

App to Experience Homelessness

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Ending homelessness is a lofty goal for the Kindling Group, a team working towards solutions for critical social issues. Social Workers aspire to provide safe shelter and resources for vulnerable populations. The @home game may be a way to combine advocacy, awareness, and fundraising all in one app for the smart phone. The premise is that people in their own areas can help to solve homelessness.



GPS identifies where you are and how many people experiencing homelessness are in your area. The game has items for you to find (pillow, cup, etc.) to collect for a homeless move in kit. Move in kits can be purchased in actual life through social media or the game. The game gives you an area to find. Once the participant finds the area, they lift up a phone to the scenery and a video interview of someone experiencing homelessness is superimposed on their smart phone. A vulnerability chart lets the user identify how at risk the person in the video is and then post to social media how he can be helped. The game also moves you to areas where the homeless may live or even a shelter in your area.

Personally, I hope they push the game farther. These are my additions. Participants can choose one or more of the following to experience.

1. Locate a thrift store in the area and have someone else pick out clothes and shoes for you, do you best to fit in them. Don't give your opinion. Wear them for a week.
2. Here is your budget (social security disability, public aid, food stamps). Live off of this for the next month. Only pay those bills from your budget.
3. Go to an area food pantry and live off the food given to you for a week.
4. Find a way to get to work without your car.
5. Find a way to grocery shop without your car.
6. Go to a local social service agency and sign up for services.
7. Don't eat for a day.
8. Stand on a street corner for a day with a cup and ask everyone who goes by for money.
9. Sleep outside in your back yard on newspapers or in a cardboard box. Don't use a sleeping bag.
10. Shave and/or wash your hair in a bathroom at the local gas station.
11. Make a sign asking for money, sit on a highway exit

12. Go to a car wash and offer to wipe the cars down, hope you get donations.
13. Go to the mall with your kids, but use public transportation if you normally use a car.
Share one lunch between yourself and all of your kids.
14. Find transportation, not your own, to your local VA hospital for services. Arrive at the VA hospital at 8 am sharp.
15. Spend a night in a homeless shelter.
16. Go to the back of your favorite restaurant and look for something edible in the garbage out back. Eat at your own risk.
17. Go through your neighborhood garbage cans looking for aluminum cans, take them to the recycling plant in your area for money, on a bicycle.

Then after the participant in the game does one of these things they can then post their insights on a social media site. These are homelessness situations the clients I have met experience every day. Statistics and testimonies are good, experience is better. If everyone walked a mile in their shoes, there would be no more homelessness in our society.

For more information visit:

<http://www.kindlinggroup.org/>

<http://invisiblepeople.tv/blog/2013/04/update-veterans-homelessness-video-and-smartphone-game/>

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