



## Resources for Teachers

Bridges is fortunate to have many students of all ages support Bridges in the classroom. While students make brown bag lunches, package toiletry kits or help in other ways, there is an opportunity to learn more about people who are homeless and the causes of homelessness. The students are often eager to learn more about the issues of homelessness and understanding the difference their contribution will make to a homeless friend. Below are some tools that will help you capitalize on that teachable moment and hopefully create a dialog with your students before, during, and after a Bridges activity.

[These are just guidelines and suggestions. Please pre-view every book, film and activity to be sure that it is appropriate for your students.](#)

## General Information

<http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/reauthorization.pdf>

The McKinney-Vento Act was passed by Congress in January 2002. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act includes a definition of who is considered homeless for the purposes of this subtitle of the Act, and therefore, eligible for the rights and protections it provides.<sup>1</sup>

The below website “The McKinney-Vento Act at a Glance” is a good introduction to homelessness and a good civics lesson too.

[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/86909/top\\_ten\\_gifts\\_for\\_homeless\\_people.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/86909/top_ten_gifts_for_homeless_people.html)

An article about what homeless people need. It’s short and to the point.

[http://www.education.com/magazine/article/How\\_Talk\\_Your\\_Kids\\_About/](http://www.education.com/magazine/article/How_Talk_Your_Kids_About/)

This article includes the “do’s” and “don’ts” of talking to your child about homelessness. Although it is directed to parents, teachers may also find it useful.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/reauthorization.pdf>

[http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/638719/how\\_to\\_teach\\_kids\\_about\\_homeless\\_people.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/638719/how_to_teach_kids_about_homeless_people.html) This article is also directed to parents, but has a few good points for teachers too.

## For the classroom

[http://www.isbe.state.il.us/homeless/pdf/Lesson\\_Plan\\_Links.pdf](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/homeless/pdf/Lesson_Plan_Links.pdf)

This website from the Illinois State Board of Education has a host of lesson plans, books and other resources for children in Grades K-12. The site compiles resources from other states as well. A lot of information here and worth checking out.

<http://homelessed.net/schools/booklist.htm> This is a list that the Illinois Board of Education found to be helpful in providing professional development and awareness, for educators and students. It contains resources, curriculum and books appropriate for all ages.

<http://www.nomoreturningaway.org> Although this is a faith based initiative, it may be appropriate for public institutions as well. Under the "Activities" section you will find a list of movies, lessons, activities and some good references.

## Children's Books on Homelessness

*A Shelter in our Car*, by Monica Gunning (2004) K-Gr. 3.

The kids at school call her Junk Car Zettie. After Papa died in Jamaica, Zettie and Mama came to America, where they now live in the city in the backseat of their car, while Mama tries to go to school and also earn money to pay rent for a room. This picture-book describes the harsh realities of being homeless, scavenging for food, washing in the park rest room, being harassed by police. At the end of the book, the author asks kids to get involved in helping the homeless.

*Fly Away Home.*, by E. Bunting (1991) New York: Clarion. Picture book, lower elementary level. A homeless father and his son live at an airport and have learned how to move around so as not to be noticed by airport security. The father has a weekend job as a janitor in an office in the city, which does not pay enough to afford them a place of their own to live. They become friends with other homeless people living at the airport and remain hopeful the father will find more work and have a place to live.

*Rosie the Shopping Cart Lady*, by C. Martin, (1996). Hohm Press. Picture book, elementary level. The author introduces readers to Rosie, a homeless woman who lives on the streets and pushes a shopping cart through her town. Rosie meets friendly people who offer her a place to sit, a hotdog to eat, friendly conversations, and a young boy who takes care of her cart when she is taken to the hospital. She also encounters young boys who throw rocks at her cart and adults who stare when she falls. The text could be used to discuss different responses when encountering homeless people.

*Homelessness: Can we Solve the Problem?*, by L. Rozakis, (1995) Twenty-First Century Books, .Picture book, upper elementary level. The author refutes stereotypes about homeless people, describes how widespread the problem is, who the homeless are (children, intact families, single-parent families, veterans, and the mentally ill), and the greater likelihood homeless people will be victims rather than perpetrators of crimes. The text also explains the many different causes for homelessness including joblessness, rising housing costs, divorce, substance abuse, mental illness, natural disasters, war, and declining government aid for the poor. Helpful explanations of problems that homeless people face in staying healthy and safe, finding shelter and schooling, and eventually escaping homelessness assist readers in developing empathy for homeless people. Finally, the author encourages readers to become involved in various activities to move toward ending homelessness.

*The Lady in the Box*, by Ann McGovern (Grades 2 – 5)\ Grade 2-5. A modern morality tale that never strays too far from the stark reality of homelessness while portraying the generosity and concern of two children for a stranger. Ben's story tells how he and his sister try to help the "lady in the box" who keeps her "home" over the heating grate outside the Circle Deli. Worried, they take her gifts of food and warm clothing and eventually find out that her name is Dorrie. When the owner of the Circle Deli tries to force the woman to move, the children's mother convinces him to let her stay. The family volunteers at the soup kitchen, where they see Dorrie and she smiles and says hello. It's a nice moment as the boy realizes that he has made a difference in someone else's life.

*Home is Where We Live: Life at a Shelter Through A Young Girl's Eyes* , Kindergarten-Grade 3. Life in the Cornerstone Community Outreach Center, a shelter for women and children in Chicago, is presented through the eyes of a young girl who has just arrived. Through very simple language; short, declarative sentences; and a montage of photographs presented in quasi-collage format, she offers her impressions of shelter life. The book seeks to demystify and de-stigmatize the experience, and casts as positive a light as possible on the residents. The black-and-white photographs display a diverse population, and many of them show strong emotions as well. For the most part they correspond well to the brief text on each page. The book humanizes and individualizes an aspect of life about which children have many questions and fears and about which there is little appropriate information available.

*Changing Places: A Kids View of Shelter Living*, by Judy Wallace. The voices of eight homeless children, ages 6-13, are captured with stunning illustrations that give you a poignant look at shelter life. Here's the voice of Roberto: "Guess what! Mama and I stopped at this Mexican restaurant -- she talked the owner into a job! She's gonna cook enchiladas for pay -- ALL RIGHT, MAMA!" The book acquaints children with the issues of homelessness and poverty. It shows, too, how similar people's needs, likes and dislikes are, no matter what the circumstances.

*A Kid's Guide to Hunger & Homelessness: How to Take Action*, by Cathryn Berger Kaye. Kids explore what others in the world (including young people) have done and are doing to address the issues, find out what their community needs, and develop a service project. The workbook includes facts, quotations, real-life examples, write-on pages, resources, a note to adults--and a lot of inspiration to get out there and make a difference in the world.

*No Place to Be: Voices of Homeless Children.*, Berck, J. (1992). Houghton Mifflin. Upper elementary/middle school level. The author interviewed more than thirty children who were living in or had recently moved from welfare hotels or shelters for homeless families in New York City. Through quotes and poems from the thirty children, the author reveals their experiences and feelings about being deprived of school, space, privacy, control over their lives, good nutrition, health care, and safety. The book explains why people become homeless, different types of shelters, the difficulties of getting an education while being homeless, health problems often resulting from shelter living, the stress of homelessness, and advice from the thirty children for helping homeless people.

The Institute for Children and Poverty offers a number of books on homelessness for preschoolers and very young children, and accompanying activity books, some of which can be downloaded for free.

## **Movies**

Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0338109/>

Samaritan: The Mitch Snyder Story  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091888/>

The Children of Times Square  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090829/>

The Saint of Fort Washington  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108026/>

Resurrecting the Champ  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0416185/>

God Bless the Child  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095227/>

The Christmas Choir  
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1285239/>

Home by Christmas

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0893404/>

Stone Pillow

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090080/>

Also see movies posted at <http://www.nomoreturningaway.org>

## Music

*Give US Your Poor* by Bruce Springsteen, Madeleine Peyroux, Pete Seeger, Dan Zanes, and Jon Bon Jovi (Audio CD - 2007) –contains 17 exclusive new tracks by Bruce Springsteen & Pete Seeger, Jon Bon Jovi, Madeleine Peyroux, Bonnie Raitt, and other stars, many in collaboration with currently or formerly homeless musicians, on benefit CD to fight homelessness. Listening to this while making lunches for Bridges will be inspirational.

## Make a Difference – Volunteer with Bridges

Make a difference without leaving your school, house of worship or organizational home. Girl and Boy Scout troops and schools are ideally suited to our group efforts. A 5 minute video of Bridges in action is available at <http://www.bridgesoutreach.org/video.php> or by request to [volunteerbridges@gmail.com](mailto:volunteerbridges@gmail.com).

- Organize a drive. Collecting a specific item needed such as jeans, coats and toiletries is easy and very helpful.
- Make and deliver any number of bagged lunches on a Friday (instructions on the website). Remember to sign up on the website ([www.bridgesoutreach.org](http://www.bridgesoutreach.org))
- Make brown bag breakfasts and deliver any Tuesday or Friday (instructions on the website). Remember to sign up on the website ([www.bridgesoutreach.org](http://www.bridgesoutreach.org))
- Make toiletry kits (instructions on the website).
- Each month arrange for a different grade to learn about homeless neighbors to raise homelessness awareness; follow up by making lunches for Bridges to distribute; or choose one special day of service for homelessness awareness education.
- Hand out paper lunch bags with a list of ingredients for a healthy bagged lunch and have them returned filled and ready to go. Deliver to Bridges on Fridays.
- Encourage messages of compassion from our youngest volunteers by asking them to decorate lunch bags or make valentines or other seasonal greeting cards.

- Have a Sock Hop. At your next school dance ask everyone to contribute a pair of new socks or cut out paper socks to hang on a wall with the donor's name and collect \$1 for each paper sock.
- Make a clothesline out of string and hang paper blue jeans. Have everyone take a "pair" home with them to remind them to look in their closet for jeans they no longer wear.
- Collect new backpacks and school supplies for children in shelters.
- Collect old backpacks and duffle bags for friends on the street.
- High school students with adult supervision may sign-up for a Bridges Run to participate in our street outreach. Sign-up at [www.bridgesoutreach.org](http://www.bridgesoutreach.org).
- Let us know your great ideas.

## **Thank you**

As a thank you, you may download a certificate of appreciation from Bridges for your students at [www.bridgesoutreach.org/forms](http://www.bridgesoutreach.org/forms). To order certificates, contact: [volunteerbridges@gmail.com](mailto:volunteerbridges@gmail.com).

We would be happy to post comments and photos with your permission. Please send to [volunteerbridges@gmail.com](mailto:volunteerbridges@gmail.com).

Thank you for your support. We look forward to hearing from you and your classroom experience volunteering for Bridges.