

Educate

Homeless Awareness Month is the perfect time to educate your community about housing and homelessness issues. This is an opportunity to call in your partners and the public on how housing insecurity and homelessness impacts everyone in the community, and how we can all work together to find solutions.

Data and statistics should create the base of your educational efforts, but they can't stand alone. While creating educational materials or opportunities, make sure to incorporate personal narratives by elevating the stories of individuals who experience homelessness in your community. Data and narrative, when combined, tell a crucial story about what homelessness looks like and directs us toward tangible ways that we can be involved in the work to prevent and end homelessness in our community.

Acknowledging the Impact of COVID-19

This year homeless service providers had to significantly adjust how community members can access services as they adapted to constantly evolving guidance on safely operating during a global pandemic. During COVID-19, homeless service providers became some of our most important essential workers as the basic needs of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness continued despite the pandemic. Staff providing these services had to adjust practices to adhere to social distancing and sanitizing mandates all while juggling the changes going on in their own households.

During your Homeless Awareness Month activities, we encourage you to acknowledge and discuss the challenges COVID-19 has presented for homeless service providers and individuals experiencing homelessness. This can include educating the community about issues such as:

- New policies and procedures needed to keep staff and clients safe
- The need to move people experiencing homelessness to new and different locations like hotels and motels
- The restrictions placed on unsheltered individuals that reduced their access to public facilities and other easily accessible locations where they could keep up with the basic hygiene practices necessary to prevent the spread of coronavirus
- How the constant challenges homeless service providers face have not only remained but become amplified, including that
 - assisting clients with employment access became much more difficult when many workplaces shut down or moved to working from home
 - already overcrowded shelters have had to struggle in adapting to social distancing guidelines
 - essential employees of homeless service providers have seen a significant increase in their workload with more complicated and time consuming health and safety procedures.
- Above all else, take the time to recognize and honor the work of the community's homeless service providers for their dedication and perseverance during difficult times



Suggested Activities

There are many activities that you can use to educate your community during Homeless Awareness Month. Consider the following:

- Engage with schools by asking to join an online classroom. You could encourage the class to read a book or share a documentary and follow up with questions and discussion
- Host (virtual) movie night. Pick a movie from our list and hold a group discussion
- Share educational materials (MCAH infographics, stories from your organization, etc.) on social media, websites, and local media outlets
- Reach out to local businesses to see if they are interested in becoming partners in your educational efforts by:
 - sharing your social media messages during the month and in turn recognize the contributions of your local supporters
 - donating a percentage of their profits during a period of time to a local homeless service provider
- Sponsor a blanket, food, or essential items drive or organize the collection of nonperishable items such as food, hygiene products, clothing, blankets, books, toys etc. at local business and use this as an opportunity to educate the public about basic needs for those experiencing homelessness

Resources

Additional resources are updated throughout the year on our HAM Facebook page. Join other organizations and agencies for ideas and advice. Content on the FB group is tagged according to category. For a quick look up of information, select the topic from the right side of page.



Join the [Homeless Awareness Month](#) Facebook group.

Teacher's Lesson Plans

HAM Facebook group – [Teacher's section](#)



[be homeful project](#): lesson plans for all ages

Launched by the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) in 2015, the be homeful project aims to give kids aged 2-17, families, and their communities tools to have meaningful conversations about how homelessness affects families in their community and to take action to help prevent others from becoming homeless in the first place.

<http://www.behomeful.org/>



Children's Books on Homelessness

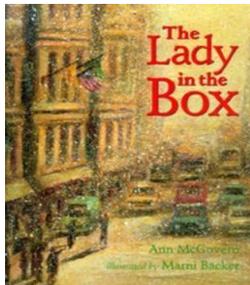
HAM Facebook group – [Children's Books section](#)



Almost Home, 2012

by Joan Bauer

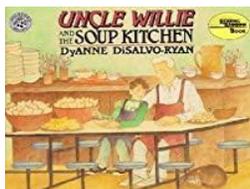
When twelve-year-old Sugar's grandfather dies and her gambling father takes off yet again, Sugar and her mother lose their home in Missouri. They head to Chicago for a fresh start, only to discover that fresh starts aren't so easy to come by for the homeless. Nevertheless, Sugar's mother has taught her to be grateful no matter what, so Sugar does her best.



The Lady in the Box, 1997

by Marni Backer, Ann McGovern

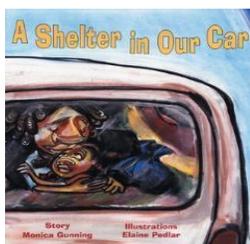
It is wintertime in the city, and Christmas decorations are everywhere. But in Lizzie and Ben's neighborhood, a woman lives in a box, grateful for the warm air that escapes through a vent in the sidewalk. After watching this lady in a box, the brother and sister decide to help her, despite their mother's admonition to never talk to strangers. The children worry about the kind-looking lady and begin sneaking food and clothes out of their apartment for her.



Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen, 1991

by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

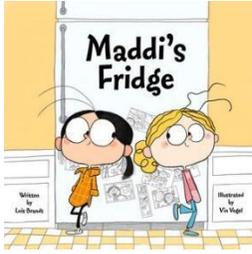
DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan's sensitive text and pictures show a bustling, friendly group of workers who welcome the young narrator into the caring world of the soup kitchen as she deals with the problem of hunger at the level for children to understand. Full-color illustrations.



A Shelter in Our Car, 2004

by Monica Gunnin

Since she left Jamaica for America after her father died, Zettie lives in a car with her mother while they both go to school and plan for a real home.



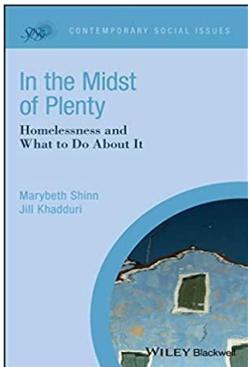
Maddi's Fridge, 2014

by Lois Brandt (Goodreads Author), Vin Vogel (Illustrator)

Best friends Sofia and Maddi live in the same neighborhood, go to the same school, and play in the same park, but while Sofia's fridge at home is full of nutritious food, the fridge at Maddi's house is empty. Sofia learns that Maddi's family doesn't have enough money to fill their fridge and promises Maddi she'll keep this discovery a secret.

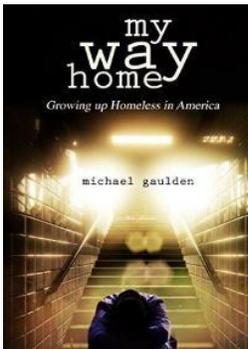
Adult Books on Homelessness

HAM Facebook group – [Books section](#)



In the Midst of Plenty: Homelessness and What to Do About It, 2020 by Jill Khadduri and Marybeth Shinn

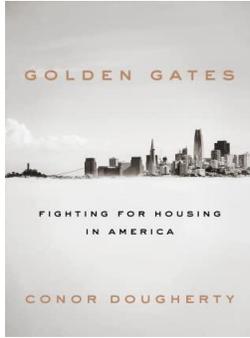
This book explains how to end the U.S. homelessness crisis by bringing together the best scholarship on the subject and sharing solutions that both local communities and national policy-makers can apply now.



My Way Home: Growing Up Homeless in America, 2017 by Michael Gauden

His life was barely worth a dollar. He slept outside, on park benches, in stairwells, under bushes. Michael Gauden lived in shelter after shelter across the United States. With his father incarcerated and mother disabled, he stayed homeless for ten years.

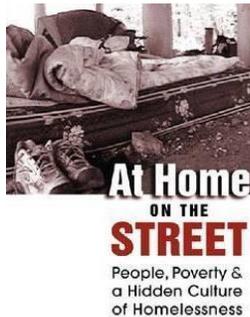




Golden Gates: Fighting for Housing in America, 2020

by Conor Dougherty

A stunning, deeply reported investigation into the housing crisis. Spacious and affordable homes used to be the hallmark of American prosperity. Today, however, punishing rents and the increasingly prohibitive cost of ownership have turned housing into the foremost symbol of inequality and an economy gone wrong. Nowhere is this more visible than in the San Francisco Bay Area, where fleets of private buses ferry software engineers past the tarp-and-plywood shanties.

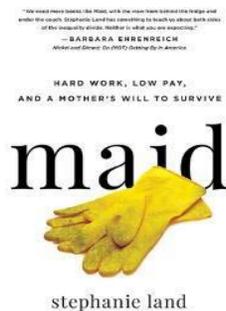


At Home on the Street: People, Poverty, and a Hidden Culture of Homelessness, 2009

by Jason Adam Wasserman, Jeffrey Michael Clair

In their compelling examination of what it means to be truly at home on the street, Jason Wasserman and Jeffrey Clair argue that programs and policies addressing homeless people too often serve only to alienate them. Wasserman and Clair delve into the complex realities of homelessness to paint a gripping picture of individuals - not cases or pathologies - living on the street.

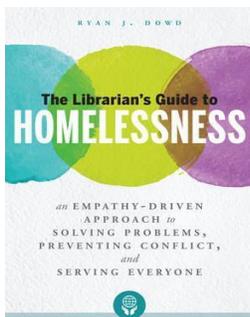
Jason Adam Wasserman • Jeffrey Michael Clair



Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive, 2019

by Stephanie Land (Goodreads Author), Barbara Ehrenreich (Foreword)

Stephanie Land's memoir about working as a maid is a beautiful and gritty exploration of poverty in America. Stephanie Land worked for years as a maid, pulling long hours while struggling as a single mom to keep a roof over her daughter's head. In *Maid*, she reveals the dark truth of what it takes to survive and thrive in today's inequitable society.

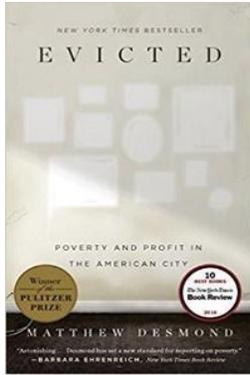


The Librarian's Guide to Homelessness: An Empathy-Driven Approach to Solving Problems, Preventing Conflict, and Serving Everyone, 2018

by Ryan J. Dowd

Homelessness is a perennial topic of concern at libraries. In fact, staff at public libraries interact with almost as many homeless individuals as staff at shelters do. Empathy and understanding, along with specific actionable advice that's drawn from experience, makes all the difference in working with this group. Filled with real life stories that illustrate the effectiveness of Dowd's approach, this one-of-a-kind guide will empower library staff to treat homeless individuals with dignity.





Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, 2016 by Matthew Desmond

In *Evicted*, Harvard sociologist and MacArthur “Genius” Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they struggle to keep a roof over their heads. Hailed as “wrenching and revelatory” (*The Nation*), “vivid and unsettling” (*New York Review of Books*), *Evicted* transforms our understanding of poverty and economic exploitation while providing fresh ideas for solving one of 21st-century America’s most devastating problems.

Short Videos

HAM Facebook group – [Movies/Documentaries section](#)



INSPIRING Volunteers Helping Homeless People During COVID-19 in Los Angeles

<https://youtu.be/8pWTs9hxKIs>

SELAH Neighborhood Homeless Coalition is a group of normal folks that decided to take tangible actions to help their homeless neighbors. What started as just giving out 25 food boxes a week has grown into an organization that’s helping people with basic needs like food and water and connecting them with resources.



Faces of Homelessness

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLD6f2anyof-BkCJWq6St5Fg89ToyNjjJg>

Created and updated by the National Coalition for Homelessness, this YouTube collection features multiple videos that explain homelessness, often from those who have experienced it directly.



Invisible People

<https://invisiblepeople.tv/>

Vlogger Mark Horvath creates short videos featuring individuals currently experiencing homelessness, often asking “If you had three wishes right now, what would they be?” The answers give you a glimpse into the daily struggles of those living unsheltered and are framed by Mark’s own lived experience with homelessness.



How Housing Changed My Life

<http://bit.ly/HousingChangedMyLife>

At a July, 2017 rally at the Michigan State Capitol, MCAH asked 9 individuals who had experienced homelessness one question: How did housing change your life? Their answers provide a roadmap for the resources we need and the impact our collective efforts make on the individual and family right here in Michigan.

Full Length Movies and Documentaries

HAM Facebook group – [Movies/Documentaries section](#)



SHELTER DOCUMENTARY, 2018

<https://youtu.be/KUfNbNBFwRI>

A feature length documentary following a year in the life of homeless youth in New Orleans. For video updates from the young people and staff featured in the film - and to learn how you can help - visit

<http://www.shelterdocumentary.com>.



American Winter, 2013

www.americanwinterfilm.com – discussion guides and additional information

Documentary that follows the personal stories of families struggling in the aftermath of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Filmed over the course of one winter in one American city, the film presents an intimate snapshot of the state of the nation's economy as it is playing out in millions of American families, and highlights the human consequences of the decline of the middle class and the fracturing of the American Dream.





The Homestretch, 2014

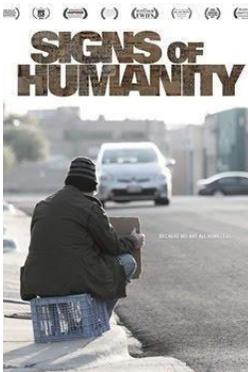
Three homeless teenagers brave the Chicago winters, the pressures of high school, and life on the streets to build a brighter future.

Show: Independent Lens



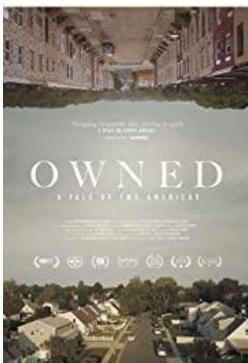
United States of Tents, 2019

An estimated 500,000 U.S. citizens, veterans and children are homeless across the nation. A newly released documentary by filmmaker Dennis Michael Lynch tackles the homeless crisis in America head-on. "United States of Tents," takes you on a journey to several homeless camps across the country and includes interviews with leaders in many communities who are addressing this devastating crisis.



Signs of Humanity, 2016

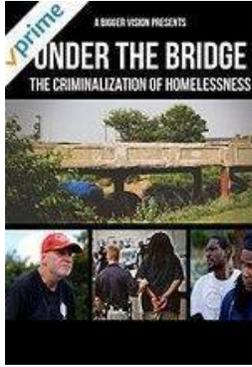
Signs of Humanity explores themes of home, homelessness, and compassion. Artist and Professor Willie Baronet has bought over 1,800 homeless signs from people on the streets since 1993 and uses them to create installations to raise awareness about homelessness. In 2014, he drove across the United States buying signs and talking to the people behind them. This is a film about that trip.



Owned: A Tale of Two Americas, 2018

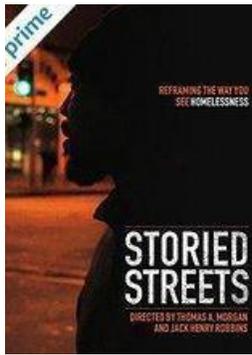
'Owned' is a fever dream vision into the dark history behind the US housing economy. Tracking its overtly racist beginnings to its unbridled commoditization, the doc exposes a foundational story few Americans understand as their own.





Under the Bridge: the Criminalization of Homelessness, 2017

By the production team A Bigger Vision, Under the Bridge: Criminalization of Homelessness is a documentary film about one summer in Indianapolis, a tent city under a bridge, and the criminalization of homelessness in the United States.



Storied Streets, 2015

Storied Streets explores homelessness across America by telling the stories of those who live it every day.

