



“Head-lines” Episode 2: Our Unhoused Neighbors

Conversation starters

Hey adults! The “Head-lines” crew wants to make it easy for you to keep the conversation going after watching this week’s episode about our unhoused neighbors and how to help them.

One of the most important things is to have conversations around homelessness that elicit empathy, not pity. When kids learn about this topic through an empathetic lens, they are more likely to want to listen, learn and volunteer, or help in other ways. But when they’re taught to pity unhoused people, it can lead to judgment and disdain.

Our hope is that our young “Head-lines” viewers can learn how to empathize, not fear, our unhoused neighbors and better understand (through age-appropriate conversations) what they’re seeing on the streets of L.A.

Before starting the conversation, consider watching this video by L.A.-based Everyone In:

<https://everyoneinla.org/basecamp/why-its-important-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-homelessness/>

Additionally, Everyone In has created this toolkit for families to use in discussing homelessness:

<https://everyoneinla.org/resources/toolkit/>

Questions

- The kid in the show this week, James, talked about seeing some people outside of a tent while he was walking to school. How do you feel when you see the tents around our neighborhood? What questions do you have?
- What does homelessness mean to you?
- Would you like to know what you can do to help?

Let’s get crafty!

Draw a neighborhood

Together as a family, draw a neighborhood where everyone is welcome. What are the houses like? Are there lots of playgrounds? Maybe a big free pool? Where do the dogs and cats go to hang out? Get creative, and use this as an opportunity to talk about what home and community means.

Write a friendship card

The Giving Spirit is an L.A.-based organization that helps our unhoused neighbors by handing out survival kits (including food, hygiene products, medical supplies, etc). Every survival kit has a handmade “friendship card,” which includes a compassionate and kind message for the receiver of the kit.

To create a friendship card:

1. First, fold a sheet of 8.5” x 11” paper in half, lengthwise.
2. Then fold it again, to make your card.
3. This is the front of the card.
4. Inside the card, write a personal message. Share love, encouragement and warmth for the recipient. The Giving Spirit also encourages children (and adults!) to show off their art skills, using lots of colors. Grab markers, crayons, colored pencils — whatever arts supplies you already have in your house.

Mail your completed cards to:



THE GIVING SPIRIT
Friendship Cards
11693 San Vicente Blvd
#113
Los Angeles, CA 90049



Instructions also available here: <https://www.thegivingspirit.org/friendshipcards>

Your home practice

How to help

As mentioned in our episode, volunteering around L.A. County (and beyond) is a great way to help our unhoused neighbors.

- Every year, the L.A. based organization Big Sunday puts together a list of volunteer opportunities to do around the holidays. You can find the opportunities to help our unhoused neighbors here:
<https://theholidaylist.bigsunday.org/tag/homelessness/>
Note: Some activities are only for volunteers 18 and older.
- Through the L.A. County Department of Public Social Services, your family during the holidays can adopt a family and help them with their wish list, which might include groceries, clothing, gift certificates, or toys:
<https://dpss.lacounty.gov/en/community/volunteer.html>
- And for our teenage Palmy fans, you can check out this great list by MomsLA that features a list of great organizations to help out year round:
<https://momsla.com/volunteer-opportunities-for-high-school-students/>
- Lastly, if anyone in your family wants to write to their city councilor or another lawmaker, you can visit Shape Your L.A., the L.A. Times newly-launched civic engagement app. It will help you find out which lawmakers represent you. The app includes their contact information so you can easily call or email them:
<https://www.latimes.com/projects/community-civic-engagement-government-participation/>