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ACTIVITY BOOKLET

ONE NIGHT WITHOUT A HOME

STEP INTO THEIR SHOES: EXPERIENCE
THE NIGHT WITHOUT A HOME

NOVEMBER 23RD, 2024
LEHIGHCHURCHES.ORG/HHAWEEK

Thank you for joining us for One Night Without A Home! As you experience the challenges faced by those without shelter, engage in these thought-provoking activities designed to deepen your understanding and empathy.

ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

- Truth or False
- How Vulnerable Are You?
- Choose It or Lose It
- Poverty Quiz
- Play Spent (Interactive Game)
- Real Life Experiences
- Other Activities

HOMELESS
PLEASE HELP



These activities are designed to help groups and individuals think through homelessness and its effects. Remembering that no two cases are alike and everyone is one life-altering event away from being without a home.

ACTIVITY #1 The TRUTH or NOT* About Homelessness in the Lehigh Valley

Circle True or False for each statement below.

1. There are individuals who don't have a home in the Allentown.
True / False
2. There are individuals who choose not to have a home.
True / False
3. All individuals without a home sleep on the street.
True / False
4. There are children in Bethlehem who don't have a home.
True / False
5. Individuals without homes are lazy and don't work.
True / False
6. It would be cool to have no home because you can go anywhere and do anything you want.
True / False
7. All individuals who don't have a home are addicted to drugs or alcohol.
True / False
8. Homelessness only happens in big cities.
True / False
9. If we had more homes there would be no homelessness.
True / False
10. There is nothing we can do about homelessness.
True / False

**answers on page 8*

ACTIVITY #2 How Vulnerable Are You?

The following survey illustrates some of the factors that can lead to homelessness. When several of these exist, and there isn't strong family support, people are at risk of becoming homeless. Consider the following and choose (3) to explain what you would do if this was to happen to you:

- Involved in a flood, fire, tornado, or other natural disaster
- Work in an area of the job market where your job might become obsolete
- Suffer a long-term illness or accident without proper health benefits or other compensations
- If there is a down turn in the economy, or change in your local economy and it causes you or your family to lose a job(s)
- You live in a household with only one full time wage earner
- Behind in monthly bills, have high credit card debt, or have a home in foreclosure
- Housing costs in your area increasing faster than wages are increasing
- Someone in your family struggles with alcohol, drug, or other addictions
- Have been in any form of domestic violence or abuse in your family
- Money in savings/life insurance to cover living expenses should your spouse die unexpectedly

ACTIVITY #3 Choose it or Lose it

Imagine that you and your family were just told that you have 10 minutes to vacate your home. What are the reasons you would have to leave? You can only take whatever fits into a backpack. What things would you take with you? What things would you find most difficult to leave behind?

Things to discuss...

- Why did you choose the items you took and left behind?
- How did it feel to make your choices?
- How will you do without the things that you left behind?
- Where will you get the things you need but no longer have?

ACTIVITY #4 Poverty Quiz

1. Who is poor in America: Are there more men or women living in poverty?
2. True or False? Nearly one in five children in the U.S. lives in poverty.
3. Each month Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which provides households a monthly stipend to purchase groceries, helps feed how many people?
 - a. 40 million
 - b. 4 million
 - c. 400,000
4. Which of the following reasons is not a reason why people utilize payday lending programs?
 - a. Underemployment
 - b. Stagnating wages
 - c. Low-interest rates
 - d. Rising cost of living
5. The Official Poverty Rate for 2021 was 12.8%. What is Allentown's poverty rate?
6. Which state has the highest poverty rate?
 - a. Texas
 - b. Mississippi
 - c. West Virginia
7. Which of the following activities addresses a root cause of poverty?
 - a. Volunteering at a homeless shelter
 - b. Advocating for the rights of workers
 - c. Donating to a food pantry
8. Which age group has the highest poverty rate in the United States?
 - a. Adults
 - b. Children
 - c. Elderly
9. Are rates of homelessness higher in urban or rural settings?
10. What is the cause of increased homelessness in America?
 - a. Financial cut backs in safety net programs
 - b. Student loan borrowing
 - c. Lack of affordable housing

*answers on page 9

ACTIVITY #5 Play SPENT

Play SPENT: www.playspent.org *PlaySpent, designed to help people understand the challenges and trade-offs faced by low- income people with insecure employment. The “game” begins when you’ve been unemployed, have only \$1,000 left in your bank account, and need to get a low wage job.*

- 1.How long did it take you to run out of money?
- 2.What was the hardest choice you had to make?
- 3.What surprised you?
- 4.How much did healthcare impact your monthly budget?
- 5.If you could only choose between one of the following, which would you select?
 - a.A strong support system
 - b.A better paying job that required working longer hours
 - c.Additional social services programs to utilize
- 6.What was the reason for your choice?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES: Real Life Experience

In this activity, you are given a scenario and need to come up with ideas on how you'd manage to find housing based on your own circumstances. Below are some true-life scenarios:

1). We are a family of a mother, father, and two children, ages 6 and 8. Recently, we lost our home due to flooding and our landlord did not renew our lease. We stayed with friends for a few weeks, but now we need to find a more permanent place to live. Mom works part-time at a grocery store, earning \$300 a week, while Dad is unemployed after being laid off from his construction job. He used to make \$900 a month, but now we're living on Mom's income and struggling to cover basic expenses. We have \$400 saved up and are unsure about where to start looking for housing. We don't have family nearby who can help us.

2). We are a single mother with two children, ages 4 and 10. After losing my job as a waitress, my income has dropped to \$500 a month from a government assistance program. My landlord has given me a month to find new housing since I can no longer pay rent. I have no family nearby and limited savings. I'm feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about my options.

3). We are a family of four—mom, dad, and two teenagers, ages 15 and 17. After Dad was injured at work and is currently on disability, our income has dropped to \$1,200 a month. We have lived in our apartment for several years, but the rent has increased, and we can no longer afford it. We are looking for a new place, but our credit score is low, which makes it hard to find a landlord willing to rent to us.

4). I am a 30-year-old single father with a 5-year-old daughter. I recently moved to a new city for a job opportunity, but the job fell through, and I'm now unemployed. My savings are running low, and I'm currently staying in a shelter. I have no connections in the area and am struggling to find stable housing.

5). We are a blended family of six—two parents and four children, ages 3, 6, 9, and 12. After losing our home due to a fire, we are staying with relatives temporarily. Both parents work part-time jobs, bringing in a total of \$1,200 a month. We're looking for a new place, but we're concerned about how we'll manage the cost of rent and utilities.

6). I am a 32-year-old single mother of two children, ages 5 and 8. After enduring years of emotional and physical abuse from my partner, I finally found the courage to leave. We are currently staying in a local shelter for survivors of domestic violence. I have no income at the moment since I was a stay-at-home mom, and I need to find housing and a job quickly to provide stability for my children.

What Causes Homelessness: The purpose of this activity is to help participants remove some of our own stereotypes about people who don't have a home, by gaining an understanding of the reasons why some people might not have a home.

This is an open discussion and there are no right or wrong answers.

Additional First Impressions Think about a very small home you have seen. What words do you think about when you visualize this?

Think about a homeless person you have seen either in photos or in real life. What words do you think of when visualizing this person?

What is a stereotype?* What is a stereotype that you may have personally experienced? How did that make you feel? Many stereotypes are the result of a lack of accurate information.

*Essential meaning from Merriam-Webster - to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same // *It's not fair to stereotype a whole group of people based on one person you don't like.*

***ANSWERS, Activity #1**

1. True

It is estimated that 1,426 people are experiencing homelessness in Allentown today.

2. True

For various reasons, some people choose to live outside. These people need supports in order to survive - warming shelters, soup kitchens and medical care.

3. False

People without a home can be temporarily staying with friends, relatives or sleeping in shelters.

4. True

The age at which people are at the highest risk of entering a homeless shelter in the United States is infancy.

5. False

Over 44% of homeless people are employed.

6. False

Everything that housed people can do just by walking into another room of their house usually requires a person experiencing homelessness to travel several miles.

7. False

Poverty and homelessness seeps into every aspect of life and can begin with just an unfortunate event: reduction in work hours; illness; fire; domestic violence.

8. False

In no state, metropolitan area or county can a full-time, minimum wage worker afford a modest two bedroom apartment.

9. False

The shortage of affordable housing is contributing to the homelessness situation, not lack of housing.

10. False

There are many ways we can help those who are homeless: additional mental health services; advocating for living wages; building affordable housing; to name just a few.

*ANSWERS, Activity #4

1. Women. 16.3% of women live in poverty while only 13.8% of men do. Although women are making huge strides in our country, they are still greatly impacted by poverty. In fact, 26.6% of single moms live in poverty—that's more than one in every four single moms.
2. True! In 2016, 15.3 million kids were living in poverty out of the 72 million children in the United States. Children of color are even more likely to live in poverty. The poverty rate for Hispanic children is 1 out of 4. While for Black and Native American children, it is around 1 out of 3.
3. 40 million people, who are mostly children, seniors and people with disabilities, rely on SNAP to put food on their tables. This astounding number is in part due to food prices rising much faster than wages.
4. Low-interest rates. Payday lending programs involve using a worker's paycheck as collateral for short-term, high-interest loans. Stagnating wages, underemployment, and rising costs of living have combined to create heavy financial stress for many in the U.S., especially those living in and near poverty.
5. 27.3% of Allentown residents live below the poverty line. That is more than 111% higher than the Pennsylvania average.
6. Mississippi. In 2021, Mississippi had a staggering 20.3% poverty rate, with a statewide median household income of \$46,511. The percent of the population aged 65 years and over that lives below the poverty line is 12.8%, tied with Louisiana for the highest level for this age group.
7. Advocating for the rights of workers, including livable wages, is one way we can help address the root causes of poverty. This is one way of changing systems and structures that prevent opportunities for people to get out of poverty. Such an approach goes beyond acts of charity—e.g., donating food or money—to respond to the immediate needs of families in poverty.
8. Children are our most vulnerable. In 2016, 15.3 million kids lived in poverty out of 72 million children in the United States. Childhood poverty can have significant consequences for children's development and life chances. Not only are they more likely to be poor as adults, growing up in poverty can be harmful to children's cognitive development, ability to succeed in school, and to their health.
9. Rural. The odds of being poor are between 1.2 to 2.3-times higher for people in non-metropolitan areas than in metropolitan areas. People who are homeless people in rural areas are more likely to be white, female, married, currently working, homeless for the first time, and homeless for a shorter period of time.
10. Two trends are largely responsible for the rise in homelessness over the past 20-25 years: a growing shortage of affordable rental housing and a simultaneous increase in poverty. Persons living in poverty are most at risk of becoming homeless, and demographic groups who are more likely to experience poverty are also more likely to experience homelessness.



THANK YOU!

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