



COTS
Social Media Toolkit

EXCEL

Useful Hashtags¹

Hashtags on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, denoted by the “#” symbol, are used to mark clickable keywords or topics in a message. For example, if someone clicks on a hashtag for #healthcare, it will open up a search stream that shows all posts/tweets related to the topic, giving organizations and individuals the opportunity to listen, find people talking about the topic, and insert themselves into conversations. Thus, using hashtags to mark different topics and keywords is essential to listening and engagement. On Twitter, the process of tagging other users is through mentions, denoted by the “@” symbol, which allow you to tag an organization or individual’s Twitter account to let them know you are talking about them. Mentions are important to use if you seek to engage in direct conversation with other users.²

#socialgood #cause #volunteer #4change #giveback #dogood #nonprofit #nfp #philanthropy #charity #foundation #poverty #homeless

#172vt

172 children are homeless in our community. That is 4 school busses full of children. It is enough children to fill 8 Vermont classrooms and 14 school basketball teams. *One homeless child is a tragedy, 172 is a crisis.* **Get online and raise awareness!** Let all of your friends and followers know that you think 172 homeless children in our community is unacceptable. Use the hashtag (#172vt) to join a community of people fighting against childhood homelessness. Tweet a storm! Take to Instagram! Flood Facebook! Do anything you can to get the word out about the #172vt campaign.

Pinterest

You can use Pinterest as a powerful storytelling tool. Do you remember thumbing through magazines and newspapers and being captivated by a photo of your favorite celebrity, a turn of phrase in bold letters, or an intriguing article? Do you remember grabbing a pair of scissors and cutting out squares and rectangles out of the pages? Pinterest is like that. Or in their own words: Pinterest is a tool for collecting and organizing things you love. Share things that you love about COTS.³

What to Share

- Images of you volunteering with a call-to-action for your followers.
- Inspiring quotes about advocacy and/or volunteering.
- Iconographs or charts that give useful information about homelessness.
- Powerful images paired with facts about children’s homelessness.

¹ Adapted from <http://rising.globalvoicesonline.org/blog/2012/05/28/featured-guide-social-advocacy-toolkit-for-activists-and-non-profits/>

² Adapted from <http://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/The-Art-of-Listening-Social-Media-Toolkit-for-Nonprofits.pdf>

³ Adapted from www.causevox.com

Examples:

ISSUE NO. 1

#BeInformedNYC
Informing Candidates and Voters about Poverty and Homelessness in NYC

— WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT —
homeless families?

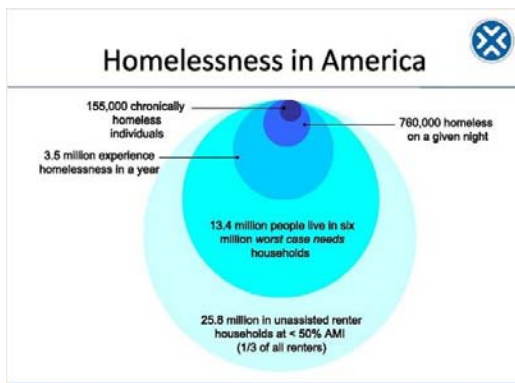
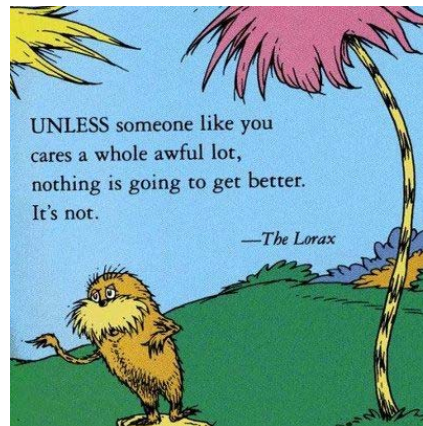
1 in 35 families with children in NYC lived in a homeless shelter in 2011.
This amounts to **over 70,000 family members**, enough to fill Madison Square Garden more than 3.5 times.

A typical homeless family ...

- Is headed by a **single mother** in her late 20s with two children.
- Stayed with family or friends for one year after the mother lost her job and then entered shelter.
- Is **not homeless** due to substance abuse or emotional health issues.

ICPH Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness
To learn more, log onto www.ICPHusa.org or email info@ICPHusa.org
www.ICPHusa.org

Sources: NYC Department of Homeless Services, CPN National Homeless Family Database, U.S. Census Bureau, National Black Leadership Initiative, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. For source information, visit www.ICPHusa.org.



29 WAYS TO BE A BETTER ACTIVIST

1. Start with one person
2. Act locally
3. **Be open to *do anything***
4. Listen to those that you want to help. They know what they want, you may not.
5. Update your opinions
6. Stick with truth and facts
7. **Get the big picture, pay attention to details**
8. Know your argument and your opponents
9. Define your terms and then open them up to debate
10. **Have a worldview bigger than yourself**
11. Look at things through a child's eyes
12. Listen to what's not being said
13. **EMPOWER YOURSELF**
14. Replenish yourself with experiences
15. Network with like-minded people
16. Collaborate
17. **Don't forget kindness and humility**
18. Remember that "different" doesn't mean "wrong"
19. You don't have to be right all the time
20. **Don't take yourself too seriously**
21. Enjoy doing little things, they add up to make a whole
22. Don't wait, do something now
23. **BE ASSERTIVE**
24. Do what you feel is right
25. Be authentic
26. Question authority
27. Do something, don't just talk about it
28. Believe in the future you can make
29. **Never give up**

ONE



Twitter

On Twitter, you have a 140-character limit per tweet, so make the most of every character. The use of well-known acronyms is acceptable and encouraged, such as "CA" for California or "POTUS" for President of the United States. If you want to link your followers to important websites or news articles, use a link shortening tool like bit.ly to shorten website addresses. Always tag and/or mention specific twitter handles. Feel free to @COTSVt! And remember, for this campaign, use #172vt to help end homelessness, one child at a time.

Sample Tweets

- Children without housing are sick 4 times more often than children who are housed #172vt
- In Oct. 2014 #172vt kids were homeless in Chittenden County. Wondering how you can help? Register for the Walk.
- Public opinion is a powerful force for change - educating the general public can bring solutions to ending homelessness <http://ow.ly/kYrD6> #172vt

- There are 1.8 million kids w/out homes in the USA. Stay informed & get involved in solutions w/ COTS e-Newsletters: <http://ow.ly/m92Kc>
- There are #172vt homeless children in Chittenden County. That is 14 high school basketball teams.
- There are #172vt homeless children in Chittenden County. That is 8 classrooms, based on the average classroom size in VT.
- There are 4x as many homeless kids in Chittenden County as there are Dunkin Donuts in the entire state of VT. #172vt
- I stand for community. I walk for #172vt.
- 1 child waking up homeless is unacceptable. #172vt is a crisis. Join me at the COTS Walk. You have #172vt reasons.
- Kids who grow up on the streets are in real danger and so is the society that allows them to do so.

Instagram

Instagram is the largest mobile social network in the United States. Users are generally younger on Instagram than other social media platforms so this is a really great way to engage middle and high school students. Post photos of you volunteering, or any of our Pinterest suggestions could easily translate into Instagram! Be sure to tag all of your photos with #172vt. Upload a selfless selfie to your Instagram account and use the hashtags #UNselfie and #172vt to let the world know that you support COTS!

#UNselfie

The Unselfie Movement is spreading across the nation! Upload a selfless selfie to your Instagram account and use the hashtags #UNselfie and #172vt to let the world know that you support @COTSVt!

Examples:



#Purple4COTS

Break out your best purple gear or COTS swag! Help raise awareness about the homeless children in our community by wearing PURPLE for COTS. Take a picture, and then post your photos on Instagram with the hashtag #purple4cots!

Examples:



Facebook

You can use all of the **messaging and hashtags mentioned above** when you are advocating on Facebook. Share with your friends when you are going to an event like the Walk. You can even **make an event** to invite all of your friends to join you in fighting homelessness! If you have a powerful message to post, you might consider **tagging your local politician** in your post (most have public pages.) For daily articles and updates, **like and follow The Committee on Temporary Shelter**. We'll give you tons of inspiring stories and useful information to share!

If any of your friends or family would like to get involved, direct them to our website www.cotsonline.org. We are always looking for volunteers, donors, and folks who are dedicated to ending homelessness in Vermont. If anyone would like to donate to the cause, let them know:

- **\$10** pays for a credit report for low-income families or individuals looking for an apartment
- **\$18** covers a night of emergency shelter for an adult at the COTS Waystation.
- **\$25** pays for groceries needed to prepare a hot noontime meal at the COTS Daystation- - the only daytime drop in shelter for the homeless.
- **\$50** pays for new backpacks and school supplies for two children in our family shelter.
- **\$180** provides 10 nights of safe and decent shelter for a homeless veteran at the COTS Waystation.
- **\$250** can provide emergency, one-time assistance to help a family avert homelessness by paying a medical bill.
- **\$500** can go toward a car repair bill so an employed individual can continue driving to work and avert the pain of deciding whether to pay for rent or pay for the car repair.
- **\$750** can provide a security deposit for an individual moving into a new apartment
- **\$1,000** covers more than two months of decent, affordable housing for an elderly person at the COTS Wilson Hotel.
- **\$1,500** pays the back rent for two months to help a family facing eviction stay in their apartment

These numbers are also great for sharing on your social media platforms. Happy Posting!