



## MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Committed to ensuring that everyone has a place to call home

15 Bubier St., Lynn, MA 01901, 781-595-7570, [www.mahomeless.org](http://www.mahomeless.org)



The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless' HomeLink Initiative partners with public schools to assist at-risk families of students to avoid becoming homeless. As part of this partnership, the Coalition has been able to assist many parents who need assistance with material items such as clothing and household furniture. Over the past year HomeLink learned that many of the students in the schools did not have a bed, and were sleeping on the floor or with a sibling. In many of the schools social workers have taken to setting up cots in a quiet area of the library because students were falling asleep at their desk.

Many of the students' families have had an infestation of bed bugs – a growing epidemic in many urban areas, forcing them to throw out their beds without being able to afford to buy new ones. Even more families are living in poverty and can not afford to buy a bed in at all. Although a bed may not seem like the most pressing social issue, it does have a major affect on a child's ability to come to school prepared to learn, which can have long term consequences on their education. In Massachusetts, statistics indicate that 23% of students have the potential of not graduating.

To break the cycle of poverty, we know we have to give these children all the tools they need to assist them in their education. One of these is a bed. To meet this goal, the agency launched A Bed for Every Child Initiative, where we are raising funds to purchase a twin mattress, frame and linens for each student referred to us by our partners. Presently, we are working with the Lynn Public Schools to ensure each student referred to us will have a bed delivered to their home.

For over 25 years, the Coalition has operated the Furniture Bank which stabilizes over 3,000 households a year transitioning from homelessness to their own home by providing donated furniture and household goods to make a house a home. This program has a proven history of operating with maximum efficiency and cost effectiveness. Leveraging this experience and a network of partners, A Bed for Every Child will undertake outreach, build awareness of the need, and provide beds to children through this new collaboration. Our goal over the next 12 months is to distribute 1,500 beds to children in need who are attending school. By the end of February, approximately 100 beds will have been distributed. As funds become available, we will have an additional goal of expanding to schools in Boston.

To get involved by organizing a community drive or inviting a Coalition spokes person to a civic event to speak about the campaign to raise critical financial support to A Bed for Every Child contact Donna Crotty, Major Gift Coordinator at 781-585-7570 x20 or email: [DCrotty@mahomeless.org](mailto:DCrotty@mahomeless.org). If you are a member of a faith community, contact: Sister Linda Bessom SND, Faith Into Action Together Coordinator, 781-595-7570 x 18, e-mail: [Linda@mahomeless.org](mailto:Linda@mahomeless.org).



## IDEAS OF WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO

3 -8-12

- Set a date to collect new sets of twin sheets, and new blankets, bedspreads, pillows to go with the beds; put notice in your congregation's bulletin or website.
- One school had a dress down day with each student bringing in a donation. Students designed their own "A Bed for Every Child" buttons and posters. Then the teacher who initiated the project at her school challenged another school to match the amount.
- One class brought in their own donations (weekly allowance, etc.) and the school matched their \$150 to make it \$300.
- Designate a special collection or offering for A Bed for Every Child during/ before or after worship; You could also pass out A Bed for Every Child Letter and pledge card in specially marked envelope - a week before and then the following week people can hand the envelope in the following week in the collection basket.
- Create your own event - walkathon; dance or a sleep-a-thon.
- Have a store collect donations in a special container.
- Host a special raffle fundraiser (for example: a pair of Red Sox, Celtics, Bruins Tickets) of which the proceeds will go towards A Bed for Every Child.
- Birthday or other celebration of life -- instead ask people to bring a monetary donation for A Bed for Every Child, a new set of twin sheets, blanket, bedspread or pillow.
- Department Stores -- speak to the Manager and ask if they would be willing to donate twin sheets, pillows, blankets and bedspread to "A Bed for Every Child." The Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless would be able to write a cover letter or send required information to the store to make this donation possible.
- PotLuck House Party for A Bed for Every Child -- ask people to bring money donation, new linens etc.
- Lent 2012 -One Church will have the donations in the Lenten table boxes go towards "A Bed for Every Child."

People are really creative in raising funds. I would appreciate hearing other ideas that people may have, so that we could pass them along.

It would also be helpful to raise awareness in the Community by doing a **press release** and/or sending in an article with a picture to the local newspaper. If printed, please send the original copy with date, title of newspaper to me at the address below, or e-mail the newspaper link of the story to: [linda@mahomeless.org](mailto:linda@mahomeless.org). Then we will have a record of this event.

In solidarity,

Sister Linda Bessom SND  
Faith Into Action Together Coordinator  
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