



5 Everyday Ways To Combat Homelessness

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In 2017, approximately 550,000 people experienced homelessness on any given night, representing a rate of 17 people per 10,000 in the general population battling with homelessness. With an issue as massive as homelessness, it is easy to feel as though the problem will never be resolved. At times, people wonder how exactly their seemingly small contributions can help, but any type of support, big or small, is helpful. Listed below are five everyday ways you can help homelessness.

Educate Yourself

Homeless is a complex issue, and while some people want to write it off as individuals being lazy, this is not the case. So many factors contribute to homelessness such as job loss, chronic illness, death of a loved one and divorce, and many times multiple circumstances can intertwine and lead to homelessness. Individuals living in poverty are at a greater risk of homelessness because one “everyday” issue such as a broken-down car or unpaid parking tickets. One of the best ways to help combat homelessness is to learn about it; you can’t help if you don’t understand what people struggle with. Educating yourself will make you more empathic and removes stereotypes you may have previously believed, then you can use your newfound knowledge to greatly impact the lives of the homeless.

Donate

A simple but active way to help is to donate to non-profit organizations that assist the homeless, or if you’re comfortable, you can donate directly to an individual themselves. You don’t have to have a boatload of money to make a difference in your community; in fact, if you’re low on cash, your support can still be helpful. You can donate clothes you’ve outgrown instead of throwing them away and blankets to be used for cold nights. Charity organizations will always need non-perishable items, so another important thing you can donate is food. If you are wary of giving money directly to a homeless person, another way to help is to buy them a bus pass or a gift card to a grocery store or restaurant.

Volunteer

Volunteering, another form of donating, not only helps those in need but also gives you the opportunity to learn about the struggles of homelessness in your community. Even if you’re doing something as small as cleaning

the floors or washing dishes, your contributions is still significant. Charity organizations always need helpers not just during the holiday season but throughout the year, so anytime you give to volunteering can greatly help a lot of people. Volunteering is a convenient option because you can volunteer at a homeless shelter or soap kitchen on your days off, and it is something everyone can do. If you want to volunteer but don't know where to look, there are websites such as State Farm's Neighborhood of Good dedicated to helping you find volunteer opportunities near you.

Show Respect

Homeless individuals are still human, and just because you see them on the streets, doesn't give you the right to be disrespectful. With everything they have lost, it can be easy for many people to feel ashamed, so a comforting smile, a "Good Morning" or words of encouragement can help make a difference. Don't pretend homeless people are invisible, but instead treat them with dignity, listen to their stories and offer reassurance. You don't know how much your kind gesture can mean.

Spread Awareness

Homelessness has a lot of stigma attached to it, and critics have a hard time sympathizing with homeless people because they assume they know the full story. Spreading awareness is important because it educates people on the harsh reality behind the issue and ensures the struggles of the homeless community is not forgotten. One way to spread awareness is to correct any insensitive comments made by your friends or family members and educating them on the complicated roads that force people into homelessness. You can also invite them to come volunteering with you, so that as they serve people, they can see the challenges faced in their community first-hand. Another way to spread awareness is to share eye-opening articles (like the ones on this website) on your social media accounts or to loved ones in person. By sharing posts you read, you helping to make sure that stigma behind homelessness is removed and that the real story is being told.

Whether you are a busy college student or a mother of four, there are simple things you can do to help make a difference. You don't have to start a charity organization or donate a bunch of money to make an impact. Homelessness may look like a big problem, but it is something we can overcome together one step at a time.

References:

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