

the JOY MAKER CHALLENGE



generationOn
A POINTS OF LIGHT ENTERPRISE



Be a Joy Maker!

The holidays are a wonderful time when people celebrate with their family and friends. But for some people, the joyful holiday season can feel lonely. By completing acts of joy through meaningful service, you can bring holiday cheer into the lives of people in your community and across the country.

Issue Area: Homelessness and Poverty

Project Name: **Holiday Hope Chest**

What You're Doing: Creating Holiday Hope Chests (individually prepared shoe boxes filled with age/gender appropriate gifts) that will be distributed during the holiday season to non-profit agencies serving children.

Project Summary: The holidays can be extremely hard for children without homes. Thirty-five percent of the 3.5 million homeless people in the United States are families with children. Use your imagination and a generous spirit to assemble a Holiday Hope Chest to give to child in need!

Ideas to Chat About:

- What might life be like for children living in shelters?
- How might they feel during the holidays?
- What can you do to brighten their holiday season?

What You Need:

- Shoeboxes or plastic boxes \$0-\$2
- Wrapping paper- \$0-\$1
- Scotch tape- \$0 - \$1
- Ribbon or rubber band- \$0-\$3
- Barely used or new small toys and other items (see suggestion list) \$0-\$10
- **Fillers. Get ideas by age group at:** http://generationon.org/files/_projects/holiday_hope_chests_post-holiday_linked.pdf.

Project Instructions:

- **Grades K-2:** Keep it simple! Follow the instructions!
- **Grades 3-5:** Invite your whole class to create their own Holiday Hope Chest!
- **Grades 6-8:** Hold a school-wide/community drive to get materials for the chests. Take this project one step further by creating a coloring book to add to the Holiday Hope Chest (favorite super heroes, holiday images, etc.)
- **Grades 9-12:** Host a holiday Hope Chest Donation Drive and Packing Party! Hold a drive to collect items for the Holiday Hope Chests and then bring a group together to pack them!

Project Instructions:

1. Contact your local homeless shelter, domestic violence shelters, and other agencies that might cater to low-income families, and tell them you want to donate a Holiday Hope Chest to a child. Make sure to ask what their needs are and how you can help.
2. Ask for a specific recipient for your Holiday Hope Chest and note the age of the child.
3. Take a shoebox or plastic box and decorate it with wrapping paper, comics, stickers, etc...
IMPORTANT: Wrap the top and bottom separately, so the box can be opened or closed without tearing the decorations. This box will become a "treasure chest" for the child who receives it.
4. Use your imagination to fill the box with small new gifts. The average total cost of these gifts should be at least \$15.00. Make sure the items you are choosing are age appropriate.
5. Create your own hand-designed holiday card to include in the box.
6. Cut out the Holiday Hope Chest Gift Tag below and tape it very securely on the top of your box. Use 2 or 3 strong rubber bands to secure the lid on tight.
7. Deliver the box, and spread holiday cheer!

Reflections:

- How do you think it would feel to not receive gifts on the holidays?
- How do you think the child who received the Holiday Hope Chest feels?
- What are other ways that we can continue to help children in homeless shelters? (School supplies, backpacks, packaged snacks, etc)

Additional Resources and Suggestions:

- Read *A Shelter in Our Car* by Monica Gunning. Zettie and her Mama learn about homelessness from the perspective of immigrants searching for a better life and what small acts of kindness can mean to them.
- Check out this [fact sheet on homelessness](#) and discover ways you can help.
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen or with Meals on Wheels monthly!

Holiday Hope Chest Gift Tag:

This gift was made with love for:

(Circle one)

A Girl

A Boy

Age:

(Circle one)

Infant (newborn to 9 mos)

Elementary (6 to 9 yrs)

Baby (10 mos to 2 yrs)

Middle School (10 to 13 yrs)

Preschool (3 to 5 yrs)

Teen (14 to 17 yrs)