NATIONAL STUDENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS · NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week 2026

Campus Organizing Toolkit & Strategic Campaign Guide

Campaign Dates: November 14–22, 2026 **Register your Event:** HHWeek.org **Hashtag:** #HHWeek2026

No individual should ever be forced to decide between eating a full meal, affording course textbooks, or having a safe, stable roof over their head. Founded in 1975 at Villanova University, Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week unites more than 700 colleges, high schools, and community groups across the country every November to educate campuses, collect vital winter resources, and build momentum for systemic antipoverty solutions.

The Reality in 2026: Why Action Is Urgent

Economic pressures, rising student housing expenses, and escalating grocery inflation continue to drive acute basic-needs insecurity among people nationwide:

Scope	Current National Landscape	Campus & Community Impact
Higher Education	More than **30%** of college students report experiencing food insecurity during the semester.	Over **14%** of surveyed undergraduates experience homelessness or severe housing instability annually.
United States	Over **44 million** Americans live in food-insecure households, including 1 in 5 children.	More than **650,000** people experience unhoused homelessness on any single night in point-in-time counts.
Global Scope	More than **600 million** people face chronic hunger and malnutrition across the world.	Deep structural inequities demand both immediate relief and sustained policy advocacy.

> **Action First:** Register your campus campaign early at **HHWeek.org**. National registration connects your group with free organizing toolkits, virtual coordinator webinars, promotional materials, and national impact reporting.

Types of Events

An effective campus campaign moves beyond a single one-off event. Organizers should balance their schedule across four essential pillars:

- **Educate:** Demystify systemic poverty, confront stigma surrounding food pantries and homelessness, and illuminate campus-specific basic needs data.
- **Direct Service:** Mobilize students for volunteer shifts at campus food pantries, emergency shelters, meal packaging centers, and mutual-aid hubs.
- **Fundraise & Collect:** Partner with dining services, student clubs, and local businesses to gather non-perishable goods, hygiene items, and emergency funds.
- **Advocate:** Lobby for expanded SNAP eligibility for students, institutional basic needs funding, and an end to municipal ordinances that criminalize homelessness.

Priority Campaign: Campus Food & Winter Essentials Drive

Early winter represents the most critical period for community shelters and campus pantries:

- **"Fill the Van" or "Stuff the Quad":** Coordinate with facilities or student transportation to park a campus van in high-traffic plazas as a visible drop-off indicator.
- **Inter-Dorm / Greek Life Competitions:** Structure competitive leaderboards among residence halls, student organizations, and academic departments.
- **Targeted High-Need Goods:** In consultation with local agencies, collect items often overlooked: menstrual products, warm socks, thermal gloves, ready-to-eat protein meals, baby formula, and grocery gift cards.

12 Campus Event Ideas for 2026

Tailor your week by selecting a combination of educational, fundraising, and service events that match your team's bandwidth:

1. "One Night Without a Home" Sleep-Out

A 12-hour structured overnight teach-in on the campus quad (7 p.m. to 7 a.m.) featuring facilitated discussions, guest speakers, and solidarity reflections.

2. Faces of Homelessness Panel

Collaborate with the National Coalition for the Homeless Speakers' Bureau to host a respectful panel where people with lived experience share their stories.

3. Oxfam Hunger Banquet

An interactive simulation demonstrating global resource distribution where participants are randomly assigned to high-, middle-, and low-income meals.

4. Campus SNAP Challenge

Challenge campus leaders, student government officials, and faculty to eat on the average daily SNAP allocation for five days, concluding with a reflection forum.

7. "Swipe Out Hunger" Meal Donation

Work with campus dining services to allow residential students to convert unused dining hall swipes or flex points into direct donations for student food vouchers.

8. Empty Bowls Art & Soup Fundraiser

Partner with university ceramics departments where students create handmade clay bowls, then host a community soup luncheon where guests keep their bowl.

9. Community Garden Gleaning

Organize volunteer crews to visit regional farms or campus gardens to harvest surplus crops and deliver fresh produce directly to local community kitchens.

10. Documentaries & Discussion Forum

Screen student-accessible documentaries exploring modern homelessness and host a post-screening talkback with campus social work faculty.

5. Emergency Meal-Packaging Day

Partner with organizations such as Rise Against Hunger or The Outreach Program to mobilize 100+ volunteers packaging thousands of nutritious shelf-stable meals.

6. Basic Needs Town Hall & Policy Panel

Host campus administrators, local housing advocates, and student leaders to discuss campus emergency aid, housing insecurity, and on-campus pantry access.

11. Voter & Civic Registration Drive

Coordinate voter registration outreach ensuring unhoused community members understand voter ID requirements, address policies, and ballot access rights.

12. Mutual-Aid Care Kit Assembly

Set up drop-in stations in the student union where students assemble winter cold-weather survival bags (hand warmers, socks, toiletries, water, resource cards).

Media Outreach Toolkit & Press Strategy

Media coverage is a vital component of Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. Strategic press outreach amplifies your campaign beyond campus borders, reaching tens of thousands of community members, dispelling misconceptions, and mobilizing local support and donations.

Steps to Effective Media Organizing

1. **Build a Targeted Media List:** Compile a directory of campus reporters, student radio/TV station managers, metro daily beat reporters covering higher education and social services, local TV assignment editors, and regional news blogs.

2. **Identify Key Contacts:** At local TV and radio outlets, address materials to the *Assignment Desk* or *News Editor*. For local newspapers and digital publications, search past reporting on poverty, food insecurity, and municipal housing to reach interested journalists directly.

3. **Draft & Personalize Your News Release:** Adapt the provided press release template with your campus-specific events, local hunger metrics, and spokespersons.

4. **Pitch Proactively by Phone:** Reporters receive hundreds of emails each morning. At least one week before your events, place phone pitch calls. If a journalist expresses interest, immediately email your release.

5. **Day-of-Event Media Hospitality:** Have printed press kits and copies of your release available at event check-in tables for visiting photographers and reporters.

6. **Post-Event Follow-Up:** Immediately after milestone events, email high-resolution action photos and updated donation totals to reporters who were unable to attend in person.

How to Deliver a Compelling Phone Pitch

- **Check Their Deadline First:** Always begin: *"Hi, my name is [NAME] from [GROUP]. Do you have two minutes, or are you on deadline?"* If they are on deadline, arrange a time to follow up.
- **The 30-Second Hook:** Focus on the immediate local angle, visual opportunities (e.g., hundreds of students packing meal bags or a crowded quad sleep-out), and human-interest impact.
- **Follow Up:** If a reporter requests materials or interviews, fulfill the request within the hour.

> **Highlighting Lived Experience with Dignity & Respect:** Reporters often look for personal narratives of overcoming housing or food insecurity. Coordinate closely with campus basic-needs centers or local partner shelters. Never pressure anyone to speak, ensure full informed consent, and focus stories on systemic solutions rather than sensationalism. For campus media, focus on student-led initiatives, food pantry usage, and peer advocacy.

Sample Phone Pitch Scripts

1. Initial Outreach to Shelter or Community Partner Director:

> *"Hello, my name is [NAME] from [CAMPUS GROUP]. We are organizing our campus for Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week this November 14–22, and we would love to collaborate. We are working to ensure local news outlets cover the systemic reality of homelessness in our area as well as inspiring stories of resilience. If your organization has clients or former participants who have successfully transitioned into stable housing and are passionate about sharing their journey, we would welcome the opportunity to connect with them respectfully, alongside highlighting the essential services your shelter provides every day."*

2. Outreach to Local News Assignment Editors & Reporters:

> *"Hi, my name is [NAME] with [CAMPUS GROUP]. Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is taking place from November 14 to 22, and we have a powerful local story for your [readers/viewers]. With food prices and housing costs heavily impacting local families and college students, our campus is mobilizing over [NUMBER] volunteers to pack meals, collect essentials, and call for systemic change. We have strong visual setups, student leaders ready for on-camera interviews, and representatives working on local shelter solutions. Can I send you our media advisory and press release for your calendar?"*

Customizable News Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, November 16, 2026

CONTACT: [Spokesperson Name], [Title/Group] · [Phone Number] · [Email Address]

[CAMPUS / CITY] Students and Community Unite for Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week

[ORGANIZATION / CAMPUS GROUP] Launches Week of Service, Direct Action, and Advocacy from Nov. 14–22, 2026

[CITY, STATE] — This week, students and community volunteers from [ORGANIZATION / INSTITUTION] are joining hundreds of schools and civic groups nationwide for Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (Nov. 14–22, 2026). The campaign brings attention to widespread poverty and basic-needs insecurity through educational teach-ins, volunteer service drives, and community-wide fundraisers.

"No one in our community should have to worry about where their next meal is coming from or whether they will have a safe place to sleep tonight," said [NAME], [TITLE] of [ORGANIZATION]. "Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week gives students and residents the opportunity to take collective action, support our frontline emergency shelters, and push for long-term solutions."

Across [CITY / STATE], these challenges remain pressing:

- The overall poverty rate in [CITY] currently stands at [XX%], with the child poverty rate reaching [XX%].
- On any given night, an estimated [X,XXX] individuals experience homelessness across [STATE].
- On campus, basic-needs surveys show that roughly [XX%] of college students report experiencing food or housing insecurity during their academic career.

Throughout the week, [ORGANIZATION] will host several campus and community events, including:

- **Campus-Wide Food & Essentials Drive:** [Dates, Time, Location] — Collecting non-perishable food, warm winter wear, and toiletries for [Local Food Pantry / Shelter Name].
- **[Event Name, e.g., "One Night Without a Home" Sleep-Out / Panel]:** [Date, Time, Location] — Featuring guest speakers, interactive discussions, and educational opportunities.
- **[Event Name, e.g., Meal-Packaging Day or Swipe Donation]:** [Date, Time, Location] — Student volunteers assembling meals in partnership with local mutual-aid relief partners.

For event schedules and full campaign details, visit [CAMPUS WEBSITE] or the national campaign headquarters at **HHWeek.org**.

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About the Sponsoring Organizations: Co-sponsored nationally by the National Coalition for the Homeless (nationalhomeless.org) and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger and Homelessness (studentsagainsthunger.org), Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week was founded at Villanova University in 1975 and is observed annually by hundreds of communities nationwide.

What to Do After Your Week: Post-Campaign Checklist

The impact of your Awareness Week doesn't stop when Sunday night arrives. Taking time to report your outcomes, thank your team, and steward campus and community relationships solidifies long-term momentum and sets up future campaigns for success. Complete these essential follow-up actions in the days immediately following your week:

- **National Reporting at HHWeek.org:** Visit **HHWeek.org** to submit your official event outcomes (pounds of food collected, funds raised, number of attendees, and service hours logged) and upload your high-resolution event photos to be featured in the national wrap-up report.
- **Instagram Results Graphic:** Design and publish an eye-catching recap carousel or infographic highlighting total donations, volunteers engaged, and key campaign milestones. Be sure to tag all student clubs, Greek houses, departments, and community partner accounts in the caption and visual tags.
- **LinkedIn Partner Spotlight:** Share a professional recap post on LinkedIn detailing the collaborative community effort, tagging your campus administration, corporate or non-profit sponsors, and partner organizations to publicly recognize their leadership and community impact.
- **Stakeholder Impact Memo:** Write and distribute an executive email brief to university leadership—including student government executives, campus administrators, supportive faculty, and local elected officials summarizing total metrics, student participation rates, and ongoing campus basic-needs policy priorities.
- **Student Body Email Update:** Send an energetic recap to your general campus or club email list sharing the tangible difference students made together, celebrating collective results, and offering next steps for staying involved year-round.
- **Volunteer Appreciation Email:** Send a personalized thank-you note to volunteers, shift leader, and planning committee member recognizing their hard work, time, and dedication.
- **Student Government Presentation:** Deliver an announcement or brief presentation at the next Student Government Association (SGA) or Associated Students (AS)meeting highlighting key results, presenting final figures, and giving formal public credit if they co-sponsored, funded, or promoted your week.
- **Handwritten Thank-You Cards:** Write and hand-deliver or mail handwritten thank-you cards to the shelter directors, food bank coordinators, and frontline service agency staff who collaborated with your team.
- **Post-Campaign Press Release:** Issue a concluding press release to your campus newspaper, local journalists, and regional news desks announcing the final results, total pounds of food collected, community funds raised, and quotes reflecting on the success of the week.