



**A Participation Kit for
Where Will I Sleep Tonight? Registrants**

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Where Will I Sleep Tonight?

Livestream Program Thursday, June 24, 2021 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

- Follow the Catherine McAuley Center on **facebook** to tune in and join us for a special livestream program to learn more about homelessness in our community and the important work of the Catherine McAuley Center.
- Go on a virtual tour of the Center's Emergency Shelter Residences in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. You will see the many ways that our shelters are homes
- Listen to interviews with clients as they share their experiences with homelessness and speak to the many ways the Catherine McAuley Center has made a difference in their lives.
- Watch videos of volunteer service projects and holiday celebrations that are an essential part of our programs for families.
- Hear stories about homelessness from a child's point of view.
- Connect with other program participants through photos and live messages.
- Learn how you can make a difference by becoming involved in the Catherine McAuley Center.
- Our Livestream Program will include a special tribute to our Event Sponsors, recognizing these individuals and organizations for their generous support.



CATHERINE MCAULEY CENTER
FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

A Welcome Message from Executive Director Krista Somers

Dear Friend of the Catherine McAuley Center,

Where Will I Sleep Tonight?

For most of us, this is a question we never contemplate, since the warmth of our own bed is simply a part of our comfortable daily routine. For women and children who are experiencing homelessness, the question ***Where Will I Sleep Tonight?*** is a harsh reality they confront every day.

At the Catherine McAuley Center, we work with a highly vulnerable population of homeless women and children. The fear and uncertainty that many of us experienced for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic is a constant way of life for our homeless families. They struggle to survive during even the best of times.

By registering in support of our inaugural ***Where Will I Sleep Tonight*** event, you have committed to spending the night somewhere other than the comfort of your own bed. While this may seem like a simple act, you have accomplished so much more than clicking a button on a website. Your participation is a powerful expression of solidarity with those who struggle with homelessness. Your generosity helps to raise critically needed funds to provide housing and supportive services for homeless families here in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties.

We hope the experience of ***Where Will I Sleep Tonight*** gives you a better understanding of the reality of homelessness, here in our own community. Each one of us has the capacity to make a difference in the life of someone who is homeless.

Thank you for your generous support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Krista Somers". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Krista Somers
Executive Director

An Introduction to the Catherine McAuley Center

The history of the Catherine McAuley Center traces its origins to a group of dedicated members of the Sisters of Mercy community, who first identified the need for housing for homeless women in Scranton. By 1983, these Sisters began to reach out to the local population of homeless women by sharing their extra bedrooms in their convent in North Scranton. The first woman to be accepted into the Convent as a guest was welcomed on September 1, 1984. The ministry began and was incorporated as the Catherine McAuley Center in 1985, and the organization held their first Board meeting on July 31, 1986.

Today the Center provides housing and supportive services for homeless individuals and families, primarily women and children, in Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties. The Continuum of Housing includes emergency shelters, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing for both individuals and families. In partnership with other nonprofit agencies, the Center also operates a transitional housing program for women leaving prison. Additional housing programs include two single-room occupancy residences and a single dwelling for a low-income family.

Beyond the shelter of a roof and walls, our wide range of supportive services help women and children overcome the trauma of homelessness through education, life skills, and assistance in accessing counseling, employment, and training opportunities. Through our intensive level of case management, these services are tailored to each individual's circumstances, and needed transportation is provided where possible. These essential supports prove invaluable since the majority of those served are living at or below the federal poverty level.

Our role is distinctive in the community by providing emergency shelter to a highly vulnerable population of women and children beyond those in an active domestic violence situation. The Center also offers a community food pantry, a furniture bank, and family bonding activities throughout the year.

During the 2019/20 fiscal year, the Catherine McAuley Center housed a total of 329 individuals, and served an additional 405 people through our Family Support Program, 621 through our Food Pantry, and 1,735 individuals through our Christmas Adopt-A-Family Program.

Discussions and Activities

For Parents and Children: “What Would You Take?”

Activity:

Imagine you and your family were just told that you have 10 minutes to vacate your home. You can only take whatever you can fit into a backpack. What things would you take with you? What things would be hard to leave behind?

Discussion Questions:

- Why did you choose the items you took and left behind?
- How did it to feel to make your choices?
- How will you do without the things you left behind?
- Where will you get the things you need but no longer have?

For Teachers and Students: “Spent”

Activity: <http://playspent.org/>

This online game about homelessness was created for Urban Ministries of Durham in 2011 and its ad agency McKinney. SPENT went mobile in 2014 and continues to be played by millions of people in hundreds of countries. Players accepting the challenge imagine that they are one of the 14 million Americans unemployed. Their savings are gone and they have lost their homes. They are down to their last \$1,000. Players are forced to make the same difficult decisions about money and resources that families and individuals in our community must make every single day.

For Adults: “How Vulnerable Are You?”

Activity and Discussion Questions:

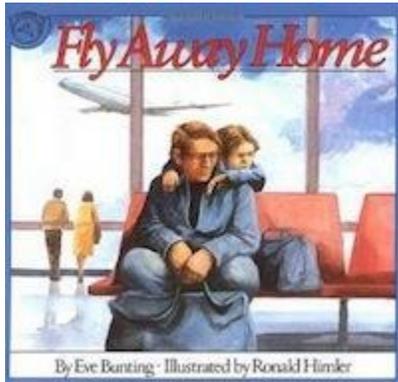
The following survey illustrates some of the factors that can lead to homelessness. When several of these exist, and there isn't strong family support, people are at risk of becoming homeless. Have participants consider the following questions:

1. Could you ever become involved in a flood, fire, tornado or other natural disaster?
2. Do you work in an area of the job market where your job might become obsolete?
3. Could you ever suffer a long-term illness or accident without proper health benefits or other compensations?
4. Could a downturn in the economy or a change in your local economy cause you or your family to lose a job(s)?
5. Do you live in a household with only one full time wage earner?
6. Are you behind in monthly bills, have high credit card debt, or have a home in foreclosure?
7. Are housing costs in your area increasing faster than wages are increasing?
8. Does anyone in your family struggle with alcohol, drugs, or other addictions?
9. Has there ever been any form of domestic violence or abuse in your family?
10. Do you have money in savings/life insurance to cover living expenses should your spouse die unexpectedly?

Resource Library

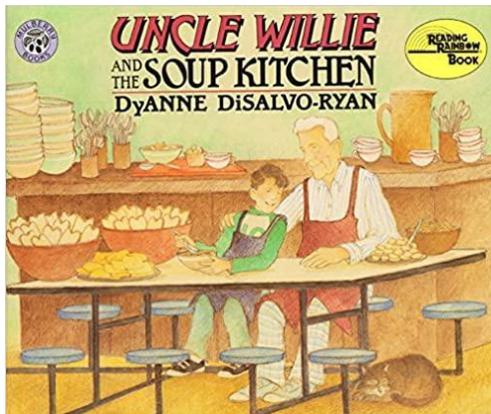
Books for Children and Youth

(1) *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting



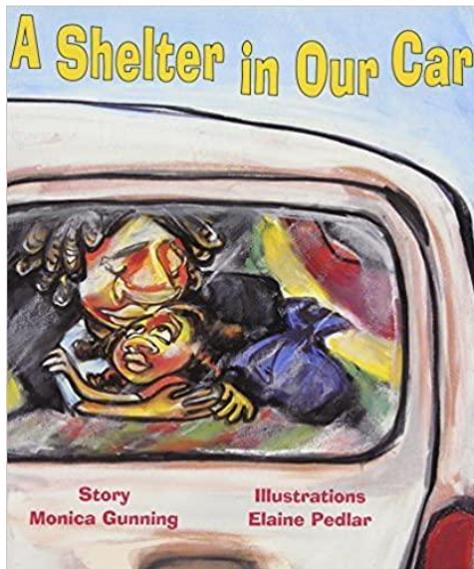
A homeless boy who lives in an airport with his father, moving from terminal to terminal trying not to be noticed, is given hope when a trapped bird finally finds its freedom. To open the book is to get an insight into a counterculture that most of us don't even know exists. The matter of fact narrative by the boy tells us a story of coping with misfortune and homelessness. There is no preaching here, neither does the author/narrator offer a simplistic solution.

(2) *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen* by Dyanne DiSalvo-Ryan



A gentle and age-appropriate introduction to two key issues of our time—hunger and homelessness—from a kid's point of view. This empathy-building book is good for sharing at home or in a classroom.

(3) *A Shelter in Our Car* by Monica Gunning



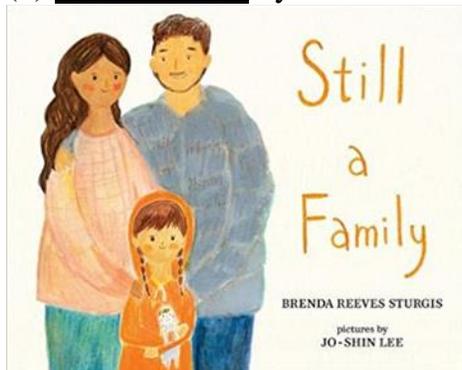
Monica Gunning's moving and authentic story about homelessness in an American city was developed with the help of the Homeless Children's Network in San Francisco.

(4) *Paper Things* by Jennifer Richard Jacobson



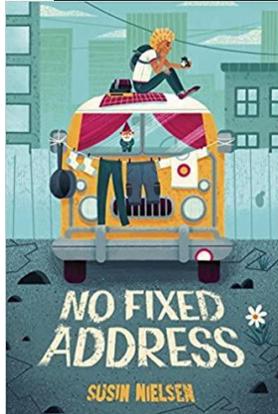
When forced to choose between staying with her guardian and being with her big brother, Ari chose her big brother. There's just one problem — Gage didn't actually have a place to live. How can Ari keep up with school, her best friend, and middle-school applications when she's "couch surfing" — a night here with Gage's friend in a tiny apartment, a night there with Gage's girlfriend and her two roommates — and even, when necessary, sneaking into a juvenile shelter? Told in an open, authentic voice, this nuanced story of hiding in plain sight may have readers thinking about homelessness in a whole new way.

(5) *Still a Family* by Brenda Reeves Sturgis



A little girl and her parents have lost their home and must live in a homeless shelter. Even worse, due to a common shelter policy, her dad must live in a men's shelter, separated from her and her mom. While the young girl wishes for better days when her family is together again under a roof of their very own, she continues to remind herself that they're still a family even in times of separation.

(6) *No Fixed Address* by Susin Nielsen



This book is a middle-grade story about family, friendship, and growing up when you're one step away from homelessness. Susin Nielsen deftly combines humor, heartbreak and hope in this moving story about people who slip through the cracks in society; and about the power of friendship and community in making all the difference.

Additional Learning Resources for Children

Family Homelessness: Sesame Street in Communities

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/family-homelessness/>

National Coalition for the Homeless: Teaching Resources

<http://nationalhomeless.org/references/teaching/>

Unsheltered Lives: Teaching about Homelessness in Grades 1-12

<https://cotsonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Unsheltered-Lives-2010.pdf>

Books for Adults

(1) ***Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*** by Matthew Desmond

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize

In ***Evicted***, Princeton sociologist and MacArthur “Genius” Matthew Desmond follows eight families in Milwaukee as they each 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 twenty-first-century America’s most devastating problems. Its unforgettable scenes of hope and loss remind us of the centrality of home, without which nothing else is possible.

(2) ***Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America*** by Jonathan Kozol

Winner of the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award

“A searing trip into the heart of homelessness” (*Chicago Sun-Times*) that jolted the American conscience

“Jonathan’s struggle is noble. What he says must be heard. His outcry must shake our nation out of its guilty indifference.”—Elie Wiesel

Based on the months the author spent among America’s homeless, ***Rachel and Her Children*** is an unforgettable record of the desperate voices of men, women, and especially children caught up in a nightmarish situation

(3) ***Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women*** by Elliott Lebow

While serving as a volunteer in shelters in the Washington D.C area, Lebow records the feelings and life stories of women experiencing homelessness. The author dismantles the myth that people experiencing homelessness are lazy and don’t want to change their situation, following women living in interim housing. and presenting the obstacles they face each and every day.

(4) ***The Color of Law*** by Richard Rothstein

For those interested in housing policy, ***The Color of Law*** dives into the local, state, and federal laws and policies that promote discriminatory practices that have lasting effects to this day. In a time where minorities are significantly overrepresented in our homeless population, this book can help us understand why.

Next Steps

You've just spent the night somewhere than your own bed to show solidarity with those who are homeless, and you may be wondering: *What Can I Do?*

Organize a Donation Drive

Our families need the same household supplies that you use in your own home. While these may seem like basic items that many of us take for granted, they are luxuries for a family experiencing homelessness. Paper goods, toiletries, cleaning products, and diapers are not covered by food stamp programs, and yet they are critical to any family setting up home in their own apartment.

You can host a donation drive through your workplace, school, community of faith, civic association, or any other community group. The Catherine McAuley Center will help you to promote your project, and we can arrange to pick up the items you collect when your donation drive is complete.

Coordinate a Service Project

While the onset of COVID-19 has made it difficult for us to offer a full range of volunteer service opportunities, we still welcome and appreciate ideas for projects that can be organized safely. Our Emergency Shelters and Residences are always in need of yard clean-up and gardening at different points throughout the year.

Volunteer at Special Events

Our holiday celebrations would not be possible without the support of an amazing group of volunteers. From leading children on Easter Egg hunts to baking cookies for our Mother's Day Tea, these service-minded individuals share their special talents and their time to bring joy to the homeless families we see and work with every day.

Raise Public Awareness

Many people are surprised to learn that homelessness is a real issue in our community. They may associate homelessness with large urban centers where the problem is more visible. Homeless families often remain unseen, spending the night on couches or on the floor of relatives and friends, or sleeping in a car or abandoned building.

You can bring attention to the issues of homelessness by sharing the work of the Catherine McAuley Center with your own circle of contacts. As more people become aware of the reality of homelessness in our local community, we can work together to address the needs of homeless individuals and families.

Donate

Monetary donations make our mission possible. Your gifts are present in the lives of homeless women and children transformed by your generosity.

Go to <http://www.catherinemcauleycenter.org/donate.aspx> to make a gift of support.

Catherine McAuley Center
Contact Information

Catherine McAuley Center
Administration Building

430 Pittston Avenue
Scranton, PA 18505
Tel: 570-342-1342
Fax: 570-341-8108

Catherine McAuley House

121 Church Street
Plymouth, PA 18651
Tel: 570-779-2801
Fax: 570-779-5240

www.catherinemcauleycenter.org