

Youth Opportunity Center @ YouthLink

Host Your Own Donation Drive

*Thinking about hosting a donation drive to benefit young people experiencing homelessness?
Here's a rundown of the process!*

Why host a donation drive?

In Minnesota every night, 500-600 youth under age 18 and 1,300 young adults age 21 and under are homeless. You can help them get the important items they need by hosting your own YouthLink donation drive. It's an easy way to give back to your community and make a difference in the life of a young person!

- You are our best marketer; donors and supporters who understand the unique value of YouthLink's work and have a passion for ending poverty and homelessness for young people in our community. Introducing YouthLink to your friends, family, and colleagues through a donation drive helps us spread the word about the impacts of homelessness and how YouthLink changes lives every day.
- Supporting YouthLink's critical intervention services through a donation drive makes you part of the solution!
- YouthLink's interventions reach more than 3,000 young people in-crisis or experiencing homelessness each year. Your fundraising efforts will be changing lives!

How do I host a donation drive?

1. **Contact us.** We love to know when an individual or group is considering hosting a donation drive for us. Call or email our fund development office at 612.252.1283 or youthlink@youthlinkmn.org and we can help you determine what items are currently a critical need, provide marketing materials, and answer any other questions you might have.
2. **Spread the word.** Get the word out by talking to friends, neighbors and co-workers, sending an email or using your social network. Below you'll find a sample email and sample Facebook post for you to use. Hang posters in high-traffic areas or distribute to potential donors at gatherings. Talk it up at staff meetings, kid's soccer games or community gatherings, send an announcement in your employee newsletter, or slip the information into a meeting agenda.
3. **Collect your donations.** Create a central place to collect donations whether it's in the office lobby or at your home. Clearly mark containers for donations drop-offs. If someone prefers to make a cash donation, ask for checks made out to YouthLink or they can make donations online at www.youthlinkmn.org.

4. **Drop off your donations at the Youth Opportunity Center at YouthLink.** Our preference is for people to call ahead and speak with a staff member before you drop off your items. The front desk can be reached at 612-252-1200 and can help you coordinate a convenient time to drop off items.

5. **Share your success.** Provide us with your name, contact information and a short story about your efforts, and we may highlight your story on our website or in our newsletter.

Email: youthlink@youthlinkmn.org

Donation Drive Themes:

For more ideas, log-on to <http://www.youthlinkmn.org/donate/in-kind-donations-process/>

Welcome Baskets

YouthLink provides more than 140 units of supportive housing for formerly homeless young people. Many of these young people arrive to their new home with little or no possessions. A basket of basic items supplies a young person with many of the essentials for a new beginning.

- Small laundry basket or trash can as container
- Paper towels
- Toilet paper
- Body Soap/shampoo/conditioner
- Dish soap/sponge
- Cleaning supplies (window cleaner, dusting spray, wipes)
- Bath towel/hand towel
- Twin bed sheet set
- Shower curtain/liner/shower rings

Cooking Up Opportunities

Put together one complete kitchen kit or collect the things on this list to fill multiple kitchens. You will be cooking up a difference in a young person's life.

- Set of 4 dishes & bowl
- Set of 4 drinking glasses
- Small saucepan w/ lid
- Medium saucepan w/ lid
- Skillet
- Large pot w/ lid
- Set of flatware for 4
- Kitchen utensils
- Large mixing spoon
- Microwave (appliances must be new or in working condition)
- Spatula
- Pot holders
- Cutting board
- Cookbook
- Dish Towels

Hygiene Drive

When a young person is forced to live on the streets, deodorant, soap, and a toothbrush can help to turn a person's life around, build trust and point him or her toward a positive future.

- Travel sized & full sized hygiene products (for sensitive skin, when possible)
- Afro-centric hair products
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Feminine hygiene products
- Deodorant

Back-to-School/GED Drive

You have the opportunity to give the gift of an education. Collect these items and you have given a young person the tools necessary for a better future.

- \$25 for GED Fees
- Notebooks
- Flash drives
- Calculators
- Folders
- Rulers
- Pens/pencils
- Backpacks
- Loose leaf paper

Underwear Drive

Most of us take for granted the fact that we have multiple pairs of clean undergarments and socks. A young person who is experiencing homelessness is often wearing all of the clothes he owns.

- New underwear (men and women)
- New bras (particularly large sizes)
- Socks
- Men's undershirts

Clothing Drive

YouthLink hosts our own clothing closet at the Youth Opportunity Center and it is always in use! We accept seasonally and teen appropriate clothing and shoes, as well as professional clothing for job interviews.

Specific winter needs:

- Coats (specifically in XL, XXL, XXXL)
- Hats
- Mittens/gloves
- Scarves
- Boots
- Thick socks

Sample email:

To: Friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, PTA

Subject: Let's help young people experiencing homelessness start school with the confidence and tools they need to succeed

Hi there,

I remember starting the first day of school filled with a combination of excitement and jitters. For young people who are experiencing homelessness, every day at school can be extremely difficult. Constantly moving, living in over-crowded conditions, lack of private space, lack of access to basic necessities like personal hygiene products and facilities, clothing, food and transportation are all barriers to school success, maintaining employment and participating in other youth development opportunities.

That's why I'm supporting a Back to School Drive for YouthLink this year to ensure every young person starts school with tools they need to succeed – and one less thing to worry about. YouthLink provides young people experiencing homelessness an opportunity to succeed through developing skills, training, and resources to succeed academically, including educational reconnection, GED preparation, individualized tutoring, independent living skills and post-secondary readiness.

My goal is to fill 25 backpacks with new school supplies and I need your help! Donations of new school supplies can be dropped off at (insert location) and I will take them to YouthLink. I have fun with shopping and always find great deals that allow me to buy one or two more items, but if shopping isn't your cup of tea, you can always donate online at www.youthlinkmn.org.

Please find a list of school supply items below or give me call for more information!

Thanks,

(insert name)

Sample Facebook Post

Help a young person experiencing homelessness succeed in school! Join me in donating to the Back to School Drive for YouthLink. I would like to fill 25 backpacks with new school supplies. I'm collecting donations at (insert drop off location) through 9/5. If you'd like to help, send me a message!