

Homelessness Week 2020 – Student Challenge: Creative Response to Homelessness

What does a future where no one experiences homelessness look like?

For our future, I envision a community that does not look down on people who are not in the same position as them. A future where no one experiences homelessness is a future that I hope we all aim towards. It is a great feeling to think of everyone in the future being able to wake up inside their home, make their commute to work/school, and at the end of the day, commute back home where they have a safe space and area to rest and recharge for the next day. This is something that our society should strive to achieve for our communities.

Are you aware of the impacts of COVID-19 on people sleeping rough? What have you heard or read about and how have you found out this information?

It goes without saying that the past 6 months have allowed the world to experience something that would happen in a film... and not a comedy film...

When governments worldwide announced that it was time for the public to settle down in their homes and refrain from setting foot outside, unless it was to attend to essential errands, the majority of people's frustrations was towards the boredom of staying at home. For the main bulk of our community, we did not think of the people who had nowhere to self-isolate if they displayed covid-19 symptoms, or to socially distance from others, especially if they were at risk (a factor that enhances the importance of socially distancing). Having a designated area to wash our hands regularly, especially during this time, is a concept so basic to most of us, but for those experiencing homelessness, it can prove to be very difficult. Meanwhile, people experiencing homelessness had to think of alternative solutions to protecting themselves from a virus that was creating fear amongst everyone. This was an added stress to every other aspect of homelessness.

Over social media, certain photos circulated, showing many people sleeping in a limited spaced area as that was their only option. This resultantly broke social distancing rules, and was a catalyst for a heated discussion in the comment section regarding the homelessness issue in our communities, especially during Covid-19.

How do you think other social crises feed into homelessness, i.e. unemployment, food insecurity, mental health issues.

It is definitely a cycle with upstream, midstream and low-stream factors that all feed into homelessness.

Unemployment leads to lack of income which will consequentially result in limited options in regards to accommodation, food options and health maintenance.

When a good diet is ignored due to cheaper and unhealthier options, health is compromised and leads to overall lower confidence. Unfortunately, this impacts on a person's employment ability, and hence, goes back to feeding into homelessness.

Mental health issues, depending on the severity, can impact on an individual's ability to work and their employment factor. If an individual's mental health status prevents them

from being employed, this again reinforces a low income and less options for self-care, which will ultimately feed into all the other factors that go into homelessness.

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