

Fundraising for the Emergency Shelter for Women - Miramichi

By: Rebecca Stewart

Step One: Identifying your concern

My initial concern that drove this project was youth homelessness. I wanted to figure out how I could help as many youth as possible. Another group was targeting the same thing and they were focusing their efforts in Fredericton. Since I am teaching in Miramichi I decided to target Miramichi. Youth homelessness is not as prominent in Miramichi as it is in Fredericton because the population is smaller. However it does happen and there are only so many places for youth to go. Homelessness is something that greatly affects a youth's ability to perform in school and is a very serious issue that needs to be addressed in far more depth than I was able to do here.

Step Two: Researching your concern

The first questions I asked myself were 'Is youth homelessness common in Miramichi? Does it even happen? In what way can I help?' After some investigation that included talking to local shelters and making observations at my high school I found out that youth homelessness does happen in Miramichi. However I found that a lot of the times homeless youth are passing through the area and either going to bigger cities themselves or being sent there by local shelters. This happens for a lot of different reasons. Larger cities sometimes have better opportunities for this youth. Sometimes they have programs that would be better equipped to help the youth and other times the youth need a fresh start away from negative influences that they may have gotten sucked in to in the local area.

In Miramichi there are several places that can help youth who are homeless. There is a hostel, a youth house, a youth home and the emergency shelter for women. After some research I found that the emergency shelter for women houses children, boy and girls younger than sixteen years of age as long as they are accompanied by their mother. Girls over sixteen can stay there independently. The shelter is a temporary home meant to help people get back on their feet and to teach them how to help themselves. The one thing that I found out about the shelter that I really liked is that they will share donations with other organizations in the area who are trying to help homeless youth. Occasionally the youth home or youth house will call the shelter to see if they have winter jackets or warm clothes for youth in need who they are carrying for. Sometimes the shelter will have extra donations and they will gladly share them. The shelter stores their donations until they are needed. If a client comes in who needs anything practical they see if they have it. They will supply their clients with anything they need if they can. I decided to raise donations for the Emergency Shelter for women in hopes that the donations would reach the greatest number of youths who need it.

Step Three: Find out who supports you

The community of Miramichi is very good with supporting the shelter. People make individual donations and groups do as well. Local business will often help fundraise for a cause such as this. The staff at the shelter are very friendly and are always appreciative of donations. I also received lots of support from my family and friends.

Step Four: Create a Plan

My initial plan was to get my school involved fundraising for the Emergency Shelter for Women. I had intended on talking to a local pizza place for donations of pizza to sell by the slice at lunch hour to

raise money for the shelter. I also was going to knit scarves to donate and recruit students at the school to help knit scarves or bring in other donations for the shelter. However, February was a busy month at the school and it was not possible to organize a fundraiser through the school. Since I was only there once a week I was not able to be around often enough to organize a knitting club. Students were not very receptive to the idea. Therefore I had to modify my plan.

My plan shifted to myself and a few friends knitting scarves on our own. Friends and family became my biggest supports. I also collected donations of yarn and cloths from family and friends.

Step Five: Take Action

My initial plan did not work. The school was suffering from fundraiser exhaustion. Because I had to be in Fredericton for five days of the week and there was little interest from the students my knitting club did not work out. However some on-the-go revisions led my project to be fairly successful. Between a few friends and myself, we were able to knit a dozen scarves and a few pairs of mitts in a few weeks. I collected donations of cloths and boots from people on campus and at home and so far I have several bags full of cloths. The knitting is ongoing. I still have enough yarn for about six more scarves.

Step Six: Evaluate your plan

My plan seemed like it would be successful when I was thinking about how to go about this project. However I had a lot of obstacles that prevented me from doing exactly what I wanted to do. That did not stop my project from being a success however it just forced some changes on to it. My initial plan would have worked better if the timing had not have been so unfortunate. If this plan was implemented in September as opposed to February the school community would have been a lot more receptive. After months of fundraising for many other causes all year long the students and staff need a break or they become unresponsive to all fundraisers. My availability was another problem. If I was at

the school full time or even more than once a week it would have been much better for organizing a group effort in the school. Students are not receptive to people who are not around very often. I hope that during my Seven week placement that I can organize a similar take action/enrichment project that would go over much more smoothly.

By the time I knew for sure that implementing this plan in my school was not going to work it was well into February. I had been knitting on my own from the beginning so I had at least some progress. I decided that the best course of action that would yield the most results would be to recruit friends and family to help me. At this point my goal was to raise as many donations as possible in the short amount of time that I had. Friends and fellow students on campus were very supportive. They gave many donations of yarn and cloths. My roommates and family were another great help.

Step Seven: Apply your learning

Looking back I wish I had of been able to implement this project through a Social Studies class. A project like this would be perfect for a world Issues class at the high school level. A project like this is a perfect way to get students aware of the world around them and the fact that they can be a force of positive change in that world. I am currently working on another plan that I hope to implement during my seven week placement.

After this project I realize the level of organization and dedication it takes to make something like this work. I also now realize how much something like this project benefits from working with a team. A project like this will probably not go off without any hic-ups. Mine certainty did not. It is important to be able to adapt your plan and project to the circumstances that you are forced to work in

or your project will fall apart. It is better to make some changes then to quit. It is necessary to be flexible in order to do this.

Step Eight: Celebrate your success

I celebrated my success by taking some time for some much needed rest! 😊 Now I am planning my next project.