

“ONE NIGHT WITHOUT A HOME”

The “One Night Without a Home” Awareness Sleep Out takes place nationally during Awareness Week. A Baltimore group called “Housing Our Neighbors” hosted a sleep out during the 2013 Awareness Week which they entitled, “Sleep Out for Housing Justice”. The large group rallied through at the Inner Harbor and their movement was covered heavily by the media. For more details about their sleep out, follow this link: <http://www.honbaltimore.org/sleep-out-for-housing-justice/>

The “One Night” event is an opportunity for housed persons to spend a night outside to discuss, think, and learn about homelessness. Although one night outside cannot fully simulate homelessness, it will help to promote advocacy, awareness, and education.

FORMAT

- “One Night Without a Home” usually lasts for about 12 hours, often from 7pm until morning.
- Develop your mission statement. Address the questions of who, what, where, when, and why?
- Make sure to receive permission right away from your city or county officials and community/school administrators concerning location, security, and other logistics.
- Invite homeless/formerly homeless people, community leaders, residents and community spokespersons to speak.
- Choose an appropriate site (central to community activities).
- Ask local businesses for donations (food, drinks, supplies, money).
- Ask other groups to co-sponsor the event, such as organizations (e.g. Food Not Bombs, Habitat for Humanity) that can serve food to homeless guests.
- Prepare group discussion topics that will promote interaction among all participants.
- Begin the night with a vigil or a march to draw attention, as well as participants, to the event.
- Include information that allows participants to act upon what they’ve learned (community service, letter writing, advocacy organizations).
- In the morning, allow time for participants to share their thoughts and concerns.

SAMPLE AGENDA

6:00 p.m.	Gather participants & provide transportation for homeless/formerly homeless guests
7:00 p.m.	Serve coffee and/or a meal
8:00 p.m.	Speakers/candlelight vigil/music
9:00 p.m.	Discussion groups
11:00 p.m.	Late night food line/music
7:00 a.m.	Breakfast /closing remarks/wrap-up

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

- Be mindful of what you bring. Keep in mind the situation that you are simulating; do not bring any objects or goodies that those without a home most likely lack. Do not bring cell phones, laptop computers, iPads or portable radios. Stay away from having pizza delivered. For college groups, alcoholic beverages are not allowed.
- Consider bringing supplies to donate to the homeless. Anything you bring for additional comfort would be greatly appreciated by someone who undergoes the experience every night.
- Contact local shelters or homeless advocates about bringing homeless people to your event. Ask these contacts to participate in the Night as well.
- Ask local musicians to play. Music brings people together.
- Distribute fact sheets and information about hunger and homelessness and the other events for Awareness Week.
- Make sure to recruit other people to participate in your early planning stages. Ask homeless/formerly homeless people, students, faculty, and community members.
- Invite the media.
- Post a list of rules on the night of the event. These may include: *1) no drugs or alcohol, 2) do not interrupt those who are speaking, 3) respect all views, 4) do not leave the site.* Also, post and announce the agenda, people in charge, bathroom locations, indoor sites, food, and first aid stations. You may choose to put a container out for donations. Have a facilitator to mediate any disputes that may arise.
- Set aside some time for group discussion about hunger and homelessness in your community and/or in our nation. Provide paper and pencils for people to jot down their ideas. This is a good time to promote future projects, such as a day of fasting.

WRAP-UP

Appoint a committee to draft a group resolution based on the discussions that night. Establish a common ground for participants who would like to take future action. Collect names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of people for future reference and provide access to information on local service sites.

For more information, contact the National Coalition for the Homeless at (202) 462-4822

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