landlords or housing developments, and local businesses in a single place.

Sponsors and in-kind donations will be valuable when planning a Project Homeless Connect event. In order to get sponsors or donations:

- In the local community, make a case for how the issue of homelessness affects them and how PHC is part of the solution. Not everyone is aware of the effects homelessness has on their community.
- Ask for the sponsorship or donation. Be clear about what you are asking for: money, goods or time. Asking in person is best, by phone is second best, and by letter probably is least effective. Follow up with requests and thank people for their time.
- When approaching large businesses, such as Walmart or Meijer, be cognizant of their "giving periods." They often process all the requests for sponsorship during a specific time period during the year and refuse any other requests. Solicitation from these businesses may require some foresight. Donations from corporations and manufacturers may not be full sized products but samples instead.

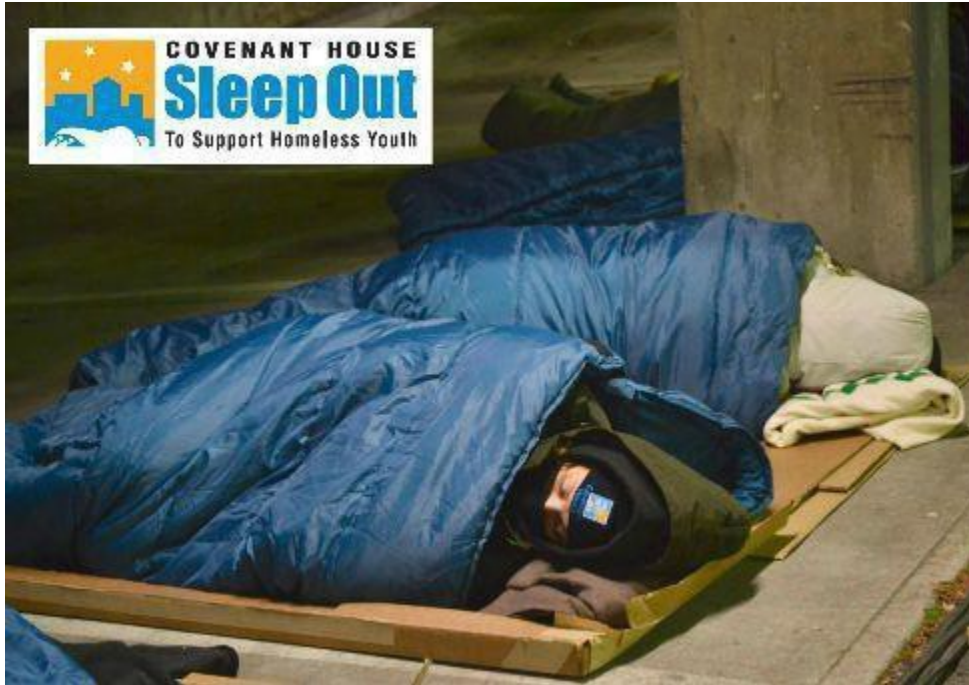
The planning team should consist of people with lots of connections to others in the community, who know how to lead. They should be people who have the time, energy and passion to devote to the event.

- Organize a planning team with leadership structure, starting with an event director then with small core group of organizers who are accountable to the director. Too large of a committee can lead to stagnation and inefficient meetings and planning.
- In our experience, four subcommittees can cover all of the major to-do items that are associated with the Project Homeless Connect event.
 - The venue committee is responsible for choosing a site and a date for when the site is available. Once a site is selected, this committee will obtain a floor plan of the venue and assess the amenities at the site.
 - The service committee is responsible for setting goals (i.e. how many services will be offered, what types). This committee will then recruit the services and service providers for the PHC event.
 - A volunteers committee is responsible for the recruitment, training and retention of the volunteers required to help the event function smoothly.
 - The guest committee set a goal for attendance for homeless and at-risk community members, advertises, organizes outreach efforts and arranges transportation for the day of the event.

Fundraising and Drives for Homelessness Causes

- Organize a drive to collect nonperishable items such as food, hygiene products, clothing, blankets, books, and toys. Involve the community organizations in a competition to see which group can collect the most donations. Helpful hint: talk with local service providers to research what items are most needed in your community.
- Sponsor a bake sale. Donate collected money to a local homeless services provider. Sponsor a benefit concert with local musicians. Donate collected money to a homeless services provider.
- Arrange a walk or a run. Have each participant collect sponsorship money; set a minimum, such as \$20 per participant. Donate collected money to a local homeless services provider. 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, the proceeds to be donated to local homeless service providers or directly to the homeless individuals whose artwork is being sold.

Example: Covenant House “Sleep Out: Executive Edition”



Each year, Covenant House Michigan hosts “The Sleep Out: Executive Edition” to raise awareness about youth homelessness. Executives were given cardboard boxes and a sleeping bag for the night where they stayed on the Covenant House grounds.

Some of the leaders that have participated in the sleep out include: Delta Air Lines Senior Vice President of Government Affairs Andrea Fischer Newman; Morgan Stanley Smith Barney Vice President David Senatore; PublicCity PR Principal Jason Brown and Weingartz President Dan Weingartz.

The event kicks off Wednesday night with a candlelight vigil and concludes at 6:30 a.m. Friday with a breakfast with kids, as well as reflections from the executives before they leave.

Remember!

During HAW, as community members begin to really think about issues relating to homelessness, it is crucial that you provide information on how they can take action after HAW has concluded. Provide them with the following information and any other material that you believe is important for your own community.

- The name, address, email, and phone number of a local shelter at which they can volunteer.
- The names, addresses and phone numbers of local, state, and national homeless coalitions and advocacy groups which they can join. Contact the national organizations listed at the end of this packet to be referred to their local affiliates.
- Information about writing Members of Congress.

A truly successful HAW will inspire people to become further involved with the issue of homelessness. At the end of this packet is a list of state and national advocacy groups with whom people could work to continue their involvement. These organizations, along with other, local ideas of how people can become more involved with this issue on a more regular basis, should be advertised throughout your HAW events.

If you're interested in working with college students, check out this great resource [National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness](http://hhweek.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/HHWeek-Campus-Organizing-Toolkit.pdf): <http://hhweek.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/HHWeek-Campus-Organizing-Toolkit.pdf>

Wrapping Up Awareness Week

When Homeless Awareness Week has concluded, there will still be a few loose ends that you will need to tie up.

1. Remember to send thank you letters to all of your contacts and your support network. You or other Homeless Awareness Week organizers will probably refer to these same people in the future.
2. Meet with your team to discuss what went right and what went wrong during Homeless Awareness Week. Make sure everyone evaluates their own project, as well as how they viewed Homeless Awareness Week as a whole. Gather these individual and group evaluations to comprise a resource folder—one that you and other groups will be able to refer to in following years. This resource will allow you to have a foundation upon which to build your future Awareness Weeks.
3. Contact the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness to let us know how things went with your Awareness Week — send us newspaper clippings, posters, commentary and other news! Forward to jweller@mihomeless.org
4. Start planning for next year!

Organizational Contacts



The Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness is your statewide contact for technical support and other resources to help you plan and carryout Homeless Awareness Week activities in your community.

Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness

15851 S. Old US 27
Building 30, Suite 315
Lansing, MI 48906
Phone: 517-485-6536
Email: JWeller@mihomeless.org
Website: www.mihomeless.org

The following is a list of national organizations that could provide you further information and support for organizing Homeless Awareness Week in your community.

National Coalition for the Homeless

2201 P St., NW
Washington, DC 20037 1033
Phone: 202-462-4823
Email: speakersbureau@nationalhomeless.org
Website: www.nationalhomeless.org

National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness

294 Washington Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02108
Email: info@studentsagainsthunger.org
Website: <https://studentsagainsthunger.org/>

Sample Templates

Below are samples of news content that you may use for your promotion. Please feel free to alter any material to better suit your community.

Sample News Release

LETTERHEAD

For immediate release
November 1, 2018

Contact: (Name)
555•555•5555

Headline

Subhead

LANSING, Mich. – (Local group name) will be sponsoring a One Night Without a Home challenge as part of Homeless Awareness Week at (place) on (date) which will include guest speakers who are or have experienced homelessness.

The “One Night” is an opportunity for residents to spend a night outside to discuss, think and learn about homelessness. Using newspaper for blankets, the challenge allows individuals to experience the difficulties homeless and at-risk individuals face.

Homeless Awareness Week will be held November 10 - 18 this year. It is a concerted effort to raise the public’s awareness about issues relating to homelessness in Michigan. (Local Group Name) is sponsoring this in (your community). Other events include (event name), (date), (other event possibly), (date) and (event name), (date).

For more information about Homeless Awareness Week and how to get involved, please call (your name) at (number). Thank you for your time and efforts in ending homelessness in Michigan.

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Sample Proclamation From a Governmental Unit

A RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING NOVEMBER 10-18, 2018, AS HOMELESS AWARENESS WEEK IN [INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY HERE]

By your city council/mayor/county commission:

Date Proclamation Issued:

WHEREAS, more than twenty years, the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness and its partners have actively promoted Homeless Awareness Week throughout the state of Michigan; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the proclamation is to educate the public about the many reasons people are homeless including the shortage of affordable housing in [INSERT COMMUNITY HERE] for very low income residents, and to encourage support for homeless assistance service providers as well as community service opportunities for students and school service organizations; and

WHEREAS, there are many organizations committed to sheltering, providing supportive services as well as meals and food supplies to the homeless including: [INCLUDE ALL AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE HAW OBSERVANCE ACTIVITIES HERE]; and

WHEREAS, the theme of Homeless Awareness Week 2018 is “Making Michigan Home for Everyone” and

WHEREAS, the [INSERT NAME OF BODY MAKING THE PROCLAMATION HERE] recognize that homelessness continues to be a serious problem for many individuals and families in [INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY HERE]; and

WHEREAS, the intent of Homeless Awareness Week is consistent with the activities of [INSERT LOCAL PARTICIPATING AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS HERE].

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the [INSERT NAME OF BODY MAKING THE PROCLAMATION HERE] hereby proclaims November 10-18, 2018, as Homeless Awareness Week.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [INSERT NAME OF BODY MAKING THE PROCLAMATION HERE] encourages all citizens to recognize that many people do not have housing and need support from citizens and private/public nonprofit service entities.

Sample Invitation to Elected Official

November 1, 2018

Honorable XXXXX
XXX
XXX
XXX

RE: "Sleep Out Against Homelessness"

Dear Senator/Representative XXX:

XXX is hosting a "XXX" event in XXX to help raise public awareness about the many issues relating to homelessness. The event, which takes place during the national Homeless Awareness Week observance, asks individuals from economically privileged backgrounds to sacrifice everyday blessings (i.e. warm bed and shelter), and live on the streets as a person experiencing homelessness for 12 hours.

Did you know that...

- 66,483 people were homeless in Michigan in 2016 – X of them in XXX County alone, including 10,954 adults in families and 14,472 children and youth?
- Seniors (age 55+) are the largest rising demographic experiencing homelessness with an increase of 9% from 2014-2016 in Michigan?
- X people in XXX County were successfully placed into safe and long-term housing?

The sleep out is an opportunity for students and other citizens to spend a night outside to ponder and reflect about the plight of homelessness.

On behalf of XXX and the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness, it's with great pleasure that we extend this formal invitation for your participation in this upcoming event.

In addition to being an opportunity for you to engage constituents about homelessness, your involvement would speak volumes to the importance of greater dialog regarding this issue and its impact on real people who live in our communities.

Enclosed please find some additional information about the event that I hope you'll find helpful. Please expect to hear from us by November 9 in follow-up to this invitation.

Thank you for your continued work on behalf of the people of our district.

Sincerely,

XXX

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Sample Posters

PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

MICHIGAN'S "ONE-STOP, ONE-DAY" COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIR FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WHO ARE, OR ARE AT RISK OF BECOMING HOMELESS.

Over 150 events across Michigan since 2009

- UTILIZING A TOTAL OF **7,375** VOLUNTEERS
- SERVING A TOTAL OF **42,606** GUESTS
- HOSTING A TOTAL OF **4,316** SERVICE PROVIDERS

+ CONNECT PEOPLE TO NEEDED COMMUNITY RESOURCES
 + RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS
 + FORM PARTNERSHIPS AMONG AGENCIES AND BUSINESSES

mhomeless.org
thecampgroundhomelessness.org

PROJECT HOMELESS CONNECT

Wednesday, November 18, 2015
 11:00 am – 2:00 pm (No entry after 1:30)
 Our Lady of the Angels
 6442 Pelham Rd. Taylor, MI 48180

FREE ITEMS, SERVICES, AND HELP AVAILABLE

Lunch
 Coat Vouchers
 Hygiene Kits
 Health Screenings

Referral Information
 Case Management
 Haircuts
 AND MORE!

NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

For more information contact Anne Beatty at abeatty@waynemetrometro.org

This event is funded by the Michigan Coalition Against Homelessness.

Michigan Homeless Awareness Week
 November 14 - 22, 2015

Last year, nearly **22,000** youth were considered homeless in Michigan.

Join us in making a difference.

To donate or get involved locally:

www.mhomeless.org

Families with children accounted for *over half* of all persons who were homeless last year

Join us in making a difference

Homeless Awareness Week
 November 12-20, 2016

To donate or get involved locally:

Sample Social Media Posts



Think you know what homelessness looks like? Think again. Meet the faces of MI #homelessness: <https://vimeo.com/album/4770977> #HAW17



Money is not the only thing you can donate to help those in need. Learn more about this year's Homeless Awareness Week and volunteer opportunities in your area! #HAW17 [<link to local information>](#)



Ignoring a problem will not fix it! Homelessness is a problem with a solution. Learn how and where to advocate! #HAW17 bit.ly/MCAHPolicyPriorities



We all have a role in ending homelessness. Where do you fit in? Join the state effort to prevent, reduce and end homelessness. #HAW17 bit.ly/MCAHPolicyPriorities



In 2016, over 66,000 ind. in MI experienced #homelessness, incl. children, veterans, seniors. Learn more at #HAW17 [<link to local event>](#)



Homelessness can happen to anyone. Michigan is lucky to have seen a 9% decrease in individuals experiencing homelessness since 2017, but there are still tens of thousands without a home each year in our state. We can, and need, to do more. Learn about what you can do at our Homeless Awareness Week activities. bit.ly/MCAHHAW #HAW17



Homeless Awareness Week is NOV 11-19! Don't know what #HAW17 is? Visit bit.ly/MCAHHAW to learn about and support this movement



Have you signed up for our #HAW17 event? [<details about your event-what you want to accomplish, who will be speaking, etc>](#) It's not too late! #HAW17 [<registration link>](#)



What would it be like to spend a night without a home? Sign up for MCAH's Homeless Sleepout to learn more. #HAW17 bit.ly/MCAHHAW