

Affordable
Housing

Illness



Child Care

Employment

Lunches for the Light House

**Weekly activities and topics
for participants to
become more educated and
more empathetic
about homelessness in
Anne Arundel County
and in the entire U.S.**

Summer Mission Program 2016

St. Margaret's Church
1601 Pleasant Plains Rd
Annapolis, MD 21409
www.st-margarets.org

A Note from Jane

According to the Maryland State Department of Education statistics for the 2015-16 school year, one third of all students in the Anne Arundel County Schools system participate in its Free and Reduced-Priced meal program, known as F.A.R.M. The children receive breakfast and lunch at their local school while the schools are in session.

But what happens when they are on summer break and do not have access to their local school? They go hungry or turn to the local social services department for food. During the summer months, the Light House shelter in Annapolis is overwhelmed with families arriving at their doorstep looking for help.

St. Margaret's Church is once again honored to be a primary, regular provider of bagged lunches in the summer as a partner parish with the Light House. We see wonderful potential in making this effort a family project where participants are helping other families in need while engaging in weekly activities that foster a better understanding of the complexities of homelessness. The booklet has been designed for all ages.

Let us know how your family is progressing with these activities and discussions, and look for links to study issues even further every Monday on our Facebook public page.

-The Rev. Jane Milliken Hague

Instructions for Participating

*Sign up for whatever Monday(s) you wish to participate using our automated sign-up form found linked on our website homepage.

Note: 10 bagged lunches are required for each slot in which you sign up.

*Pack a lunch that consists of: a sandwich, a healthy snack (like a granola bar, graham crackers, etc.), a piece of fruit (apple, orange, banana, pear, etc.) or fruit cup, and a bottled water.

If you wish to bring in your donations on Sunday:

*pack your sandwiches separately and place them in the large refrigerator in the parish hall in the notated bin.

*place the rest of the items (that don't need to be cooled) together in a bag and place in the designated bin in the parish hall kitchen.

All must be in the proper place by Mondays at 9 a.m.

If you wish to transport your donations directly to the Light House, the address is:

10 Hudson Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Phone: 410-349-5056

Questions? Contact Coordinator Beth Arruda at 252-671-0718 or maggiemarruda@gmail.com.

Week 1 - What does homeless mean to you?

Overview

We will begin this activity by writing down how you view the homeless now. At the end of this program, we will ask that you compare what you wrote here with what you have learned over the summer.

Activity

Draw an image (or write down words) that come to mind when you hear the word "homeless."

Follow-up

Discuss the similarities and differences between your drawings/descriptions.

How many thought of just men?

How many thought of children?

How many thought of ragged clothes?

How many thought of people being dirty/clean?

Final Thought

People without homes come in all ages, sizes, and backgrounds. The U.S. government describes homelessness as someone whose usual nighttime residence is in a public or private emergency shelter, a place without utilities or an area not designed for shelter.

Week 2 - Illustrating Possessions

Overview

We have many possessions which some without homes can only dream about. What are some we can actually live without? What are some we couldn't have without a home?

Activity

Draw images of your most valued possessions and people in your life, then notate what homeless families might not be able to carry around. Try to put all you chose in one bag.

Follow-up

Think about the value of having a family, clothing, food, privacy, pets, personal belongings, etc. How would that work if you didn't have your home?

Final Thought

Some without a place to live have to choose which possessions they want to keep and figure out how to pack them up to take with them from shelter to shelter. How would you feel if you had to choose between which of your treasured possessions you could keep and which you had to leave behind?

Week 3 - Causes of Homelessness

Overview

One of the common misunderstandings about being without a home is that for each person, there is one thing that goes wrong that causes them to lose their home. While this may be true for a few, the majority cite many contributing factors.

Activity

Write down some reasons why people might lose their home and connect them to the circle.



Follow-up

How many of your words were about jobs? How many words about how they grew up? How many words about health? Were there other reasons you could come up with?

Final Thought

Many factors affect why people might become homeless, including affordable housing, low wages, high housing costs, lack of educational opportunities, health care costs, family difficulty, etc.

Week 4 - Different Shelters

Overview

In Anne Arundel County, there are many without shelter who live in hotels, places that have no kitchens or cooking facilities and some that don't even have microwaves. By the time a family has no option but a hotel, they've lost practically everything. Lucky ones have an electric frying pan, camp stove or burner. Imagine trying to cook a meal for your family when you're all in one room that houses only beds, maybe a table and chair, and a bathroom. Many hotels don't offer refrigerators and there are some hotels that don't have water that you can drink.

Activity

Imagine what it takes to feed your family with such limited cooking options. Plan three meals for a family of four that you could create in such a hotel room.

Follow-up

How hard was it to come up with meals, much less meals that are healthy and inexpensive? Did you include the cost for paper plates, napkins, silverware which you probably could not have taken with you from home?

Final Thought

Our summer lunches for the Light House include ready-made sandwiches and other items that are easy to enjoy (on the healthy side) for those who might not have easy ways to prepare a meal. Our food drive coordinators also keep that fact in mind when giving suggestions for donations.

Week 5 - Transportation: Getting to Work

Overview

Owning a car is very expensive. You not only have to purchase the vehicle but you have to pay for its maintenance, gas, insurance, and registration fees. In our area, current transportation and land use policies have been designed to support and encourage car travel. There are limited options on how to get to a work location. Bus lines are available in the City of Annapolis, but limited elsewhere. And buses don't run 24 hours (if you have a night job).

Activity

Draw a picture (or make a collage using a magazine) of the different types of transportation that can be used to get to work. Talk to your parents about how the buses work in your area, how long it takes to ride a bike somewhere and how you would feel if you had to walk miles in the summer heat to get to work.

Follow-up

Are roads safe enough to ride a bike or scooter or even walk to work? Are many low-income residents able to afford driving lessons?

Final Thought

We are hopeful that our county will eventually develop land use plans that reduce the need for mass transit and consider alternatives to traditional public transportation such as business vans, ride sharing, and new public taxi systems like Uber.

Week 6 - Childcare Costs & Advantages

Overview

According to the Maryland Family Network, the number one reason parents could not find childcare in order to work was cost, double the second rated reason. The most important thing to parents wanting childcare was the location, being close to home or place of work. Families with limited income can receive subsidies for childcare payments, but one in four family care and center providers in our state do not accept subsidy payments. Working a minimum wage job often does not cover the cost of childcare, particularly with multiple children.

Activity

List what skills younger children learn in quality preschool settings. What are some concepts they would be taught that would prepare them to enter Kindergarten in public school ready to learn?

Follow-up

List skills that would put them behind other students if they didn't know.

Final Thought

Family homelessness cannot only strain a community's resources but can also deny children the experiences they need for healthy development and a solid academic future.

Week 7 - Affordable Housing & Jobs

Overview:

Most county property planning is reserved for single-family homes. Cheaper multi-family housing (apartments, townhomes) is limited and hard to find. Though the government can provide some help, most have to wait 2 to 5 years to live in a place where they can afford, even if they have jobs. A family with one full-time worker earning minimum wage cannot afford the local fair-market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in our county. A single adult living in the county needs to earn more than \$12 per hour to make a subsistence income.

Activity:

Find a home for sale in the county (or use your own current mortgage total). Use your own family's bills to maintain the home. Now using a minimum wage salary or even a little above for a full-time, 40-hour work week, create a family budget based on your proposed salary.

Monthly Budget

Mortgage Total:

Health/Medical:

Childcare:

Water Bill:

Grocery Bills:

Computer/Cell:

Electricity Bill:

Clothes:

Other:

Final Thought:

The homeless are not all jobless -- some just can't afford housing here. The numbers of what is required when you live in a home are too overwhelming for those in lower paying jobs.

Week 8 - Children and Homelessness

Overview:

Sometimes we don't remember that some of the homeless are children. How would it feel not to have your bedroom or a place to play or do homework? Or if you are a child in emergency housing, you could also be going to different schools. Do you think that would be easy to change schools during the school year? Some kids have to get up really early to take a taxi or city bus to get to their home school once they've moved. Currently, there are no programs in this area for homeless unaccompanied youth.

Activity: How would you feel?

Describe your feelings to a loved one--

What if you looked different than the kids at your new school?

What if nobody wanted to be your friend?

How would you feel if you had to go to school dirty because you had nowhere to take a shower or hungry because you had no food to eat?

Write a pretend letter to a friend talking about these struggles.

Final Thought: Twenty-one percent of children in our county are considered low-income and eight percent (nearly 10,000) are living below the poverty level. They are in danger of becoming chronically under or unemployed as adults failing to gain the skills employers require.

Week 9 - Health Care Costs

Overview:

Even with the Affordable Care Act that gave those in poverty access to some health care, 35% of those without a job in AA County were without health insurance. And even those with insurance often find it hard to pay premiums and deductibles for doctor's visits and even medicine.

Activity:

Discuss with your family about the importance of going to the doctor and medicine. Talk about things that illnesses that might cause you to need to take medicine your entire life. Do you have an elderly neighbor or family member that takes medicine every day? If so, ask them how much their medicine costs. Ask them about insurance and how that often lowers the costs of medication. Take your family budget from week 7. What if you needed to pay for medicine every month? Would you be able to pay for that medicine? Would you have to take money from other areas to pay for it? What areas would you take from?

Follow-up:

Are you able to go to the doctor each time you are sick? Can you think of an illness where it would be dangerous to put off a doctor's visit because of money?

Final Thought:

Living in poverty increases your chances of acquiring the leading causes of death in Anne Arundel County: smoking, high blood pressure, obesity, poor diet, and excess alcohol consumption. Healthy food is more expensive to buy, and cigarettes and alcohol are easier to obtain in low income neighborhoods. When these factors merge together with stress and lack of jobs, physical health deteriorates rapidly. Then doctor visits and medicine are hard to obtain.

Week 10 - Mental Health & Homelessness

Overview:

There is a rise in mental health issues among young children and adolescents. For children of poverty, that rate increases. Reasons include longer working hours of parents (minimum wage and two or three jobs). There is only one inpatient mental health facility with only 14 beds in our county if a child needs hospitalization. Others try and find private options that are expensive. When some children become young adults with mental illness, they are told to leave their homes with no where to go which can lead to a life in and out of jail.

Activity:

Discuss how those with mental illness are often outcasts in today's society. Fold a piece of paper in half. Draw the same person in both halves. On the left hand side add on a physical ailment (bloody knee, runny nose, bandage on a head etc). On the other side don't add anything. Explain to your child that both people are sick or hurting. Sometimes we can see people's sicknesses and sometimes they are on the inside. Both of these people need healing.

Follow-up:

Sometimes when we can't see someone's sickness we can't understand why they can't keep their job or have a hard time remembering to take their medicine or pay their bills. Sometimes this "inside" sickness causes people to fall into times where they may become homeless.

Final Thought:

The lack and expense of in-patient mental health facilities can lead to a lifetime of unemployment and homelessness.

Week 11 - Substance Abuse & Homelessness

Overview:

Substance abuse is often a cause of homelessness. Addiction can disrupt relationships with family and friends and often cause people to lose their jobs. In many situations, however, substance abuse is a result of homelessness rather than a cause. People who are homeless often turn to drugs and alcohol to cope with their situations.

Activity:

For our families: first talk to your kids about drugs and alcohol. This is a good child-friendly site to start that discussion: <http://kidshealth.org/en/kids/know-drugs.html>

Consider the stressors in life in the context of the things we have previously covered: lack of employment, not enough money to pay the bills, mental illness, living in a shelter, not having medical insurance. Write a song or poem about something that you like to do when you are sad that makes you happy. For families, talk to your children about choices adults often make that helps them feel “happy” for a short time. This is how substance abuse begins. While reminding your children that drugs and alcohol are bad when abused, unfortunately it is something that adults often turn to in order to feel better.

Final Thought:

Breaking an addiction is difficult for anyone, especially for substance abusers who are homeless. For many homeless people, survival is more important than personal health, and finding food and shelter take a higher priority than drug counseling. Many homeless people have also become estranged from their families and friends. Without a social support network, recovering from a substance addiction is very difficult. Even if they do break their addictions, homeless people may have difficulty remaining sober while living on the streets where substances are so widely used.

What have you learned from this activity?

Resources Used:

Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County Needs Assessment 2015

Maryland Family Network

National Coalition for the Homeless

Teaching about Homelessness in Grades K-12 An Interdisciplinary Activity Guide By Alex Messinger

www.kidshealth.org

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