

Answer Key

The following information is provided to help you facilitate the discussion activities presented on the back of the poster.

Activity #1: What Does “Homeless” Mean?

- Answers will vary.
- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 defines as “homeless” someone who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or an individual whose primary residence is one of the following: a temporary place for people about to be institutionalized; any place not meant for regular sleeping accommodation by humans; or a supervised temporary shelter.
- There are many causes for homelessness.
 - Not enough affordable housing. In 1995, the number of low-income renters exceeded the number of low-cost housing units by 4.4 million—a trend that continues today.
 - Many people’s wages are not enough to afford housing. Increases in work wages have not kept pace with increases in living expenses over the last several decades.
 - It is difficult for people to access the services that would allow them to live independently. Public systems are overburdened by people who need money for rent, childcare, mental health services, job training, etc.
- Many people in homeless situations are fleeing from domestic violence and abuse. In addition, people who are exiting the criminal justice system, mental health facilities, foster care and other long-term care arrangements, do not have families to whom they can return home.
- Every night in the U.S., an estimated 750,000 people experience homelessness. Over the course of a year, between 2.5 and 3.5 million people become homeless.
- Many people experiencing homelessness work every day but do not earn enough income to pay for housing. A minimum wage worker would have to work 114 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at 30% of his or her income (which is what the U.S. government defines as “affordable housing”).
- Young people, with the guidance of an adult, can do a lot to help people who are without homes. To help with daily, basic needs, youth can serve meals at a soup kitchen, organize clothing and food drives, or mentor homeless children. Youth also play a critical role in creating long-term solutions through advocacy efforts. Phone calls and personal visits are effective means of influencing your elected officials to respond to homelessness.

Activity #2: Understanding Youth Homelessness

- TRUE
Homeless youth are among the fastest growing subsets of the nation’s homeless population.
- FALSE
There are many people who work every day of the week but do not make enough money for rent and bills. There is no place in the United States where a minimum wage job provides enough income to afford a two-bedroom home.
- FALSE
In reality, youth sometimes leave home to escape domestic violence or physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or because their families cannot accept their sexual orientation or parenting status.
- TRUE
Some youth are homeless because at age 18 they “age out” of the foster care system without having been prepared to make a successful transition to adulthood. Many leave without knowing basic skills like how to prepare meals, how to balance a check-book, or how to apply for a job.
- FALSE
Some homeless people have issues related to drug and alcohol use. The majority of these people also have mental illness.
- TRUE
There is help available. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), enacted in 1974, provides federal funding for outreach, emergency shelters, family reunification, and transitional living programs that help youth obtain an education and employment skills.
However, RHYA programs are able to serve only a fraction of young people in need of services due to limited public funding. A number of cities and entire regions of the country lack RHYA programs and services.

Activity #3: The Power to Accept and Change

- Here are some possible positive and negative components students could consider for each scenario.
- Positive:* Chris is a good student in other subjects besides math; Chris’s sister is willing to help; Chris’s friend is willing to help; Chris cares about her grades.
Negative: Chris is not good in math; Chris does not like the teacher’s style; Chris does not like her sister’s personality; Chris may not want to cheat.
 - Positive:* Ali’s family supports her wish to own a car; Ali can get a job to help pay for the car; Ali is good at track; Ali’s coach supports her; Ali could win a scholarship.
Negative: Ali cannot have a job needed to get a car and still be good at track.
 - Positive:* Tawny is a good musician; she may win a

scholarship and be in the university band.

Negative: Tawny is bored with playing music; Tawny’s parents and director want her to continue to play; Tawny doesn’t want to disappoint the adults in her life; Tawny doesn’t want to disappoint herself.

Activity #4: Reality Check

Student opinions will vary. Use the Resource Guide to help lead their discussions.

Activity #5: Timeline Goals

Individual student goals will vary.

Activity #6: Self-Esteem Matters

- You go shopping with a bunch of kids. . .
Low self-esteem: You feel embarrassed, don’t trust your own judgement and don’t buy the clothes you like.
High self-esteem: You tell your friends that when it comes to clothes, you know what you like. You joke about how you don’t tell them how to dress. Then you go ahead and buy the things you want.
- You are teamed up with two other students. . .
Low self-esteem: You do the project and put all three of your names on it.
High self-esteem: You call the missing student to find out why he or she did not show up and to reschedule if necessary. If the student does not show an interest or willingness to participate, you say you are going to go ahead with the project as planned, but that you will not give him or her credit for the project completion.
- You are at a restaurant with friends. . .
Low self-esteem: You scream at the waiter that this food is slop and you demand to see the manager. You say this loudly enough so that everyone else in the restaurant hears your complaint.
High self-esteem: You call the waiter over and explain your problem. You ask the waiter if he can replace your meal quickly.
- Your friend asks to borrow your favorite CD. . .
Low self-esteem: You complain about your friend to everyone at school. You finally take your anger and frustration out on your friend, accusing your friend of being irresponsible and uncaring.
High self-esteem: You tell your friend you need your CD back because you would like to listen to it. If your friend responds that the CD is ruined or missing, you ask your friend to please replace it.
- You work very hard on an essay for school. . .
Low self-esteem: You complain to everyone about how unfair the teacher is. You approach the teacher and say you refuse to accept such a grade and that if it is not changed you are going to take your complaint to the principal.
High self-esteem: You ask the teacher to go over how your grade was determined. You ask your teacher if there is a way for you to raise this grade or if there is some way you can do better next time.

Resource Guide

FACTS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

What is homelessness?

In the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, the federal government defines as "homeless" someone who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence or an individual whose primary residence is one of the following:

- a temporary place for people about to be institutionalized;
- any place not meant for regular sleeping accommodation by humans; or
- a supervised temporary shelter

This definition of homeless also extends to those people who are at serious risk of losing their housing because they are being evicted from a private housing unit or because they are discharged from institutions and have nowhere else to go.

How big is the problem?

Every night in the United States about 750,000 people experience homelessness. That's more than the entire population of our nation's capital, Washington, DC! Each year between 2.5 and 3.5 million people experience homelessness for some period of time (days to months).

Why are people homeless?

The following reasons are known as "systemic" or underlying factors which cause homelessness:

- There is not enough affordable housing. The federal definition of "affordable housing" is paying no more than 30% of a household's income for housing costs. However, there are about 5.4 million families who pay more than half of their income for rent.
- Many people's incomes are too low to pay for basic living expenses. Work is one of the chief sources of income for people without homes. Increases in work wages and public benefits have not kept pace with increases in living expenses over the last several decades. Therefore, it is increasingly difficult for low-income people to afford housing.
- There are many people who work every day of the week but do not make enough money to pay for rent and bills, let alone food, healthcare, work clothes, school supplies, and other necessities. A minimum wage worker would have to work 114 hours each week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at 30% of his or her income (which is what the government defines as "affordable housing").
- It is difficult for people to access the services that would allow them to live independently. People with lower incomes often rely on overburdened public systems to get the services they need. Some people just need help earning money to pay rent, but others may require treatment for mental illnesses or substance abuse illnesses. Many people need childcare so they can work or search for a job or legal assistance to help them escape from domestic violence. A lot of people would also benefit from free adult education or job training programs.

Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story is based on the life of Liz Murray, a young woman raised in New York City in poverty by loving, yet drug-addicted parents. By the age of 15, Liz's life was in a downward spiral. Her mother died of AIDS and she was forced to live on the streets. With incredible spirit and drive, Liz turned her life around by getting off the streets and going back to high school. After earning her diploma in just two years, Liz was accepted to Harvard University and won a *New York Times* scholarship for needy students. Liz left Harvard in the Spring of 2003. She continues to pursue her college education. She still believes that the road will rise to meet her.

Girls Inc. Girls' Bill of Rights

Girls have the right to be themselves and to resist gender stereotypes.

Girls have the right to express themselves with originality and enthusiasm.

Girls have the right to take risks, to strive freely, and to take pride in success.

Girls have the right to accept and appreciate their bodies.

Girls have the right to have confidence in themselves and to be safe in the world.

Girls have the right to prepare for interesting work and economic independence.

10 Ways to Empower a Girl and Boost Her Self-Esteem

1. Create opportunities for a girl to be a leader. Allow her to choose the activity, make the rules, and settle disputes.
2. Avoid rescuing a girl. Let her know that mistakes are okay.
3. Encourage a girl to organize a "speak out" where she and her friends can express views on a particular topic to teachers, the media, or local leaders.
4. Give a girl bragging lessons. Encourage her to be proud of her accomplishments—big and small.
5. Guide a girl as she learns to identify short- and long-term rewards that come with taking a specific risk.
6. Help a girl develop a healthy body image by teaching her that beauty comes in a ton of sizes, shapes, colors, and abilities.
7. Talk to a girl about income, expenses, and budgets. Teach her that financial planning is a part of everyday life.
8. Pay attention to the values and viewpoints a girl expresses.
9. Celebrate women's accomplishments throughout history.
10. Teach a girl to think critically. Tell her to look for strong, smart women who are not limited to traditional roles.

--Adapted from Strong, Smart & Bold: Empowering Girls for Life by Carla Fine (HarperCollins, 2001)

Planet Hope: How Two Sisters Make a Difference Together

In 1993, two sisters came together to create Planet Hope in Los Angeles. Kelly Stone and her sister, actress Sharon Stone, formed the organization after Kelly had a tragic accident that greatly affected their lives. Kelly lost her job, house and self-esteem. She then found hope through an invitation by Sharon to participate in a summer camp for homeless children. From that experience, Planet Hope was born. Today, the nonprofit actively changes the plight of homeless families by providing many programs, including Camp Planet Hope, Computer Hope Job Training Program, Kids for Kids, holiday programs, after-school tutoring, and monthly outings for homeless children and their families.

Books

33 Things Every Girl Should Know: Stories, Songs, Poems and Smart Talk by 33 Extraordinary Women

by Tonya Bolden (Crown, 2000)

Finding Our Way: The Teen Girls' Survival Guide by Linda Villarosa and Allison Abner (HarperPerennial, 1995)

Girl Power: Young Women Speak Out! Personal Writings From Teenage Girls by Hillary Carlip (Time Warner, 1995)

Grand Central Winter by Lee Stringer (Washington Square Press, 1999)

Gutsy Girls: Young Women Who Dare by Tina Schwager and Michele Schuerger (Free Spirit, 1999)

Homeless in America by Jim Baumohl (Oryx Press, 1996)

The Homeless: Opposing Viewpoint by Tamara L. Roleff ed. (Greenhaven Press, Inc. 1966)

How Jane Won: 55 Successful Women Share How They Grew From Ordinary Girls to Extraordinary Women by Sylvia Rimm (Crown, 2001)

I Have Arrived Before My Words: Autobiographical Writings of Homeless Women

by Deborah Pugh and Jeanie Tietjen (Charles River Press, 1997)

Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America by Jonathan Kozol (Fawcett Books, 1989)

Strong, Smart & Bold: Empowering Girls for Life by Carla Fine (HarperCollins, 2001)

The Way Home: Ending Homelessness in America National Alliance to End Homelessness, ed. (Henry N. Abrams, 1999)

Web Sites

Lifetime Television - www.lifetimetv.com

54 Ways You Can Help the Homeless - www.earthsystems.org/ways/

CablePositive - <http://www.cablepositive.org/>

Girls Inc. - <http://www.girlsinc.org/gc/>

Help USA - <http://www.helpusa.org/sizzle.htm>

Ms. Foundation - <http://www.ms.foundation.org/>

The National Alliance to End Homelessness - <http://www.naeh.org/>

National Coalition for the Homeless - <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/>

National Network for Youth - <http://www.nn4youth.org/>

US Department of Housing and Urban Development - www.hud.gov

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