

Poverty & Homelessness

Our Youth Rise group deals with the problems of homelessness and poverty in our community. We accomplish this through both direct and indirect action. This year, we worked with a local food bank to collect food at our school which was then donated to families in need on Kent Island. We also put together holiday food and gift baskets which included the makings for a turkey dinner and new clothes and toys for families in need. All of our activities are created to help, in some way, individuals who are underprivileged in our community.

Best Practice 1: What recognized community need was met by your project? Health needs, such as the needs for food, clothing, and personal hygiene items were met in this community by our project. We determined that there was a real need in this area because the local food bank continuously asked our school through letters for help by donating food. Through advertisements in our local paper, and through our research, families in need in our area were helped by our project.

Best Practice 2: How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? Through our project, students' knowledge about the elderly and those in need in our community was greatly enhanced. The projects connected to several curricular areas: we used math skills to compute total weights, Language Arts writing skills were applied, and citizenship skills, connected to Social Studies, were gained.

Best Practice 3: How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? After watching a video about service and needs, we discussed issues in our community. After each activity, through group discussions, we reflected on what we learned and on the success of the project. We took pictures and submitted articles to the newspaper.

Best Practice 4: How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students took leadership roles and responsibility for the success of the project. Students baked cookies and put together personal hygiene items bags for the homeless. During the holiday season, students collected canned food and shopped for clothes and toys for families in need. Students were also in charge of raising awareness about the projects.

Best Practice 5: What community partners were worked with on this project? The community partners we worked with on this project were Kent Island Food Bank, Living Waters Food Bank, and Big Bats Restaurant.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? We prepared and planned ahead for the project by discussing among ourselves which ideas would best help our community. Everyone was allowed to present suggestions to the group. We discussed poverty issues in our school district, watched a video, and looked up statistics regarding homelessness.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? We acquired a new view of people who are homeless; they're just people who are down on their luck! Students also learned how to encourage active participation from local organizations and businesses to help with our project. We also learned how to call businesses and write letters to partners.

For more information on this project, contact Kathy Fowler (flfowler@friend.ly.net), Youth Rise Advisor, Stevensville Middle School, Queen Anne's County.

