

# spectrum's student sleep out



STUDENTS UNITE TO RAISE AWARENESS OF YOUTH HOMELESSNESS  
MARCH 23-26, 2017

## The Student Sleep Out Toolkit

Dear Friend of Spectrum,

You are very brave. To think about sleeping outside on a cold night. On hard ground. At the end of March.

But you are also doing something very important. **You are sending a message to other young people who are homeless that you care.** That they matter to you. You are making a difference.



And you'll be part of a movement. Across Vermont, on the same weekend in March, families and community and school groups will be sleeping out on football fields, in backyards, and on church lawns to raise awareness and funds for youth who are homeless. And on March 23rd, around 100 business and community leaders will be sleeping out in downtown Burlington.

I hope this toolkit will answer many of your questions. But if you have more, please get in touch with Jett Choquette at [jchoquette@spectrumvt.org](mailto:jchoquette@spectrumvt.org) or (802) 864-7423 x330.

Stay warm! And thank you—you are helping to change the lives of homeless youth in Vermont.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark".

Mark Redmond  
Executive Director

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the Student Sleep Out?

The Student Sleep Out is based on the Spectrum Sleep Out where business and community leaders will sleep outside in downtown Burlington on Thursday, March 23 in solidarity with homeless youth.

Inspired by Celia, a 9-year-old who slept out in her backyard in 2013, the Student Sleep Out features groups of students and/or families sleeping out in backyards, church lawns, or school yards during the same weekend as our downtown Sleep Out.

## Why Sleep Out?

The event provides a unique opportunity to understand the serious problem of youth homelessness. By asking friends and family to sponsor them, participants are making a difference in the lives of the 2,000 homeless and at-risk youth served by Spectrum each year.

## Who Sleeps Out?

Friends, families, school or youth groups—any group that wants to support at-risk and homeless youth!

## When Do We Sleep Out?

The Student Sleep Out will be held the weekend of Thursday, March 23 through Sunday, March 25—you pick the night that is best for you. If these nights do not work, please contact Jett Choquette at [jchoquette@spectrumvt.org](mailto:jchoquette@spectrumvt.org) to select a night for your group.

## Where Do We Sleep Out?

A backyard, on a church lawn, in a school yard or wherever you can Sleep Out safely. Just too cold for you? If necessary, you may Sleep Out in a gym, school hallway or other place. Keep in mind the goal is to create an informative experience for participants so the location should not be comfortable.

## What Do We Do at a Sleep Out?

This is your Sleep Out! Some people have dinner and have a discussion, watch a movie, or give presentations on homelessness. Be creative!

## How Do We Get Started?

Students and families register by visiting [www.spectrumsleepout.org](http://www.spectrumsleepout.org). There you may set up your personal fundraising page, set a fundraising goal that works for you (all students that raise \$25 or more will receive the Spectrum Student Sleep Out hat!), and email your friends and family for support or post on social media. Contact Jett Choquette if you need help getting started.

## Do You Have Any Tips for Fundraising?

Yes we do! Here are a few things we've learned:

- People want to know WHY you are sleeping out on behalf of kids—tell your story on your fundraising page and whenever you ask someone to support you.
- Send an email out to friends and relatives, and ask your parents if they're willing to send an email out too. If you do this through our website, we have sample text you can use.
- Send out a link on Facebook, Instagram, or whatever social media you are on, or ask your parents to post for you.
- Send or post at least two reminders to donate as the event gets closer.
- Most importantly, thank everyone who gives and tell them they are helping teens and young adults right here in Vermont turn their lives around!
- All donations are tax-deductible. Spectrum will send receipts to everyone for whom we have addresses.

## What Should Youth Bring to the Event?

Positive attitude and warm gear! See our gear checklist for our recommendations. Use of electronics is not encouraged and cell phones should be turned off—but some groups may want to allow limited use in order to post about the experience on social media.

## Will We Freeze?

This event is cold, but we want you to be safe. If the temperature/wind chill forecast is predicted to be especially cold, please use your discretion in cancelling, rescheduling, or moving your Sleep Out indoors. All youth should have adult supervision and a guardian's permission to participate. We recommend that each group have emergency contact information for each participant. ☺

# Event Checklist

- Register your team** on the Sleep Out website at [www.spectrumsleepout.org](http://www.spectrumsleepout.org). After the team page is set up, encourage your other “sleepers” to sign up with your team and begin fundraising! Each participant will need to sign up on the Spectrum Student Sleep Out web site.
- Raise at least \$25 and get a Sleep Out hat!**
- Choose a safe location** to host your event. A backyard, a school field, a church lawn or similar area are good options. Students under the age of 18 should have an adult leader to help coordinate and make sure there are proper supervision, parental permissions and emergency contacts in place.
- Coordinate all site details**, such as:
  - Setting up (tables, chairs, audio/visual set-up etc.)
  - Access to a nearby building during the night (in case of emergency and for a restroom)
  - Clean up and trash removal
- Decide** if you will be serving any food or drinks at your event.
- Recruit other volunteers** from your organization or family and friends to attend your event and to help you plan it!
- Plan activities** and obtain any materials ahead of time for games, crafts, or other things you schedule for the night.
- Publicize your efforts** using an event poster, via social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram...), e-mail, or any way you can!
- Sleep Out!** Make sure you have all the necessary gear you need. See our Gear Checklist for a complete list of suggestions.
- Clean up the area** you sleep in and try to be sure everyone goes home with their own belongings.
- Share your experience with us!** Tell us about how your Sleep Out went, share photos and reflections on the night. E-mail to Jett Choquette at [jchoquette@spectrumvt.org](mailto:jchoquette@spectrumvt.org) or tag your posts with **#SpectrumSleepout**.

# Gear Checklist

## Recommended

- Sleeping Bag
- Hat
- Scarf/Winter face mask
- Mittens or gloves
- Base Layer Bottom and Top (long underwear)
- Warm layers (preferably not cotton)
- Warm socks (extra pair of dry socks – just in case)
- Winter boots
- Flashlight/headlamp
- Large cardboard box, Thermarest pad or small tarp/garbage bag for ground cover

## Optional

- Hand/Toe Warmers
- Extra blanket
- Thermos/water bottle
- Ear Plugs
- Journal or notebook and pen/pencil to document experience
- Camera to capture the experience in photos

## Many Thanks!

To our premier sponsor:



**CONSTRUCTION**

And to our media sponsor:



# Facts on Youth Homelessness

Homelessness among young people is a serious issue. The National Runaway Switchboard estimates that on any given night there are approximately 1.3 million homeless youth living unsupervised on the streets, in abandoned buildings, with friends, or with strangers.

Vermont is not immune to the problem. In fact, far from it. In 2015, shelters in Vermont provided housing to 784 young people across the state,

and there are an estimated 1,000 young people who are homeless in Vermont each year.

Spectrum's Drop-In Center provides food, clothing, and other basic needs to about 500 youth each year, and our shelter and housing programs serve about 100 youth per year. We also have counseling, mentoring, and skills education programs that serve young people of all backgrounds—including many young people who have places to go home to. For more information, visit [www.spectrumvt.org](http://www.spectrumvt.org). ☺

## Meet the Girl Who Inspired a Movement

The Student Sleep Out was inspired by Celia Andrews from Westford, Vermont! Nine years old at the time, she heard business leaders were sleeping outside on Church Street in March 2013 to raise awareness and funds for homeless youth—and she wanted to get involved.

With her parents' support, she decided to Sleep Out in her own backyard and raise money to help homeless and at-risk youth. We sat down to talk with Celia about what her Sleep Out was like:

### How did you learn about the Sleep Out?

My mom's friend borrowed a sleeping bag to do the Sleep Out the first year Spectrum held it. I thought it was really neat what she was doing.

### What made you want to be involved and sleep out in your own backyard?

I thought it would be fun to sleep outside in the middle of winter and see what it is like to be homeless without a warm bed.

### What did your parents say when you told them you wanted to Sleep Out?

My mom and dad were really proud of me.

### How did you spread the word and ask people to support you with donations?

We had a fundraising site on-line. My mom also put it on her Facebook page, and I sent some emails with the link to my site to lots of

friends and relatives.



### You raised \$1,200 to support homeless youth! Was it hard?

No, people are really generous!

### What was it like?

It was like camping, sort of. But it was cold, and there was snow. I can't really imagine what it would be like to have to sleep outside every night by myself.

### What did you have with you?

I made it through the night because I had a tent, a mattress, and warm blankets. I also dressed in my warmest PJs.

### Do you plan to Sleep Out again? Do you think you can convince your friends to join you?

Yes, we're definitely doing it again! Lots of my friends knew I did it last year, and I think this year they will be ready to join me. I think other kids should do it with their friends too!

### Do you have any advice for other youth who taking part in a Student Sleep Out?

Use lots of blankets!! Also, it's okay to ask people for money, because it's for something really good, not just to buy something for yourself. You are helping homeless kids!

### Any other thoughts to share?

It felt good to raise a lot of money to help homeless youth in Vermont. It also felt like an accomplishment to make it through the whole night! ☺