



One Homeless Night 2016 **ACTIVITY GUIDE**

Thank you for joining Synergy in our efforts to provide shelter, counseling and outreach for vulnerable and homeless youth! You make a difference!

This packet will help Site Leaders create fun and impactful agendas for the sleep-out.

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CONNECTING THE OHN EXPERIENCE TO CURRICULA

The One Homeless Night (OHN) experience can be easily tied to school, faith and community-based curricula.

Primary & Secondary Education

- **Communication Arts** – speaking, writing, drama, reading non-fiction, presenting, etc.
- **Social Studies** – governance systems, economic concepts, institutions, cultural traditions, etc.
- **Health** – mental health, substance use, risk factors, health care, etc.

Faith Education

- Mercy
- Compassion
- Faith
- Healing
- Scripture

Community Education

- Community
- Citizenship
- Responsibility
- Volunteerism
- Conflict resolution
- Economics

Character Education

Listed below are just a few character traits that can be discussed around the OHN experience:



SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

Promote learning through an interactive service project in the Greater Kansas City Metro area. This will promote personal, social and intellectual growth and a sense of civic responsibility. Ideal service learning projects will focus on homelessness and related issues.

Stages of Service Learning

- 1 Preparation:** define the parameters of the project; make visiting arrangements; research the topic; gain guardian permission
- 2 Action:** complete the service; participate in discussions on-site; leave the site better than found
- 3 Reflection:** discuss thoughts, feelings and observations; document the service; discuss potential for follow up visit
- 4 Celebration:** gather to praise a job well done

Service Project Ideas

- Volunteer at a shelter, soup kitchen, pantry, or urban garden
- Hold a clothes or food drive
- Pack hygiene kits or snack bags
- Make blankets, hats, scarves, etc.

PREPARE THE SITE

During the week prior to the event, “decorate” the site with signs about homelessness, hunger, addiction, mental health, etc. Statistics should include local, national and global data. Risk factors for homelessness also make great signs.

Youth Homelessness Statistics

Individuals under the age of eighteen who lack parental, foster or institutional care are considered to be homeless or “unaccompanied” youth. Consider the following:

- The average age of entry into prostitution is 14.
- The average age a homeless child first has sex is 13.
- 46% of homeless youth report being physically abused.
- Homeless youth are 7 times more likely to die from AIDS.
- 2.8 million teens run away from home each year in the US.
- 32% of homeless youth have attempted suicide at least once.
- Homeless youth are 18 times more likely to use crack cocaine.
- 1.6 million youth have slept on the streets in the last 12 months.
- Youth Homelessness Begins a Cycle of Chronic Homelessness.
- Almost half of homeless youth have witnessed domestic violence.
- Homeless youth are 16 times more likely to be diagnosed with HIV.
- 1/3 of homeless teens have witnessed a stabbing, shooting, rape or murder.
- 1/8 of American youth under 18 leaves home each year and become homeless.
- The prevalence rate for substance use disorders among homeless youth is 85%.
- 1/3 of homeless youth are lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.
- 40% report being gay and abused in their schools and homes for their orientation.
- Homeless teens are 2-3 times more likely to be raped or assaulted than other teens.
- By the time homeless children are eight years old one in three has a major mental disorder.
- 44% report that a parent(s) has received treatment for alcohol, drug, or psychological problems.

DURING THE EVENT

It is important that your event not only raise awareness and funds for homelessness but also be as entertaining, fun and interactive as possible. It is recommended that an agenda be made for your event. **Please make efforts to balance the fun with respect for those for whom this is a reality.**

SYNERGY SPEAKERS

are able to talk about wide variety of topics for your event. **Speaker Request Forms are due by Monday, October 3rd.**

VIDEOS

illustrating homelessness include: *The Pursuit of Happiness*, *The Soloist*, *StreetWise*, *Homeless to Harvard* and YouTube videos (try YouthNoise.com). You may also film your event.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

could include causes of homelessness, teen runaways, getting thrown out by parents, teen pregnancy, GLBTQ issues, criminal activity, gang involvement, aging out of the system, foster care, juvenile justice and the education system. These discussions could take place in the form of fireside chats, open debates, blogs, tent seminars, teach-ins or panels.

THEATRE

is a great way to bring topics out into the open and inspire interest, opinion, conversation and learning. Contact a local theatre group or have participants perform.

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

Every individual has a specific learning style. Most people learn best through a combination of styles, with one primary style. The styles include: visual, aural, verbal, kinesthetic, logical, social, and solitary. Experiential learning can incorporate many different styles with the focus on learning by doing.

- Set-up registration as if participants are applying to enter a shelter. Have them wait in line until the shelter opens. Give those who arrive first prime locations closer to the food, restrooms, etc.
- Construct shelters. Individuals or groups build shelter out of cardboard. Encourage creativity and resourcefulness. Have contests for sturdiest construction, most comfortable, warmest, etc.
- Stand Up! Make a list of luxuries that many participants may have or use. Call the items out and ask participants to stand-up if they use each luxury.
- Create a “confessional” area for participants to record their thoughts during the event.

THIEF IN THE MIX

Objective

Demonstrate the necessity of “street families” to share resources and protection and deepen understanding of the homeless experience through simulated vulnerability.

Approximate Length: 45 minutes

Set-Up

Create “street families” by grouping unfamiliar participants. Provide limited clothing, food, hygiene supplies, blankets, recycled or toy cell phones, candy cigarettes, prescription bottles filled with dried beans, play money, etc. Plastic grocery sacks for making “care packages”. Instruction cards (page 6) to be placed in each participant’s bag. Bags contain a mix of the items but no one bags should contain everything one person would need. Color code bags so there are 5 or 6 colors. Try to give friends different colored bags. The idea is to set-up the situation where participants have to share with each other or try to take things. Make some bags with very little contents and others with much more.

Get Started

Give each participant a bag and send them off to gather with their “families”. Ask participants to look into the bags and read the instruction cards silently to themselves. Individuals should not share their instructions with others at any point during the activity. Address the group with the following statements:

1. “You are to play your role to the best of your ability. Do what you must in order to survive.
2. There may be some ‘thieves in the mix’. Be careful as others may try to trick you. If you feel someone is trying to take advantage of your group, you may state your case to the group and the group can then vote to allow the person to join the group or kick them out. Those accused of doing suspicious things may state their defense. If the group reaches a guilty verdict, the group may take their belongings. Regardless of the truth, you must comply with the group’s decision.
3. If you are outcast from a group, you may try to join another group.

4. It is a cold and rainy night. There is a chance of snow by morning. You haven't eaten for 2 days. Your clothes are dirty and wet. You have just received a 'care package' from a local outreach organization. These are the only possessions you have. You have met your group members at the outreach van and have agreed to camp together for the night. Get your camps set up, get some dry clothes on, something to eat and whatever else you need to do.
5. We will all meet back here to discuss the experience."

Debriefing Questions

- "Describe your experience. What happened in the groups?
- Was anyone accused of anything? What? Why? What was decided? Was it true?
- How did those accused react? Why were they singled out? How did it feel?
- How did the groups function? What things kept the groups together and what pulled them apart?
- Did you trust the people in your group? Why or why not? What made you trust or distrust others?
- Did you feel safe? How protective were you of yourself and your stuff?
- What conflicts emerged? How did the groups deal with the conflicts?
- What consequences could take place as a result of these kinds of experiences with homeless youth? What skills are necessary for handling these conflicts safely and effectively?"
- Other questions as the group finds appropriate for discussing.

Thief in the Mix Instruction Cards

Make enough cards for each person in your group. Place one card in each bag with or without the items mentioned in the card. There may be duplicates. Try not to put them in the same group.

- You have a very powerful nicotine addiction. You really need a cigarette. You get very irritable if you have to go without one for more than 10 minutes at a time.
- Your dating partner is in another camp. He/she is a prescription drug addict. You are trying to find some pills for him/her.
- You/your girlfriend is pregnant. She needs more to eat than she has been given. You have to get some food for her.
- You have an STD but cannot afford your medication. Someone else has what you need and you have to try to take it from them without their noticing.
- You're tired of living on the street. An older man in a nice car gave you his phone number and said he would take you in if you gave him a call. You have no money and no phone, but someone else does. You really need to call him and just get a break.
- You stepped on a nail yesterday and now your foot is infected. You cannot walk very well and you have developed a fever. You are very tired and weak. You need help.
- You were beaten up by your father right before you left home earlier today. Your body and face are bruised. You are very scared and need to find someone who you can trust to look after you. You are much younger than everyone else in your group.
- You were thrown out of your house because your parents found out you are gay. You don't want the others in your group to find out about you because you're afraid they will throw you out. You try to blend in as much as possible, but you wish there was just one person you could be yourself with. Try to find that person.
- You are very depressed after running away from home. You know it's not safe for you to go back, and life on the streets is unbearable. You are thinking about taking your own life. At least it's one thing you have control over. If you could just find some pills to overdose with, your pain would be gone forever.
- You've started turning tricks to get some money and drugs, and occasionally a place to stay for a couple of nights. The person you do this for asks you to get some of the other kids to do it too. You know that if you can recruit one or two others you will be well taken care of.

- Somebody in your group stole your cell phone. You don't know who it is, but you need it back. It's the only way you have in keeping in touch with the family the state took you away from. You ran from foster care and are trying to reunite with them.
- Even though you are on the streets, you cannot stand being dirty, smelling bad or not brushing your teeth. Your care package doesn't have everything you need to take care of your hygiene. You have to take care of this before you can go to sleep tonight.
- Your blanket has holes in it and you are freezing. You need something else to help keep you warm or you are convinced you will not make it through the night.
- You are an instigator. You like nothing more than to cause trouble and see people fighting with each other. It's fun for you to see what you can get people to do.
- You have never had anyone give you anything without wanting something in return. So rather than ask for what you want or need, you just try to take it without being caught. Try to steal everything and anything you can without getting caught.
- You know how important it is for you to survive, but you are incapable of taking advantage of anyone. You would rather go without getting what you need in order for someone else to get what they need. You are very generous and helpful.
- You are the protector in the group. You look out for everyone else, whether they want you to or not. If you think someone is doing something wrong you are the first to speak up. If you feel like someone is being treated unfairly, you stand up for them.
- MAKE UP ANY OTHER INSTRUCTION THAT MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO THE EXPERIENCE.

Make it Work!

Objective

Participants will learn how the homeless effectively utilize resources, particularly clothing, to meet basic needs and function in society. Participants will sort through bags of donated clothing to find outfits that would be appropriate for specific circumstances they may face while homeless such as: interviews, going to school, going out on a date, applying for a scholarship, interviewing to rent an apartment, etc.

Approximate Length: 30 minutes

Set-Up

Provide clothing. Contact Synergy In Style Thrift Store at 816-468-0404 or at 6571 N Oak Trafficway, Gladstone, MO, for free bags of clothing. Remove any undergarments. One bag usually provides enough clothing for up to 20 people. You will also need note cards that specify different situations.

Get Started

Divide participants into small groups of 6-10, depending on the overall size of the event. Allow participants first to have a little fun with the clothing, making creative outfits and displaying them "runway style". See who can come up with the most colorful, outrageous, sophisticated, etc. outfits. Allow groups to judge one another. You may also do a "quick change" contest for fun to see who can come up with outfits and change into them the fastest. After these activities, give each group a stack of notecards with different situations on them. Have the groups circulate from pile to pile as each member picks a card and creates an outfit for that situation. Debrief as a large group with the following questions:

- "What was it like trying to find an outfit for your situation?"
- How did you feel having only these clothes to choose from?

- What impact would your clothes have on what you would try to do? Would you go for a job interview one place but not another?
- How do you think people would treat you based on what you were wearing? How do people treat you based on what you wear?
- How important is your appearance to theirs? How important are others' appearances to you? Do you treat people differently based on what they are wearing? How?
- Would this affect a person's emotional or psychological state? How?
- These are the kinds of items people donate. Do you appreciate them? Why/why not?
- What kinds of things do you donate? Why do you donate the things you do? Do you think they are appreciated? Why/why not?"
- Other questions as the group finds appropriate for discussing.

Crowd the Couch

Objective

To change the perception of youth homelessness from that of sleeping under a bridge or on the street to including those who do not have a permanent living arrangement. This humorous activity generates discussion around real situations homeless teens face and real examples of available resources.

Approximate Length: 20 minutes

Set-Up

A couch (or several), speakers and music and digital camera to record the fun (and helmets if the crowd is competitive and rambunctious!).

Get Started

This is sort of like musical chairs except you do not eliminate people for not making it to the couch when the music stops.

1. Have group stand around a couch or group of couches. Instruct them to begin walking around the couch in a clockwise manner once the music starts and try to get a seat on the couch as soon as the music stops.
2. Play the music. Let the group circulate around the couch a couple of times before turning the music off.
3. Turn the music off and watch them scurry to find a seat. Have someone on hand to take pictures of the commotion.
4. Start the music and have the group start walking around again. Continue stopping the music and taking pictures of the different configurations of people on the couch.
5. For a finale, see if it is possible to get everyone on the couch (without anyone getting hurt or otherwise violated in anyway). Be certain to take several pictures.

Debriefing Questions

- “Have you ever been in a position where you have had to sleep on someone else’s couch, even while on vacation or at a family member’s house? What was that like?”
- If you were in need of a place to stay, would you feel comfortable staying on someone else’s couch? Why or why not?
- What would be some of your concerns about staying on someone’s couch?
- Where would you go if they asked you to leave?”
- Other questions the group finds appropriate for discussing.

AFTER THE EVENT

It is important to continue incorporating information and experiences from OHN into curricula and other group activities following the event. Below are some suggested follow-up activities.

WRAP-UP DISCUSS.

Follow-up sessions are encouraged to promote reflection and dialogue about how participants’ daily behavior and attitudes might have changed since OHN. Topics could include: increased sensitivity to peers, service opportunities, etc.

EDUCATE OTHERS

Encourage participants to develop a group project that teaches others about the issue of teen homelessness. Arrange a watch party for the video created during the event.

DONATIONS

Participants often ask if there is a need for items such as food or clothing. Donations are always appreciated. Contact Synergy Services at 816-505-4785 for a needs list and to arrange a delivery.

VOLUNTEERISM

Individuals and groups may volunteer at Synergy Services. Call 816-505-4945 to volunteer. Specifications on location and the type of work will be taken into consideration.

Thank you!

Synergy Services staff would like to thank you for spreading awareness and raising funds for youth homelessness by hosting a One Homeless Night event. Creating a fun and impactful event can be complex and we sincerely appreciate all the effort you put into making this happen. We hope you will consider hosting an event again next year.

Please also be sure to thank your participants and convey Synergy Services thanks for their involvement. Encourage them to participate again next year and recruit others.