

Toolkit



NATIONAL HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK

**Sponsored by
National Coalition for the Homeless
National Student Campaign against Hunger & Homelessness**



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http://hhweek.org	

Introduction

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, most people take time to consider what they're thankful for and donate some of their time, attention and resources to others. In the spirit of thankfulness and giving, each year the [National Coalition for the Homeless](#) and the [National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness](#) designate the week prior to Thanksgiving to sponsor the [National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#).

This incredible event was first held at Villanova University in 1975. In recent years, more than 750 community groups, faith-based groups, colleges, and high schools across the country came together during the week to raise awareness about the pressing issue of hunger and homelessness. This tool kit serves as a manual to inspire your community or institution to get involved in this amazing national event to end one of the biggest pressing issues in our communities, hunger and homelessness.

By participating in [Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#) you're not only raising awareness but you are strengthening the national movement to end extreme poverty in every community across this country.

Planning Ahead

Your ideal week should have a mix of events that are tailored to your specific community to make the most impact. We encourage groups to include at least one of the following events:

1. Educational events
2. Fundraising events
3. Community service events
4. Advocacy events

If this will be your first time participating in [National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#), remember that you do not need an event for each day. It might be better to choose one or two events that will be well planned, focused, and vibrant.

Sample checklist of some, but not all, questions that you will need to answer:

- Who is your audience for your event? (the elderly, college students, policy makers?)
- How many and which events should we plan for?
- Will events take place in-person, or virtually due to COVID?
- What technology, or how many volunteers do you need to coordinate each event?
- Who should handle publicity?
- What community organizations would help you by co-sponsoring the week?
- What are creative ways to publicize the week and raise awareness?
- Who is knowledgeable about organizing events within the community?
- What is the local political landscape?
- What would people who are homeless like to see during H&H Week?

Give some time to think through about your capacity and how many events you can realistically hold during the week. If you think you're stretched to thin, focus on **quality** over quantity. Due to the public health emergency surrounding COVID19, you are encouraged to hold events virtually, or with the utmost of social distancing. Take extra care to consider participants' safety in planning your events.

Registration

Before you get started take a moment to visit hhweek.org. This is a great resource for you to get ideas on how to plan your events. Once you have an idea of what you want to do, please take the time to register your event. Registration is vital and will help us keep record of the national involvement to further push policymakers across the country to address hunger and homelessness.

Register at
<http://hhweek.org>

We would also benefit from any feedback you can provide on events you hosted during Awareness Week, and we will follow up with all registered participants after Thanksgiving.

Media Outreach and Promotion of Events

An important component of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is publicity. The outcome of your event will depend largely on your ability to advertise. The media is your friend and should be seen as an asset. A good use of the media will get people in your community to start thinking about hunger and homelessness and inspire them to take part in the events 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 both campus and community media sources.

HOW TO UTILIZE THE MEDIA

- Start by making a list of the media outlets in your community, including local newspapers, local TV and radio stations and local blogs. Look up the contact info for the news editors at each outlet.
- Two weeks before your events, call each outlet to pitch them on covering your week and the issues of hunger and homelessness. This is a great opportunity for them to do some in-depth coverage on local poverty issues. Tell them about each event and how to get involved.
- As you get closer to the week, go back to each outlet and re-pitch them on how to get involved. Pick one or two events that you think are the most newsworthy .
- H&H Week can be a great chance to get positive coverage for your organization on how you are working to end hunger and homelessness.

OTHER PUBLICIZING TECHNIQUES

- It is helpful to have things to give away, such as t-shirts, posters, bookmarks, or door hangers.
- The graphics department at a local school may be willing to help you create flyers and posters for the events, as well as fact sheets with information about hunger and homelessness. NCH Factsheets: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/index.html>
- Great places to hang flyers and posters include: local restaurants, businesses, college campuses, and service organizations. Make sure to get permission.
- In addition to the media, radio, and flyers, social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter are another good way to get the word out. Remember to keep tabs on NCH's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/NationalCoalitionForTheHomeless/>, as well as its Twitter accounts: https://twitter.com/Ntl_Homeless & <https://twitter.com/HandHWeek>, throughout the entire process.

- Distribute information (fact sheets and schedule of events) to community organizations.
- E-mail can be a great reminder as Awareness Week draws closer. Urge each community organization to participate—interest them in joining a canned food drive, promoting Awareness Week within their organization, and sending at least a few representatives to each event.
- Another inexpensive and effective idea for publicity is to enlist students or community residents to announce 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 [National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#).
- If your college campus is open, using chalk on well-traveled sidewalks is another great way to publicize to a large number of people.

Make sure you let the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness know about what you are doing for Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in your community!

Registration Form:
<http://hhweek.org/register>

Contact: [National Coalition for the Homeless](#)

Phone: [\(202\) 462-4822](tel:(202)462-4822)

Email: handhweek@nationalhomeless.org



Resources & Ideas

Education

In any endeavor, education is essential. You should be able to speak confidently about why you want to, and why you think your community should, participate in this year's [National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#). Statistics inspire interest, but stories will also increase participation. Listed below are a number of websites that you can utilize to educate yourself and your community about issues regarding hunger and homelessness. Try to be creative when you inform your community and consider using NCH's awareness programs like its Speakers' Bureau (including the Speaker Bios) and its various YouTube videos.

Videos and books are great tools when educating yourself and the public about hunger and homelessness. For recommendations on both informative and entertaining books and videos, please contact the National Coalition for Homeless at: info@nationalhomeless.org; 202-462-4822

Videos produced by the National Coalition for the Homeless.

"Faces of Homelessness I"

The highly regarded NCH video that features images of America's homeless people. This 13-minute video features images taken by award-winning photographers from around the country accompanied with powerful homeless-themed music that enables the viewer to get a sense of who is homeless in America. Available on YouTube.

"Faces of Homelessness II"

DVD was done by a trio of student filmmakers who interviewed a number of homeless people in the nation's capital. Available on YouTube.

"The National Coalition for the Homeless: Bringing America Home"

A short documentary that outlines the history and promotes the work of the National Coalition for the Homeless. Available on YouTube.

"The Invisible Class"

A documentary that explores what it truly means to be homeless in America, challenging stereotypes and examining the causes of mass homelessness.

[National Coalition for the Homeless](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)

<http://www.nationalhomeless.org>

[National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness](http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org)

<http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org>

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 COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS**
<https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/nationalhomeless>

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.

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.

Business/Corporate Involvement

Involvement in [Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#) is by no means limited to school and community events; corporate involvement can also play a central role in organizing an effort to end hunger and homelessness. A local group's partnership with a business can be mutually-beneficial; the business can provide some funding for the cause, supporting the local group and the local group can support the business through advertisements, etc. at the event.

- Businesses often have access to resources that can create unique opportunities for fundraising. For example, a business might use its ability to buy relatively inexpensive bulk supplies to make a local group's clothing or food drive more affordable and successful. Another example might involve a business providing its services for free during a local group's event (like Laundromats washing homeless people's clothes).
- Involvement in [Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#) helps promote the particular business as a trusted and locally-active one, due to its involvement in the community and its support of important local initiatives. The business will benefit by establishing this positive reputation when customer support increases as a result.
- A particular business could pledge to donate a percentage of proceeds (perhaps from meals at a restaurant) to benefit a local homeless shelter or advocacy organization.
- Businesses have the option to utilize their corporate atmospheres uniquely, so as to incentivize donations or personal involvement with community events through their employees. For example, a business might allow those who donate to shelters or advocacy organizations to dress down for a week or take an extended lunch break.

A truly successful Awareness Week for any contributor will inspire people to become further involved with the issues of hunger and homelessness and support political initiatives that would contribute to ending their root causes. At the end of this manual is a list of advocacy groups with whom people could work to continue their involvement. These organizations, along with other local groups will share ideas of how people can become more involved with the issue of homelessness on a regular basis, should be advertised throughout your Awareness Week events.

Remember!

During [National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#), as community members begin to really think about hunger and homelessness issues, it is crucial that you provide information on how they can take action after Awareness Week has concluded. Provide them with the following information and any other material that you believe is important for your own community.

- The name, address, e-mail, 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.
- Information about Alternative Breaks, which allow community members to spend a week-long break doing service. Call BreakAway at (404) 919-7482 or at <http://alternativebreaks.org> for more information.

Wrapping-Up Awareness Week

When [National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week](#) has concluded, there will still be a few loose ends that you will need to tie up. Remember to send thank you letters to all of your contacts and your support network. You or other Awareness Week organizers will probably refer to these same people in the future. Also, meet with your team to discuss what went right and what went wrong during Awareness Week. Make sure everyone evaluates his or her own project, as well as how he or she viewed 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 the future.

AND...

Contact the National Coalition for the Homeless and let us know how your Awareness Week was received by the community — send us newspaper clippings, posters, commentary, and other news! Follow the link to the online form: <http://hhweek.org>

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACTS

The following includes a list of national organizations that could provide you further information and support for organizing National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in your community.

<p>Bread For The World</p> <p>Bread for the World <i>(Offering of Letters)</i> 425 3rd St. NW, #1200 Washington, D.C. 20024 Phone: 1 (800)-82-BREAD or (202) 639-9400 Fax: (202) 639-9401 Email: bread@bread.org Website: http://www.bread.org/OL</p>	<p>Break Away</p> <p>Break Away <i>(Alternative Breaks)</i> 2451 Cumberland Parkway, Suite 3124 Atlanta, GA 30039 Phone: 1 (800) 903-0646 Email: Breakaway@alternativebreaks.org Website: http://www.alternativebreaks.org</p>
<p>Church World Service</p> <p>Church World Service <i>(Crop Walk)</i> P.O. Box 968 Elkhart, IN 46515 Phone 1 (800) 297-1516 or (574) 267-3102 Fax: (574) 262-0966 Email: info@cwsglobal.org Website: http://www.cwsglobal.org</p>	<p>Empty Bowls</p> <p>Empty Bowls <i>(Fundraising for Hunger Causes)</i> P.O. Box 1689 Burnsville, NC 28714 Phone: (828) 675-9636 Email: imageren@yahoo.com Website: http://www.emptybowls.net</p>
<p>Habitat for Humanity</p> <p>Habitat for Humanity International <i>(Building Homes for People with Low Incomes)</i> 121 Habitat Street Americus, GAG 31709 Phone: 1 (800) HABITAT or 1 (800) 422-4828 Email: publicinfo@hfhi.org Website: http://www.habitat.org http://www.habitatyouthprograms.org</p>	<p>National Coalition for the Homeless</p> <p>National Coalition for the Homeless <i>(Speakers' Bureau, Homeless Challenge, Outreach Runs, Advocacy Workshops)</i> 2201 P Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20037 Phone: (202) 462-4822 Email: info@nationalhomeless.org Website: http://www.nationalhomeless.org</p>
<p>National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness</p> <p>National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Homelessness <i>(Annual Conference, Hunger Clean-Up)</i> 328 South Jefferson Street, Suite 620 Chicago, IL 60661 Phone: (312) 544-4436 Email: info@studentsagainsthunger.org Website: http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org</p>	<p>Oxfam America</p> <p>Oxfam America <i>(Oxfam Hunger Banquet, ACT FAST)</i> 226 Causeway Street, 5th Floor Boston, MA 02114 Phone: 1 (800) 77-OXFAM or 1 (800) 776-9326 Fax: (617) 728-2594 Email: actfast@oxfamamerica.org Website: http://www.oxfamamerica.org</p>