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ABSTRACT

This publication for Pennsylvania educators outlines five homelessness curricula found in schools in Florida, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania, which aim to sensitize students to the realities of homelessness. The report points out that although the curricula differ in many ways, each covers the following key topics: (1) the causes and effects of homelessness; (2) what it is like to be homeless; (3) dispelling dangerous myths; and (4) government and community responses to homelessness. In addition, each curriculum either contains or has led to community service projects. The publication lists contact persons for each program, suggests ways that educators can use the information presented, and reproduces sample activities and lesson plans from three of the five curricula. A final section presents program case studies of the five homeless curricula. The case studies of the following curricula describe the origins of each, the age group, and setting as well as activities and topics covered: (1) Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia (Pennsylvania); (2) KIDSTART: Kids Can Care! in Largo (Florida); (3) Teaching About Homelessness in Westchester County (New York); (4) Salisbury Township School District in Allentown (Pennsylvania); and (5) St. Thomas Academy in Mendota (Minnesota). A resource list includes the addresses and telephone numbers of 5 national organizations and 4 Pennsylvania organizations, the titles of 7 audiovisual aids, an ll-item bibliography, and the titles of 4publications and manuals. (JB)



HOMELESSNESS CURRICULA: Five Exemplary Approaches



Resource Tool For Teachers and School Districts

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- . Sample Lesson Plans for K-12
- . Student Activities
- . Reading Lists

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Pennsylvania's Homeless Student Initiative

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is the hope of Pennsylvania's Homeless Student Initiative that these Homelessness Curriculum Guidelines will serve as a valuable source of information for individual teachers and school districts seeking to educate their students about the issue of homelessness. With the help and openness of Jan Abramsen, Steven Goldberg, Katrina Looby, Joseph Seidel and Judy Yates, this document contains five exemplary student programs which reflect the energy and efforts of many people dedicated to building awareness within their students and encouraging them to engage in community service. Moreover, we would equally like to thank everyone who contributed, whether directly or indirectly, to the production of this document.





FORWARD

Would you help a homeless person?

"If the government is worried about other things-other nations and all that--and they're not making an
effort to help the homeless, then why should I care?
They say one person makes a difference, but it's not
true. One person can't change anything."

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This quote from a seventeen year old Miami, Florida student reflects the attitude that homelessness is not an individual citizen's concern. However, five student programs found in Florida, Minnesota, New York and Pennsylvania challenge the opinion that "one person can't change anything." These young citizen programs demonstrate how they are making a very big difference in their communities.

With an estimated 220,000 school-age children in the nation who are homeless, and of those, more than 65,000 who do not attend school regularly, it is not surprising that schools and community groups around the country have initiated programs which teach young people that homelessness is everyone's concern.

Teaching young people about important social issues, such as homelessness dispels dangerous myths, teaches social responsibility, and moves students to take action. What better place to achieve this goal than in your school!





₁ 5

To obtain additional information on any of the curricula, you are encouraged to contact any of the following individuals:

Ms. Jan Abramsen or Ms. Karen Heim Salisbury Township School District 3301 Devonshire Road Allentown, PA 18103 215/791-0830

Mr. Steven Goldberg

Westchester County Homeless Curriculum New Rochelle High School 265 Clove Road New Rochelle, NY 10801 914/576-4597

Ms. Katrina Looby

Our Extended Family
Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia, Inc.
7 Benjamin Franklin Parkway
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215/564-4657

Mr. Joseph Seidel

St. Thomas Academy 949 Mendota Heights Road Mendota, MN 55120 612/454-4570

Ms. Cynthia L. Uline

Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program Pennsylvania Department of Education 333 Market Street, 5th Floor Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333 717/787-4605

Ms. Judy Yates

Pinellas County Government Cooperative Extension Service 12175 125th Street North Largo, FL 33544 813/586-5477

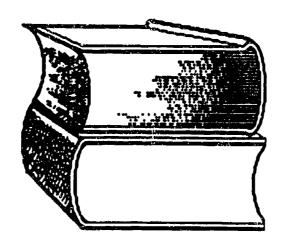


USING THIS RESOURCE DOCUMENT

This publication outlines five homelessness curricula found in Florida, Minnesota, New York and Pennsylvania. Each one aims to sensitize students to the realities of homelessness. The reader is urged to consider all five and to cross reference information.

Concerned educators can utilize the information in three contexts:

- o To keep abreast of programs in other schools pertaining to homelessness:
- o To stimulate dialogue between educators on the need for such programs; and
- o To initiate a homelessness curriculum in their schools.





WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT.

Although each of the five curricula offers a unique and effective approach to sensitizing students to the issue of homelessness, they all share similar components. Each of these components is necessary in order for students to gain a thorough understanding of a complex issue. The following key topics are covered in each:

- o Cause and effects of homelessness;
- o What is it like to be homeless:
- o Dispelling dangerous myths; and
- o Government and community response to homelessness.

In addition, each curriculum either contains or has resulted in **community service** projects which teach students the applicability of academic subject matter. The creativity of the many people who designed these five programs is apparent in the assigned activities. To mention but a few:

- o Reading magazine, newspaper and journal articles pertaining to the social, political and economic factors causing people to become homeless;
- o Listening to a local shelter director speak about why people are homeless, life in a homeless shelter and what it's like to be homeless;
- o Analyzing a poster which depicts several children playing and then posing the question - Which child is homeless?; and
- o Being an advocate. Finding out who your elected representatives are at the city, state and national levels of the government. Writing a letter to your legislator about homelessness.

What follows are sample classroom assignments and/or projects which might comprise a week-long unit. Hopefully these will spark the reader's interest in learning more about one or all of the programs.



Sample Activities From Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia Homeless Awareness Patch Program Philadelphia, PA

Junior Girl Scout Activities

Complate at least five requirements including the one starred. All animals, including people, have a habitat. A habitat is a place which provides food, water, and shelter. These three things are necessary to survive. In your habitat (home) you receive these things but there are many other special things that your home provides. Make a list or draw a picture of the other special things that your home provides. *Leader Tip: in a discussion, compare the girls' lists with what someone in a shelter would have. _____ 2. invite someone who knows about the homeless to speak to your troop. Write down two (2) questions that you would feel comfortable asking about homeless people's lives. Imagine what it would be like if you were a homeless child. How might your feelings be different? What would your day be like? Do a skit illustrating some of these ideas. Bring in articles, headlines, or photographs from newspapers or magazines for a troop scrapbook about the homeless. Choose one item to report on at a troop meeting. Try to find answers to the following questions: Who are the homeless in your community? Where do they stay? Who is helping the homeless? __ 5. Use what you have learned to educate others about the homeless. Be creative: you might want to make posters or a library display, write a report, or give a presentation to groups such as other troops, your class at school. Sunday School classes at your church or synagogue, troop parents, etc. Obtain a map of your community. Plot the locations of homeless shelters and soup kitchens or support services on the map. Select one of the __ 6. locations and get permission to visit it. •7. Brainstorm ideas for how you can help the homeless. As a troop, select one of the projects and carry it out (see "Specific Tips for Girl Scout Leaders").



Sample Lesson From "Helping Children to Understand Homelessness: An Instructor's Guide"

KIDSTART: Kids Can Care Largo, Florida

LESSON II. REASONS FOR BEING HOMELESS

Objective - student will identify reasons people become homeless.

Oral discussion:

- Based on Lesson i's information, brainstorm with students to determine reasons for homelessness.
- 2. List on the chalkboard the reasons from above brainstorming. (Reasons for Homelessness detailed analysis in background section).
- Write an experience story using writing techniques for group writing. Materials: Chart Paper
 - a. Pre-writing Use the ideas presented by students in the brainstorming activity above.
 - b. Composing · Have students help write a class story using the ideas stated in pre-writing. Begin with story started -Homelessness is Being homeless means
 - c. Revising and Editing As a group, the children will help teacher revise and edit the composed story.
 - d. Publishing Teacher will rewrite story on chart paper and share it with class.
- 4. Class project: Skills math, economics
 Using the classified section of the newspaper, do a study of how much money is
 necessary to cover basic expenses of a family. This activity will give students an
 understanding of family problems with budgeting and basic needs.
 Based on \$1,008.00 per month for a family of four, which is the poverty level
 income*, have children in small groups of 2 or 3 figure total month expenditures.

Phone. \$ 20.00/month
Electricity: \$ 100.00/month
Water: \$ 50.00/month
Food: \$ 360.00/month
Child Care: \$ 200.00/month

Rental: Use classified section of newspapers to find out rental prices.
Using above total, let students subtract this from \$1,008.00

income to see how much is left or not left for a family.

*Income Levels Defining Poverty (The Federal Register, February, 1989)

Family Size Anual Amount Monthly Amount 3 \$10,060 \$838.33 4 \$12,100 \$1,008.33

- 5. Discussion Based on information shared, discuss:
 - a) What happens when a family can't afford the rent or mortgage?
 - b) What does eviction mean?
 - c) Tell how some members of a family feel when there isn't enough money (peer pressure for clothing, accessories, can't participate in "normal" school activities).
 - d) Does a family have to make choices on how to spend money?
- Activity Divide a piece of manila paper into 4 parts on each part write a reason for homelessness - draw pictures illustrating each part.



Sample Lessons From "Teaching About Homelessness" Curriculum Westchester Jounty, New York

ACTIVITY 12: HELPING THE HONORLESS

Grade level: K - 6

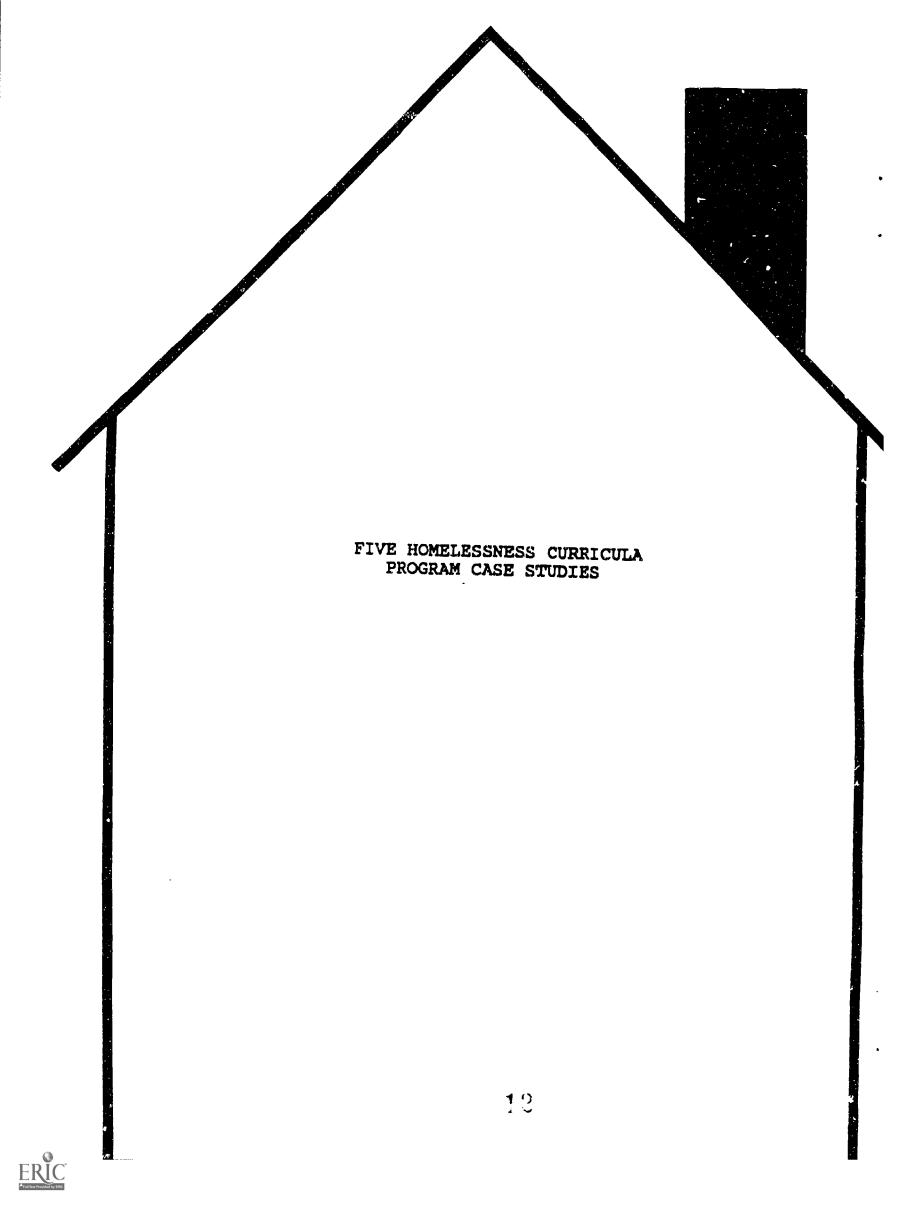
Overview: Children should receive information of sources and people seeking to help homeless people. They should be made aware of the different ways that the homeless can be aided by both governmental and private agencies.

Objective: Upon completion, children should be able to identify ways that homeless people can be helped and the role of the government in solving social problems.

Description of lesson:

- Define the following terms President, judge, lawyers, law, shelter, agency, basic necessity, social agency
- 2. Explain that shelter and warmth and clothing and food are basic necessities. In our Republican form of government, we elect a President and Congress. Explain that these political leaders are responsible for welfare of all citizens. From this, lead to a discussion of problems caring for homeless people.
- 3. Have a class meeting in which the children brainstorm ideas for a newspaper headline or billboard or TV Commercial to convey a message to a large audience about the plight of the homeless
- 4. Discuss reasons why people help others: people who help others do so for many reasons: it is their job; they want to do something for others; they feel sad that people suffer or don't feel well.
- 5. Have children find articles about homeless people. Underline needs and any mention of people helping.
- 6. Discuss possible circumstances which cause homeless people not to get help
- 7. Discuss ways in which homeless people might get help
- 8. In groups, list plans for getting help for Campless people. Each group will plan an approach on a specific government agency for seeking help for homeless population.
- Write a report about needs of homeless people in areas of health care, housing, food and clothing.





GIRL SCOUTS OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia, responding to the growing number of people who are homeless, has developed the Homelessness Awareness Patch Program for Girl Scouts. It gives Girl Scout troops age-appropriate educational activities and opportunities to contribute to their communities.

The program curriculum is designed to develop the girls' knowledge of the issue of homelessness and their sensitivity to the problems of those experiencing it. In addition, it requires the planning and implementation of service projects that benefit the homeless and address the causes of homelessness.

Each age level has seven or eight activities designed to involve the girls in learning about the importance of a home, what it means to be without a home, who is homeless, and who in the community is helping. The following are examples of activities included in the curriculum:

- Making a collage of different kinds of homes their own, their neighborhood, urban, rural, different parts of the world; (ages, 5-6).
- O Hiking around troop meeting place and observing types of homes; (ages, 6-8).
- O Inviting someone who knows about the homeless to speak to the troop and preparing questions about homeless people's lives; (ages, 8-12).
- c Keeping a time log for 24 hours, recording all your activities. Comparing this with the life of a homeless person; (ages, 12-17).
- O Being an advocate. Finding out who your elected representatives are at the city, state and national levels of government. Writing a letter to your legislator about homelessness; (ages, 12-17).

Suggested service projects include:

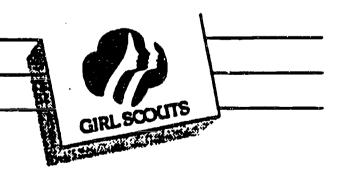
- o Donating food to volunteers at a soup kitchen.
- o Tutoring school-age children after school at the shelter or in a neighborhood library.
- o Reading to preschoolers at a shelter.



- o Giving a holiday party for children at a shelter.
- o Educating others about the homeless. Making posters or a library display, writing a report, or giving a presentation to other troops, a class at school, church or synagogue, troop pare.its, etc.

The Girl Scouts of Greater Philadelphia is committed to encouraging its' members to learn about homelessness and to develop and use their skills to work with others on this problem. Although their program is not a school curriculum, there are numerous activities and ideas that can be incorporated into one. The Girl Scout Council's project director, Ms. Katrina Looby, would be glad to share the Homelessness Awareness Program with you and your school district.

Our Extended Family is an outreach program of the Greater Philadelphia Girl Scout Council. The Homelessness Awareness Patch Program for troops is one of its components. The other involves running children's activity groups in shelters. The groups, called "Our Time", utilize adapted Girl Scout programs to give homeless boys and girls typical childhood experiences which are fun, encourage learning and increase self-esteem. "Our Time", similar to a troop, offers children a sense of belonging, of stability, and of being respected and valued.





KIDSTART: KIDS CAN CARE! Largo, Florida

The idea for an "unnamed" educational and community service project on homelessness was conceived in June of 1989. Since the beginning of this project, 14 private and community agencies, volunteers and paid staff, and the community in general, have provided support to what proved to be a needed and timely undertaking. Staff of the Pinellas County Cooperative Extension Service agreed to give leadership to the effort. From July 1989 through January 1990, a coordinating committee met at least monthly. Needs identification, planning and funding for the project came from agencies represented by this committee. Subcommittees for 1) curriculum development, 2) video production, 3) public relations and 4) food collection were each headed by a member of the coordinating committee, with other individuals assisting on the video and public relations committees. curriculum committee was composed of a sub-group of the coordinating committee.

KIDSTART: Kids Can Care was officially named in January 1990, and can be described as "A community education project that addresses the issues of homelessness." This program has proven to be an overwhelming and popular success in Pinellas County, Florida, focusing attention on the issues of homelessness at the 8-10 year old age range.

KIDSTART: Kids Can Care provides a localized, custom social studies curriculum with reinforcement opportunities to school systems, 4-H clubs, church youth groups and civic youth groups, developing awareness on relevant issues such as homelessness. The curriculum aims to enhance homeless and non-homeless children's understanding of the causes and results of homelessness. Some of the assignments which challenge these young students and which ask them to reflect on the realities surrounding homelessness include:

- o drawing a homeless person (stereotypically drawn as a a drunken bum by children);
- o watching a video, "There's No Place Like Home," which is locally produced and funded in Florida. This appeals to young students, because the video features a contemporary "hip" Fairy Godmother who oversees two homeless children and explains the causes and effects of homelessness; and
- o analyzing a poster which depicts several children playing and then posing the question Which child is homeless?

To create an effective and well-rounded program KIDSTART: Kids Can Care has incorporated a community service component. This teaches students that homelessness is a community responsibility that requires a community effort. The goals of the program are, therefore, twofold, because it sensitizes and motivates teachers



and children to get involved in accepting and assisting their homeless peers. The community service projects encourage students to:

- o write letters to kids in shelters;
- o adopt a shelter;
- o produce a play which one local school did and in turn, donated the proceeds to KIDSTART; and
- o participate in a food drive for homeless shelters. The first drive collected more than 14,000 pounds of food.

KIDSTART: Kids Can Care demonstrates how every one at every age can help the homeless. The program's flexibility provides a starting point for any district to implement such a curriculum into their schools and to adapt it to their own given needs. Ms. Judy Yates, County Extension Director, would welcome the opportunity to share her program with you and your school district, provided that you utilize the curriculum and the video as one package.





"TEACHING ABOUT HOMELESSNESS" Westchester County, New York

City School District of New Rochelle, in Westchester County, north of New York City, has developed, documented and implemented an extensive homeless curriculum in their schools. Two and half years ago, the Council of Educators for Homeless People of Westchester County requested Mr. Steven Goldberg, Social Studies Department Chairman at the City School District of New Rochelle, to develop a kindergarten through 12th grade homeless curriculum for parochial, private and public schools in the county. This project funded by the County Executive's Office aims to build student awareness and encourage an understanding of the social ramifications of homelessness.

The uniqueness of this program lies in the fact that all grade levels are incorporated. By adapting and modifying the curriculum to the individual needs of the classroom, teachers throughout Westchester County can approach homelessness from any angle in any subject.

A wide range of teaching strategies exposes students to homelessness through active learning. The news media also allows students to follow current trends. Some of the innovating ways in which homelessness is studied at the City School District of New Rochelle include:

- o reading magazine, newspaper and journal articles pertaining to the social, political and economic factors causing people to become homeless;
- o analyzing literary works and their portrayal of homelessness, such as the "The Grapes of Wrath," "Ironweed," "Les Miserables," etc.; and
- o comparing homelessness in the United States with homelessness in other parts of the world.

Although the curriculum does not include a school coordinated community service component, the values instilled and the knowledge gained within the classroom have motivated students to take their own initiative in the following ways:

- o volunteering in soup kitchens in local shelters;
- o engaging in various fund-raisers in the New Rochelle area; and
- o becoming involved with "Midnight Run"--a program organized by several Westchester communities to prepare food and clothing for shelters in New York City.



As students of Westchester become aware of homeless they not only approach school in a different way, but they also increase their social awareness. This comprehensive curriculum outlines a solid, yet flexible program which can be adapted to any classroom environment. If you or your school district would like additional information concerning the Westchester County curriculum, please contact Mr. Steven Goldberg in Westchester County.





SALISBURY TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT Allentown, Pennsylvania

Salisbury Township School District in Eastern Pennsylvania has developed an innovative and exciting homeless curriculum under the direction of Ms. Jan Abramsen, a 7th and 8th grade home economics teacher. Ms. Abramsen has received strong faculty support from her colleagues and invaluable community support from Vicky Lysek at the Sixth Street Shelter in Allentown, Pennsylvania in her efforts to educate students about social problems, especially about homelessness.

The homeless curriculum is presented in the 7th and 8th grades. It is designed so that the 7th grade program provides a base, focusing on the creative aspect, and the 8th grade emphasizes the critical-thinking component. The 7th grade curriculum teaches students the effects of homelessness on the family unit--"What is it like to be homeless?" The 8th grade curriculum entitled "Taking Charge," analyzes the socio-economic reasons that force American families into the situation of homelessness.

The guidance provided by Salisbury Township School District allows the students to understand the reality of homelessness, and its effects on the individual and the family. The program is designed around six courses—mathematics, home economics, social studies, art, English and reading. Some of the assignments include:

- o reading magazine and newspaper articles about homeless families and the rising incidence of homelessness;
- writing letters in English class to legislators, state or federal;
- o listening to a local shelter director speak about why people are homeless, life in a homeless shelter and what it's like to be homeless; and
- o decorating and designing gift boxes in art class in which to present cookies to families at the Sixth Street Shelter.



The classroom teaches the applicability of academic subjects in the world, especially in the community. This approach results in the students taking the initiative to provide community service. The community service projects vary from year to year due to the interest of the students. In the past year, activities have ranged from:

- o executing a full fashion show with the students from the Salisbury High School and xth Street Shelter; and
- o baking cookies for families in shelters.

This homeless program has been in effect for only one and a half years. It began when Ms. Abramsen sponsored a homeless family for Christmas in 1989. She became friends with the family and invited the mother to speak to her class. From this encounter, a vibrant and enriching program on homelessness has been implemented. The curriculum is further strengthened through team-teaching. It allows students to apply classroom knowledge to day-to-day situation; helping them develop a sense of the importance of being active in the community; and raising their self-esteem.

If you or your school district would like additional information concerning the homeless curriculum at Salisbury Township School District, you can contact either Ms. Jan Abramsen or Ms. Karen Heim.





ST. THOMAS ACADEMY Mendota, Minnesota

St. Thomas Academy's commitment to the issue of homelessness began two years ago as a result of the national movement for HOUSING NOW. The homeless curriculum initiated by St. Thomas Academy aims to sensitize students to this pressing social issue. In this parochial school of 500 boys in Mendota, Minnesota, every student is exposed to homelessness through academic courses and community service. This twofold experience provides the students with the understanding that homelessness is everyone's concern.

In 8th grade through 12th grade religion and social studies classes, students learn about the political, economic and social reasons that cause people to become homeless in the United States. Moreover, a strong emphasis is placed on the moral obligation for all citizens to become active in ending homelessness. The core course which focuses on homelessness is a campus ministry course taught by Mr. Joseph Seidel, a religion teacher and coordinator of the homeless curriculum at St. Thomas Academy.

St. Thomas Academy's program dispels the numerous myths surrounding the plight of homelessness. The curriculum allows the students to discover the facts by:

- o drawing information from current magazine and newspaper articles;
- o analyzing videotapes on homelessness; i.e. "Shelter Boy" and "No Place Like Home;" and
- o discussing the realities of homelessness in the Twin Cities with staff of homeless agencies and shelters in the area.

The classroom fosters an understanding and exposes students to the truths and complexities. Moreover, students are encouraged to apply what they learn in the classroom by actually involving themselves in community service. Some of the students' involvement have lead them:

- o to participate in "Meals-on-Wheels" which provides Thanksgiving Day meals for the elderly and poor,
- o to volunteer for "Dorothy Day Lunches" purchase the food, prepare and serve lunches in shelters,
- o to write letters to their senators on behalf of the McKinney Act, and
- o to help deliver household items (i.e. lamps, furniture, etc.) to families in need of such items.

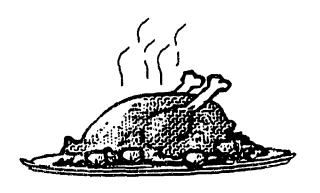
The benefits to initiating a homelessness curriculum



outweigh the time and effort required for implementation. St. Thomas Academy is successful in instilling a sense of continual awareness within all their students in regards to America's homeless population.

If you and your school district would like more information on St. Thomas Academy's curriculum, you can contact Mr. Joseph Seidel.





RESOURCES

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Children's Defense Fund 122 "C" Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20001 202/628-8787

Homelessness Information Exchange 1830 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 4th Floor Washington, D.C. 20009 202/462-7551

National Alliance to End Homelessness 1518 K Street, N.W. Suite 206 Washington, D.C.

National Coalition for Homelessness 1620 "I" Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20009 202/659-3310

National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 918 F St., N.W., Suite 412 Washington, D.C. 20004 202/638-2535

PENNSYLVANIA ORGANIZATIONS

Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program Pennsylvania Department of Education 333 Market Street, 5th Floor Harrisburg, PA 17126 717/787-4605

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2505 North Front Street Harrisburg, PA 17110-1111 717/234-7353

Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth 7 Benjamin Franklin Parkway Philadelphia, PA 19103

Philadelphia Committee on the Homeless 802 North Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19130 215/232-2300



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AUDIOVISUAL

"Down and Out in America," Joseph Feary Productions, 610 West End Avenue, New York, NY 10021

"The Many Faces of Homelessness," The Homebuilders Association, 15th and M Streets, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005

"No Place Called Home," Ecufilm, 810 12th Avenue S., Nashville, TN 37203

"A Place to Call Home," Global Food Crisis Fund, Brethren Press, 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, Il 60120

"At Issues, Poor Kids," Video I and II, Council of the League of Women, Voters of Bucks County, PA, Box 7-A, Route 3, New Hope, PA 18938

"Shelter Boy" from "The Reporters," Fox Television, 205 East 67th Street, New York, NY 10021

"Shelter Stories," a video by the Committee for Dignity and Fairness for the Homeless, contact Louise Mayberry at: 215/224-9890

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In Just Times, monthly, National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 918 F St., N.W., Suite 412, Washington, D.C. 20004.

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Safety Network, monthly, National Coalition for the Homeless, 1439 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005

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Making a difference in your community. A workbook for student directed service projects.
(1989).

Youth Community Service Constitutional Rights Foundation 601 South Kingsley Drive Los Angeles, CA 90005 213/487-5590

Reaching out: School-based community service programs. (1988)

National Crime Prevention Council 733 15th Street, N.W., Suite 540 Washington, D.C. 20005 202/393-7141

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National Society for Internships and Experiential Education 3509 Haworth Drive, Suite 207 Raleigh, NC 27609 919/787-3263

Youth Service: A guidebook for developing and operating effective programs. (1986). Conrad, D. & Hedin, D.

Independent Sector 1828 L. Street N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036 202/223-8100

