

Talking to children about street homelessness

Goal

Help children to develop compassion and empathy by recognizing similarities and differences and finding practical ways to help.



Renewing lives. Reclaiming hope.

What we did in class

- Talked about our homes, and what we like about them, and how homeless people on the streets want the same things we do—safety, personal space, and a comfortable place to sleep.
- Discussed how many people are homeless, but most are homeless for a short time and live in shelters not on the street.
- Those homeless people we see on the streets have many blocks keeping them from being healthy, finding a home, and getting a job.
- New York City is special in its help for those kinds of people as the only place where the city has to provide those who need it a bed.
- Just like if someone had a broken leg, we wouldn't expect them to walk without crutches, these homeless people need help from others, and this help is provided by people who know about their needs.
- We can help them in tangible ways with the help of a grown up, by giving useful items and healthy snacks to those who ask for it.
- We assembled sample kits together for the students to take home .
- When we talk about the people we see on the streets, we can be careful with our words to call them “homeless man” or “homeless woman”, instead of “the homeless,” to show them dignity as people.

Some of the things we include in the bags are:

fruit juice or water
healthy snacks
socks
hand wipes
toothpaste

toothbrush
tissues
knit cap
deodorant
soap

chapstick
sunscreen
Pen and paper
a note of encouragement
unused hotel toiletries

What you can do at home

Children appreciate an opportunity to discuss how they think about homeless New Yorkers in their environment, and to direct their to help in a meaningful way. You can create similar kits at home and share them with those you meet.

To download the pocket guide visit our Toolkit to Help at blog.projectrenewal.org.