

# Houses for Change

## Teaching Guide, Grades 4-6

### Goal

Children will reflect on their needs and wants and consider them in the light of other children who may be homeless.

### Objective

Participants will be assembling and decorating the boxes to look like homes. They will then use the boxes to collect change to be donated to those providing support services to homeless families. Stereotypes of the homeless do not fit in an era with rapidly growing family homelessness. While most families experience homelessness for only a short period, it is nevertheless a difficult and traumatic time. It is possible that some of their peers are homeless and they may not know it.

### Time Required

Generally allow an hour for the project, the first 15-20 minutes for discussion and the balance of the time for decorating the boxes.

### Materials

You will need a blackboard or flipchart, a box for each child and crayons, markers, stickers, glitter, collage materials, glue sticks, scissors, etc. to decorate the boxes. Prepare the first page of the flipchart for two columns, or head two lists on the blackboard with "Needs" and the second column with "Wants."

### Procedure

Distribute a box to each child and be sure they have crayons, markers, stickers, etc. with which to decorate the box at the appropriate time.

Introduce the project by saying:

***"I want everyone to think of what things you need for survival?"*** Make a list on the blackboard or flipchart. Food, clothing and shelter should be represented.

***Next, I want to ask you what things do you want to make you happy?"*** Write them on the board or flipchart. Among them might be one's own television or cell phone, etc.

As the list develops, allow for some movement of items from one list to the other. Encourage and challenge participants to decide what are "needs" and what are "wants."

***Say: "Not all of the children or families in the United States have all that they need to exist. Some lack food or adequate clothing. Others have no place to call home."***

***"If I say the word 'homeless' what images come to your mind?"***

It is optional to list some of these on another page of the flipchart or on the blackboard. After some images have been mentioned say:

***“Do you ever think of families being homeless? The fastest growing segment of the homeless population is families with children.” Many children in schools all over the United States do not have homes to go home to...***

Ask: ***“Can anyone think of reasons people might lose a home?”***

Some (real) reasons: Fire, flood, because the landlord of the apartment could not pay his mortgage, because Mom or Dad lost their job...

Share some facts:

***“Families with children are now the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.”***

***“Today, 1 out of every 11 workers in America cannot find a job.”***

### ***Introduce the boxes***

Say:

***“It is important that we all do our part to try and help those who don’t have what they need, especially when times are difficult. We should treat people the way we would want to be treated if we had no place to call home.”***

***“We are going to assemble these boxes that we will decorate to look like houses. These boxes can then be used to collect money for organizations (like Family Promise) that provide services to families that have lost their homes. Perhaps some days you may want to give up some things you want (like an ice cream cone) so others can have what they need like healthy food, or a home to live in. Save that money you would have spent, and put it in this box. After (name the period of time) all the savings in the boxes will be collected and sent to (fill in the name of an organization.) Let’s get started...”***

Demonstrate how to assemble the boxes and spend the rest of the time coloring and decorating the boxes to resemble homes. Participants might want to unfold their boxes to make them easier to decorate.