



## Think Globally and Act Locally: How to Organize a Charity Drive at Your School



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### Help for the Homeless

This past winter, two high school English teachers in Osaka organized a food and clothing drive for the homeless, and it was quite successful. We would like to share the process we used, in the hopes that you may undertake a similar project at your institution. Working in the education sector, we are in a unique position that makes doing something like this surprisingly easy and yet powerfully useful on many levels.

If you have it in your heart to try a project like this, you should be highly organized. Charity work can be quite time consuming. But with careful planning, it can take minimal time and be extremely rewarding. Let's look at some of the techniques that will help you to help others.

First of all, get support. If you have one or two like-minded co-workers at your institution, enlist their help. Initial duties will be setting a date for the used clothing drop-off, plus advertising and promotion. In selecting a date, consider the school calendar. Is it near exam time? Culture/sports day? If so, find a day that will not clash with regular school events. Late November or early December is recommended, since exams haven't started, but the weather will be getting cold.

Advertising and promotion should begin 3-4 weeks before the drop-off date, allowing an extended period for the message to sink in, and the collection box to fill up. We set up a large clearly marked clothing drop-off box near the school gate, making things convenient for students who contributed. Every other day, we collected bags of warm clothing (big and small) for temporary storage and boxing up. Posters, signs, word of mouth, and even the school broadcast club were used to constantly remind students to bring unwanted warm clothes for the homeless, to clean up their closets and make a difference for those in need. This double-pronged message was very effective. We left slogan-style messages on black-boards, and even handed out leaflets near the end!

The constant promotion paid off, and in the end, we had exceeded our best expectations. We had enough boxes of clothing (and food) to fill a 1-ton rental truck twice! Also on D-day (drop-off day), a few like-minded friends gathered to help prepare *onigiri* rice balls, a cheap but filling food. With a 10,000 yen donation by these friends, ingredients were bought,

rice cooked in the school cafeteria, and busy hands packed over 300 *onigiri*. The cafeteria even got on the bandwagon, and donated several sandwiches, which were very popular with the homeless! Generating this kind of excitement and boosting spirits is critical for success. This food accompanied dozens of boxes of clothes to Nishinari-ku, the ghetto of Osaka.

By the second time we arrived, a crowd had gathered, waiting to see what we had brought. A few dozen boxes of warm clothes, a few hundred *onigiri* and sandwiches made life a little easier for the estimated 400 homeless people. Not a bad day. Afterwards, our group went and celebrated the goodwill of man and the spirit of giving in an *izakaya* pub. No beer ever felt more deserved!

To document this activity, we took photos and made a slideshow, which we posted on the website *YouTube* (address below). We sent this link throughout the school, so that those who donated could see and feel good about their contributions, which is an important part of charity work.

### Social Action and Education

"How is this related to education?" you might ask. The simple goal here is awareness. During the drive, the educators involved encouraged students to donate. It may be something as simple as a two-sentence announcement at the beginning of a class. There would naturally be a few questions from the learners. *Where does the clothing go? Why are there so many homeless in that area of the city? How did those people end up in such a position?* The answers to these questions are complicated, but the questions are certainly the ones that need to be asked. I found it more productive not to offer input but rather to let other students interject their ideas. In the short time of an announcement before class and the few learners' utterances following, the group's ideas about these social issues were brought to the surface and examined by each individual. The context of the real time clothing drive enables this to happen in concrete, real world terms, and fosters awareness of these topics in a way that would be quite difficult without the link to reality that this kind of clothing drive creates.

UNESCO's Decade of *Education for Sustainable Development* (ESD) sets the goal of creating awareness of environmental, economic and social issues under the umbrella term "sustainability". A project like this certainly covers at least two of these spheres.

The ways in which this topic can be brought into the classroom are only limited by the imagination of the teacher.

In relating a project like this to *Global Issues in Language Education*, one is reminded of the adage *think globally, act locally*. It's easy to see the similarity between those who are marginalized on a local level (your local homeless) to those marginalized on the global stage. The social issues being faced are the same. With a project like this, you can not only educate your students about an important social problem, but also *empower* them to do something about it. Such an education is beyond any textbook, and will hopefully plant a seed within a small number who will pass on the knowledge of

what it means to truly make a difference in the world.

The authors have prepared a You-tube video report on this charity project entitled "HATO 2\_ The Attack of the Warm Clothes". HATO stands for "Hands Across The Ocean". Check this out at:

<> [www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2TqAYwShhc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2TqAYwShhc)

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## HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOMELESS - TEACHING RESOURCES

### BOOKS

Kroloff, Charles (1993) *54 Ways You Can Help the Homeless*. Hugh Lauter. \$6

Temple, Gray (1991) *52 Ways To Help the Homeless People*. Thomas Nelson. \$18

Pearce, Q.L. (2008) *Hanna Taylor: Helping the Homeless*. (Young Heroes) Thomas Nelson. \$28

Greene, Robert (2005) *Cardboard Condo: How the Homeless Survive the Streets*. iUniverse. \$16

### MOVIES and DVDs

- *Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story*
- *Samaritan: The Mitch Snyder Story*
- *The Saint of Fort Washington*
- *Tokyo Godfathers*
- *The Fisher King*
- *City Lights*
- *The Homeless Home Movie*  
 <[www.homelesshomemovie.org](http://www.homelesshomemovie.org)>
- PBS on-line documentaries <[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)>  
*Home at Last?* (2007) NOW  
*Homes for the Homeless?* (2009) NOW
- Photos <[www.picturethehomeless.org/](http://www.picturethehomeless.org/)>

### LESSON PLANS

Homeless Education: On-Line Lesson Plans  
[www.isbe.net/homeless/pdf/Lesson\\_Plan\\_Links.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/homeless/pdf/Lesson_Plan_Links.pdf)

A Day in the Life of a Homeless Person  
<http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit19/lesson3.html>

How to Teach Kids About Homeless People  
 <[www.associatedcontent.com](http://www.associatedcontent.com)>

### WEBSITES & NGOs

National Coalition for the Homeless (US)  
 <[www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)>

Help the Homeless (UK)  
 <[www.help-the-homeless.org.uk](http://www.help-the-homeless.org.uk)>

Sanyukai (Japan)  
[www.geocities.jp/world\\_of\\_510/english.html](http://www.geocities.jp/world_of_510/english.html)

Homeless Australia  
 <[www.homeless.org.au](http://www.homeless.org.au)>

### SONGS

- *Another Day in Paradise* (Phil Collins)
  - *Homeless* (Paul Simon)
  - *Fast Car* (Tracy Chapman)
  - *Almost Home* (Craig Morgan)
  - *Moments* (Emerson Drive)
  - *Some People Cry* (Heather Haywood)
  - *King of the Road* (Randy Travis)
  - *He Calls Home* (Candlebox)
  - *Johnny Ryall* (Beastie Boys)
  - *Waltzing Matilda* (Australian folk song)
- <> CD *Homeless in America; 21 Songs of Social Conscience for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* <[amazon.com](http://amazon.com)>

### ESTIMATED NUMBERS

- Number of homeless worldwide = 500 million
  - Number of homeless in Europe = 3 million
  - Number of homeless in the US = 1 million
  - Number of homeless in Canada = 150,000
  - Number of homeless in Japan = 30,000
  - Number of homeless in Osaka = 10,000
- Sources: <[www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com)> <[www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)>