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INTERESTING

Want to Really Help the Homeless This Holiday Season? Donate Socks.

They're among the most needed items at shelters.

Michelle Woo • 2 weeks ago

Being without socks, especially during the cold and wet season, can lead to all sorts of foot ailments: blisters, fungus, frostbite, and in extreme cases, blood poisoning, and deep bone infections. But many homeless people don't have clean, dry pairs of socks available.

In Reddit's [Today I Learned community](#), Reddit user ironypatrol pointed to the finding that socks are among the most needed—but least donated—items at homeless shelters.

According to Tom Costello Jr., founder and “Chief Sock Person” of Philadelphia-based nonprofit [The Joy of Sox](#), new socks can even be more important than food since many homeless people have access to soup kitchens and pantries.

“If I ask people what they do with their old clothes, they’ll probably say they donate them,” Costello Jr. tells Upvoted. “But what about socks? Since their socks usually have holes in them, they’ll get trashed. So a homeless person going to a clothes distribution center might get shirts, sweaters and other clothing items, but not socks.” Since 2011, the organization has [distributed nearly 157,000 pairs of new socks](#) to the local homeless population.

Reddit users, some who have experienced homelessness themselves, shared their insight donating socks.

One noted that the socks must be new and clean.

re-verse

74 points • 14 days ago

I spent a bit of time being homeless and socialized with a bunch of longer time homeless people. Something I learned is that many of them are oddly enough really germaphobic, even if they are filthy. Once I was back on my feet, I tried to give a guy I'd known a few pairs of socks I'd bought at a store, and he had no interest in them. The trick was to go to a store where they in plastic wrap. I found an 8 pack of tube socks that were still encased in plastic, and he nearly cried in happiness.

TLDR: If you buy homeless people socks, they have a better change of getting worn if they are wrapped up.

from discussion [TIL socks are among the most needed items at homeless shelters, yet among the least-often donated.](#) on [/r/todayilearned](#)



Another offered a simple way to remember to donate them.

1st_thing_on_my_mind

170 points • 14 days ago

Been socking the homeless since I became not homeless. It was one of my big sought after items when I was out there so now I buy them and pass them out regularly. Its cheap, its easy and well appreciated by those on the street.

The simplest thing you can do is take 1 pair out of every pack of socks you buy or receive and give them away. Thats so easy and you wont miss that pair.

from discussion [TIL socks are among the most needed items at homeless shelters, yet among the least-often donated.](#) on [/r/todayilearned](#)



This redditor gave the idea of having a pair ready to go at all times.

whatispunk

22 points • 13 days ago

I heard this recently too and started keeping a couple pairs of warm wool socks in my car. The other day I saw a guy at an intersection asking for change. He came over to my car and I handed him the socks. He looked at me, smiled, then said, "Well there's a million dollars right there".

from discussion [TIL socks are among the most needed items at homeless shelters, yet among the least-often donated.](#) on [/r/todayilearned](#)



Others mentioned [Bombas](#) and [Divvy](#), two companies that will donate a pair socks for every pair sold.

Check out the full discussion in the [original Reddit thread](#). Then go forth and help, two warm feet at a time.

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