

Community Action Ministries', (CAM's) "One Night in a Box" event was a great success, despite the weather Friday, March 27, 2009. The threat of a huge snowstorm did not deter 36 participants from braving the cold spring snowstorm to learn more about the homelessness situation here in our own community. About half of the group set-up cardboard boxes outside to sleep; just like many homeless people would have to be doing that very night. The other half decided to seek shelter that was available, thanks to University Christian Church. Majority of the group had gone all day without eating, in order to get a true feel of what it might be like to receive only one meal a day. The group was feed stone soup and ate out of the can they donated for the meal and was offered bread that was donated by J R's Restaurant. .

When asked to in vision a homeless person, most people think of a middle-aged man that wears tattered clothing, living in a large city. In reality, most homeless people are women and children who live in the suburbs. Over 600,000 people in Oklahoma will experience hunger at least a few days during the month, not by choice. Participant were given a sack of different amounts of commodities (candy representing money) when they arrived. Inside the sack, they found an explanation of why they had become homeless for the night. Many had reached this destination because of circumstance beyond their control, such as an accident, loss of a job, or health reasons. A few had become homeless due to poor decisions such as dropping out of school and not being able to find a decent job, or their involvement with drugs and or alcohol. Participants were able to buy extra food and other supplies with their commodities. This role-playing activity gave the group an eye opening experience. They walked away saying they would not be so judgmental when they found out that someone was homeless.

The Youth Advisory Council of CAM decided to donate the funds raised, which was a little over \$1,500, to Bridges, formerly known as ILSY, a non-profit organization that helps homeless teenagers in our area. Andy, a former recipient of Bridges gave a testimony of how the organization has helped him. He is a junior at OU, with a 4.0 point grade average. He admitted that he would not be where he was if it had not been for loving people and organizations like Bridges reaching out to him during the rough years of his life. When asked what he wished classmate would have done while in high school, he said he wished they would have asked him more questions so that he would have had the opportunity to share more about homelessness and what kind of programs are here in our own community to help people like himself.

When asked at 7:30 AM , when the event ended, if they would do this again, they all said an overwhelmingly YES!

CAM offers volunteer opportunities working for non-profit organizations, hospice patients, as well as widows and senior citizens in the community, once a month during the school year. CAM participants must be in sixth grade or older. They have accomplished over 14,000 hours of volunteer time. CAM is preparing for its 9th summer of hosting 3- Free Local Summer Mission Opportunities. Check out their website for more information (www.cam-inc.net) or contact the Executive Director, Donna Hooper, at cam-inc@cox.net or 329-8041.