



Episode 17 – The Significance of ECYEH Awareness Week, November 11-15 Transcript

Matt Butensky:

Welcome to our podcast, I Will Be Your Voice: Stories of Homelessness and Hope. I am so excited for today's episode. We're coming back to our podcast after a couple months, and I am your host today, Matt Butensky, Youth Development Project Manager with the Center for Schools and Communities. And I'm joined by my colleague here, Taylor. Hey, Taylor.

Taylor Teichman:

Hello. Hi, all. I'm Taylor Teichman, Youth Development Coordinator at the Center for Schools and Communities. Thanks so much. I'm excited to be co-hosting with you today.

Matt Butensky:

Awesome, Taylor, glad to have you as a co-host. And today we're talking all about homeless student awareness, and we cannot have a better guest than Sonia Pitzi, one of our regional coordinators with the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program here in Pennsylvania to talk about Homeless Student Awareness Week and Pennsylvania Awareness so that we can raise important awareness not only during November, but throughout the year. So Sonia, welcome to the podcast.

Sonia Pitzi:

Thank you so much. It is such an honor to be here to see you and Taylor, I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about this.

Matt Butensky:

And you are our first returning guest speaker of the podcast.

Sonia Pitzi:

I'm very honored about that as well.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, so you're the first returning speaker, and again we're talking about Homeless Student Awareness Week. So we wanted to jump right in. We wanted to let everyone know that this important week recognizes and brings awareness to the importance of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the education needed to provide stability and consistency to children and youth experiencing homelessness across Pennsylvania.

So with that, we know that schools and organizations are going to be hosting activities throughout Homelessness Awareness Week, which you're going to tell us the dates, you're going to tell us all the details, you're going to tell us what's going on. So really I just want to open it up to you to first share when the week is this year.

Sonia Pitzi:

Okay. Well, this year it is Monday, November 11th through Friday, November 15th. November 13th, we will be having a Capital Event. And November 15th is where we have an ask where ask everyone to wear red and put it on social media with our hashtags that we'll go through. And that's the easiest ask we can ask for anyone in the state of Pennsylvania as well as across the country because this is a federal law, so we ask all of the folks that we know across the country to help participate in raising awareness about McKinney-Vento and about the educational importance for any student experiencing homelessness.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah. So two important dates. Wednesday, November 13th and Friday, November 15th. We'll talk more about the details. I think because you're here and you've been doing this for quite some time, let's talk about the origin story.

Sonia Pitzi:

Sure.

Matt Butensky:

We all love an origin story, we love a backstory. So can you-

Sonia Pitzi:

A little meet-cute.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, a little meet-cute. So can you tell us about your work as a regional coordinator and then also how this week evolved and came to be here in Pennsylvania and then nationally too?

Sonia Pitzi:

So as a regional coordinator, we are charged with making sure that all the districts in our region have professional development opportunities, that they learn what each liaison in every district needs to know, and also how we can build the community bridge between schools and the different places that they can go to for resources for anybody who's experiencing homelessness.

McKinney-Vento has a very different definition than HUD, so it's very important to have that differentiation. So while I have been doing this for... this will be 29 years this year working specifically with McKinney-Vento, 11 years ago, it became a conversation that I was having with someone who worked at the Capitol who said, "We really talk a lot about homelessness and this is Homelessness and Hunger Awareness Month, but we don't really know a lot about the education piece." So through brainstorming and just a conversation, it became let's really focus in on a specific week that talks about the education piece because the education piece is something that falls to the wayside. When anyone is experiencing homelessness, they're thinking about food, shelter, and clothing, understandably.

So we want to talk about why education is important, the stability, the consistency, the fact that we can get students in a chair, let the adults take care of the adult stuff we have to take care of and let the students be students. But in order to know that that's out there, you have to let people know that you can stay in your school of origin, transportation can be given to you. They have to know that McKinney-Vento exists and what the rights are under that.

So this week is important to just talk more about the education and the importance of that because our students have said that while they're experiencing homelessness, school is the best place for them to be. There's some place warm and safe, there's some place that they're receiving food, there's some place where their friends are, where their sense of community is.

So the week really started with just making sure that we really focusing on the importance of education and why we need to talk about it because people don't talk about that piece enough. And McKinney-Vento is different in their definition than HUD and is more encompassing and I think is more based on the realities of folks who are experiencing homelessness.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, so important. We were talking about that a little bit in our warm-up conversation about, you had mentioned that November is Homelessness and Hunger Awareness Month, but having that distinction of education is really important because I think we talked about some numbers. Do you want to share the numbers from where you started back...? I don't know when you started.

Sonia Pitzi:

So we started this 11 years ago. So 11 years ago, the numbers were just over 19,000 that were identified in the state of Pennsylvania. Those were the official numbers that we had that for data. 11 years later, the 2022, 2023 school year data, which is our last official or latest official data shows close to 47,000 students. So when you think about...

Matt Butensky:

Wow.

Sonia Pitzi:

... how much in 11 years we have identified, some of that is because we have raised awareness, some of that is because of the education that we have provided to both districts and communities, but also we have a crisis in the country, in the state of Pennsylvania. So when we have that housing crisis, we're going to see those numbers. And that's why it's important to talk about this because if we can't identify these students, then they're not going to be in school and they're going to get lost and they're going to lose all of those important pieces that education is there for to offer the safe space and the food and the consistency and the community and all of that. So yeah, I mean, just over 19,000 to close to 47,000 is a big leap in 11 years.

Matt Butensky:

That's a very big leap. And I think we talk about, and on our team and in the state, we talk about how students experiencing homelessness are often hidden in schools in our communities, and that's why this week is important because for a long time we didn't think about how those non-education needs affect their school day and why we aren't seeing students graduate at higher rates or why they're facing certain academic challenges in school. We didn't talk about that they might not have a home at night or they might not have food security, and it really does impact their education.

So I think it's just so important and brilliant that you started to have this awareness week around specifically education because it's important to just hone in and narrow in.

Sonia Pitzi:

Absolutely.

Matt Butensky:

So Taylor, anything you wanted to chime in on or ask or see?

Taylor Teichman:

I just love, again, that the emphasis right around this awareness week in particular is of course around those education supports for students, especially when we know with the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness that so many of those students that even within that leap between that 19,000 plus to now the 42,000 plus that so many of those students are experiencing doubled up situations. So I think that's also just kind of something I was thinking about, Sonia, when you were kind of bringing that message home. I'm curious actually in conjunction with awareness week, why the color red, right? Our color for awareness week is red, so I'd love to also maybe as part of that origin story, why red?

Sonia Pitzi:

So that's purely selfish. Red is my favorite color. Red to me represents joy, love, as well as anger, upsetness. And if you think about the myriad of emotions that someone who's experiencing homelessness may have, I felt like that, while it was selfish, I felt like I could really speak to why red was an important color.

I want to say that in another region, they had blue for... they had done Blue Shirt Day for their region, and it just has evolved into now just being we're all united and having it be Red Shirt Day. So I want to recognize that I was not the origin of the having the shirt day kind of thing, but it stayed in red because of the state Capital Events and all of that. So it has just now been consistent and is now united in red with the myriad of emotions.

I think it's a good... While it's, again, the selfish reason, I really do feel that it does portray the emotions and the many emotions. And anytime I talk with students and about this awareness week and we talk about red, they're just like, "That is such a good color. It's love and anger all in one." And I'm like, "Yes." I mean, valid and perfectly fair. And that's a great perception of why that is. And it's an easy ask for people to wear red and show it on social media because the impact that it has when these students and families see red, the social media, all the socials, all of that stuff, when they see people wear red and the hashtags, they're just amazed that people take the time to listen to why...

"Sonia, they're wearing red because you told them?" I'm like, "Well, I asked them. And yes, they're taking the time out of their day and being very intentional about posting this and putting the hashtags and understanding why they are doing that." So I think the intentional messaging is very important, and that they do hear it, and they do know that, and that's students as young as six have said, "Oh, look at all the red. People do care about us." And it's sad that they feel that they aren't cared about.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, it's awesome how you can take things that are simple like wearing red, and it really is impactful and it's a simple message. But I know if we have some listeners or a couple of weeks ago at our annual conference, we had our Wear Red Day and we had the room lit up in red, and it was powerful that we just could be united in that way for this mission.

And what's interesting is I have been involved in this program for about eight years now, and I always associate McKinney-Vento with red. So you have made your mark and left your impact because I just think McKinney-Vento, Pennsylvania, and it's going to be red if we're designing anything at the Center for Schools and Communities for McKinney-Vento, there's going to be red in it. So anyway, so that's good. Anything else, Taylor?

Taylor Teichman:

As you mentioned with us having recently our Wear Red Day at our conference just a few weeks ago too, I just love too, when asking folks to wear red on our Wear Red Friday, which is again November 15th this year, I love that there's also some autonomy in that, right? And so even at our conference, it

was really beautiful to kind of see the variety of ways in which people did show up in wearing their red, so. [inaudible 00:13:02].

Sonia Pitzi:

And it was great because some people didn't know why they were wearing red, and I overheard some of them, and it was a perfect opportunity to just be like, "Hey, this is why you're wearing red, and that's why we have the hashtag, let's have a conversation, because that is what this is about." The week is about starting the conversation. This week is just a week, but we have these conversations all year round, we raise awareness all year round, and by having an intentional week, we can talk and have very concentrated events and very concentrated press, but it carries over throughout the year.

Matt Butensky:

And if you were sitting in the room with me now that we're recording the podcast, and you'd be able to see that Sonia is wearing her signature red sequin, Dorothy-esque slippers, kind of clogs, right?

Sonia Pitzi:

Yes, yes.

Matt Butensky:

I love those. Very, very festive, and on message.

Sonia Pitzi:

That started, gosh, I don't know how many years ago, at least eight years ago, maybe 10 years ago. I had found a pair of flats that were reminiscent of Dorothy and The Wizard of Oz, and they were inexpensive. I bought them more of I'll wear those, and the kids just thought it was awesome. And then my unaccompanied teenagers that I do outreaches to were like, "Sonia, you have to wear them every day in November." I'm like, "I don't know if I can wear them every day." And they're like, "We're experiencing homelessness every day." So then it was like, Ugh. But then that graduated to my current shoes.

But it's true, these are conversation starters, and I will wear them every day, and I show accountability pictures to the unaccompanied teens that I work with to show that I'm wearing them. And on Facebook we have that as something... It's, again, I'm not a girly-girl, so sequins and glitter and all that is kind of a... it's interesting for those who know me who are just like, "What are you wearing? Okay, it's awareness month. All right, let's talk about that." And I'm like, "Yeah, okay, this works."

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, and again, like you said, a conversation starter. Very Dorothy-esque clogs and No Place Like Home.

Sonia Pitzi:

No Place Like Home.

Matt Butensky:

So you can really have a conversation about those.

Sonia Pitzi:

Yep, and home can be a person.

Taylor Teichman:

Well, and even speaking about accountability, what I love about awareness week too is so much of the professional development and training that is happening throughout the year is of course geared towards educators and youth serving professionals. But I love that awareness week too kind of brings them that accountability and peer-to-peer support when we're encouraging schools and students to show up wearing red as well, right? So I just also love that during awareness week, we're really encouraging students to show up for one another and to support and have each other's back.

Sonia Pitzi:

That has been a really great evolution of this, is that we have had students who when districts are participating in this, everybody participates. So no one is singled out if they're wearing red, that you're wearing red because you're homeless. It's everybody's participating when we're raising awareness. And to have the conversations and have their peers learn about what McKinney-Vento Act is and what the definition of homelessness is because people have certain stereotypes. They still believe or still envision, and when they hear different parts of it, they're like, "Oh."

And the students and families that we work with just really love that they can have that, again, that intentional piece of this, this whole thing and this intentional piece of raising awareness and what it can look like so that we can remove more of the bias that is harmful.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah. So you are a regional coordinator for the program. Can you tell us what, if we're learning from the ground up, if you're learning from the ground up here, what are some of the activities or supports that your office might provide in a school or what are some activities that the school homeless liaison might be doing with their students that are experiencing homelessness not just this week or this month, but throughout the year? So what does that look like on the ground for how schools support students that are experiencing homelessness?

Sonia Pitzi:

So a lot of schools will do drives, clothing drives, food drives, hygiene drives, that kind of thing, not just during this month, but during other times. And that will go towards those students who are experiencing homelessness or students who are in poverty, et cetera. The importance of school being able to provide those resources is we have education funds that are only supposed to be spent for educational purposes, so curriculum, backpacks, those types of things. What we don't have funding for but is looked for from the school level is for clothing, traditional clothing, not just uniform, but traditional clothing, for food.

In Pennsylvania, we're lucky we have breakfast that is for everybody, so we don't have to worry about that. But free lunch is part of the McKinney-Vento Act if you're identified, so again, the importance of identification. And by having people know about what's needed at each school district level, they can have things like the clothing drives and the intentional... Some churches want to donate, and they'll ask, "Well, I'd like to donate a backpack.

But a school district is able to say, "I love that you want to donate. Thank you. We'll never turn down a donation. However, this is what we need more because we can provide the school supplies, but what we can't supply that we think is just as important to the whole student are things like hygiene items, things like clothing that is new or gently used."

Those are all important things that if you think about yourself, if you think about when you woke up today to go to work, what did you yourself need to get ready to go for work? Think about if you had the challenge of living in one of the situations where you're identified as experiencing homelessness what that would look like, if you're sharing a hotel, if you're doubled up with other people and you have to share showers, if you're in a shelter and you have to be out of the church basement by a certain time, but then the shelter only has three showers and there's 60 people who need showers, what all of the things that have to line up in order for you to be successful for a day.

So the schools have been a place for students to be able to get those things that help them be more successful for a good day so that you can have food, so that you can have a good shower or you can have clean clothes because all our districts also provide washer-dryers. We were able to, with the ARP ESSER funds, help facilitate buying some dryers for some of our districts. And I think that was a great use of funds to be able to say to our students and families here, wash your clothes because people don't think about that. We take those types of things for granted, to be able to wash your clothes whenever you want.

So having schools and having us as regional coordinators help support those things is always important. To help, again, from the portion of it, we also can't... we don't have the funds to spend on anything that's not education specific. So it is important. People want to donate. People will ask me to do a speaking engagement and they'll donate \$100 and that goes into a fund where I can pass that around for whatever, have discretionary funds because important to have, so.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, thank you for illustrating that. I think because so many families can probably resonate with that, it's just hard for them to get out the door in the morning with their children when they don't have to

worry about those essential items. So when you really think about what some people do not have, just getting there is sometimes hard. So thanks for telling us about that.

I wanted to talk more about the Capital Event on Wednesday, November 13th. Can you tell us more about the when, where because essentially this podcast episode will be released so people could potentially attend, and/or it's just important to know what will take place and why it is taking place on Wednesday, November 13th?

Sonia Pitzi:

So the Capital Event is going to be Wednesday, November 13th from 10:00 to 11:00. I think that's the right time. From 10:00 to 11:00, we are going to be presenting at a hearing to the Education and Children and Youth Committee, which is a great opportunity for not just myself, but other agencies in the state to speak about students experiencing homelessness to the committees that are housed with representatives and staff who... so people who can make policy changes, people who can affect change from the Capitol area.

The reason we call it the Capital Event is because they do a resolution every year, and it's put together from the representative side. And this year I think we'll have the senate side as well, and the reps and senators will do a press event then following the committee hearing to talk about the resolution. And both events are public, so you can come.

I think it's great that we have this hearing component. Last year was the first year we did it. I did not know what it was going to be when I talked about it going into it until it happened. And then when it happened, it was like, "Oh, well, this is a phenomenal opportunity to talk to representatives and know that we're educating them." I'm not lobbying anybody. I'm just educating you about what this is, what the state of Pennsylvania looks like, and how this is and why this is about. And it was great to have the different voices at the table to talk to the hearing.

So this is the second year that we're participating in the hearing, which is just great. And then that's a public... Anyone can attend that. And they also have an online version, so you can listen or watch it online. And then we have a press event that anyone can show up at. And I'll be speaking at the press event as well as with the representatives who are putting forth the resolution, Representative Curry, Rep Izzy, and just kind of talking again to the importance of why education is important.

The Capital Event is a great way to kind of unify Pennsylvania. So that's why we started having... When we started this, it was, again, the intentional piece of it, the intentional piece to have legislation to say this week we're resolving to make this a week so that we can bring it to the forefront because I am just this little peon in a little pond where if we bring it to the Capital Event and representatives, they can talk more to it, they can talk about the awareness piece and have that part of it. So I invite anybody in the area to come because it's public hearing and it's a public press event.

And, if you come, wear red because, again, I think it is a powerful statement visually. I think that makes a really good visual, as Taylor mentioned at our state conference. It was great to see the sea of red. It's a powerful thing to see that, and it's powerful from a press viewpoint.

When I first started this, I was disheartened when I would have reporters ask me, "Well, Sonia, what's the hook? What's the hook to talk about this?" And I couldn't understand why the hook wasn't that we have children who are experiencing homelessness. Why do I have to give you...? They wanted me to give them names of students that they could interview and put on TV, and I refused to do that because they're living in the trauma. And to put that on there, and students might think, "Oh, yeah, I'm on TV, and think it's really great."

But we as adults know what can happen, how kids can be mean, and now they're going to be the face of homelessness? That's not what this week is about. I will give voice to those stories, and I will, at the hearing, I will share what students have shared with me about different things. I've read stories that students have written themselves at the press events. Sometimes I just share stories in a general thing. But it's a great event, I think, for folks to go to.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah. And you sort of gave a little bit of backstory on the name of this podcast and the hashtag in your work in Region 3 that I will be your voice so that we don't increase stigma and tokenize certain students for speaking out themselves.

Sonia Pitzi:

Right.

Matt Butensky:

A little birdie, when you were talking, did just confirm what you had mentioned that the information session is at 10:00 AM. So I just wanted to make sure we all knew that it's at 10:00 AM. And then the press conference and rally is at 11:30 AM, and that is at the Pennsylvania State Capitol Complex Rotunda, 501 North 3rd Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. So great.

Sonia Pitzi:

Thanks for that confirmation, little birdie.

Matt Butensky:

Little birdie. Taylor, anything you wanted to note about the Capital Event? I know you've attended a few years, just any reflection or insight?

Taylor Teichman:

I mean, with the I Will Be Your Voice, I think it's so impactful, Sonia, when you've been able to share those stories from students. I feel like I've been in the room with you in a variety of settings at the Capital Event and also at our conferences previously. And so I've felt firsthand that impact and I've seen

a room of folks impacted by those stories. And so I just think it's such an impactful approach and way that we're able to share the experiences of students across the state.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, and I mean, it's making its impact and it's making its mark because for the first time for the past couple of years now, there has been discussion that the state of Pennsylvania could possibly provide funding specifically for the education of students experiencing homelessness, which currently is a federal program through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. So there is no state funds tied specifically to the education of ECYEH students. So I mean, that speaks to, it is important to involve legislators so that those conversations around budgets and putting money towards the issue could have a bigger impact.

Sonia Pitzi:

And it helps to not only have that statewide conversation, but for instance, Philadelphia School District right now, they've heard the importance of having more funding specifically for students experiencing homelessness, and they have intentionally put money into their operational budget, which is the first time ever that that's been a thing. And it's millions of dollars. And that's a huge win, and hopefully a starting ripple for other districts to be able to say, we can make it work, we can find the funds, or we can get funds for this very important thing because the more successful our students are, the more successful our districts are in being able to educate them and turning out the graduation rates, the graduation rates increase. We don't want to see them decrease, we want to see them increase and keep all of the leveling of state testing and all of those things. And you can only do that if you can provide these students with basic needs to be successful during a day, showing up.

Someone asked me what I thought success looked like when I thought of students experiencing homelessness, and that varies. Showing up some days is a major success. Showing up consecutive days is a major success. Showing up and staying awake can be successful because they've showed up. So the ultimate success for this is a high school diploma, is graduating.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, absolutely. Pathways to graduation, and the program helps create those pathways.

Sonia Pitzi:

Absolutely.

Matt Butensky:

So we wanted to let everyone know that there is a ECYEH or Student Experiencing Homelessness Awareness Week toolkit available on the Center for Schools and Communities website right now. You can find it at ecyehpennsylvania.center-school.org.

Taylor, did you want to share with our listeners what type of information they could find at our Pennsylvania toolkit, or would you like me to talk about that?

Taylor Teichman:

Sure. I mean, I can get us started, and then, Matt, you can certainly jump in. So we do have some digital content on there that folks can be using as part of that Wear Red on Friday, as part as folks are taking photos of what they're wearing and posting that we have digital content that can be used.

We have some posters and flyers available as well that just share some additional ways that you can participate all week during awareness week. We have a few other initiatives through the center that we're hoping folks might be interested in utilizing.

As part of awareness week, we have the Bridge Project, which is a free mental health service for students experiencing homelessness. We have our Finding Your Way in PA app that we're encouraging folks to share with students, share with families, download to their phones if they haven't done that yet. So those are some of the few additional initiatives that we have available as part of that toolkit.

Sonia Pitzi:

And I want to really hone in on the Bridge Project because I think that is very important. I've always said that we need to normalize talking about mental health and being able to talk about depression, anxiety, all of those things. And having the Bridge Project is a really important tool that state is able to provide to any student who's experiencing homelessness. And really talking about that to all of our districts and all of our families that this exists and how they can tap into it, and that it costs nothing to the student and family is very important because you can imagine the impact it has on their mental health.

Again, just the anxiety that can happen, the crisis that we've seen or I've seen personally for my unaccompanied teens that I work with, the depression, all of that. And to let them know that we have a place for you to talk to someone where... Because right now, mental health professionals, there's months long waiting list. So the Bridge Project allows for pretty immediate access.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, we really hope that schools are including the Bridge Project in their conversations, as Taylor said and you said about awareness week this year because currently it is being underutilized and we do have the resources now, and they're available for a limited time, so we hope more people learn about the Bridge Project, which as was said is for free mental health teletherapy for McKinney-Vento eligible students in Pennsylvania.

We also, with that, we do have an ECYEH cell phone project currently going on. We still have service equipped devices available that will include service duration up to March of 2026. So it is a cell phone device that will be requested by a school homeless liaison and shipped to the school for the homeless liaison to give to their student that's experiencing homelessness, keep them connected to school and vital resources in their area and connected to family. So we do have the ECYEH cell phone project still

available right now that we hope people will learn more about. And you can learn more about all of them, as I said, at our ecyehpennsylvania.center-school.org website.

And Taylor, you have a webinar next week as well. It is also on Wednesday, November 13th, but if you're not available-

Taylor Teichman:

It is on.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, but if you're not available to attend the Capital Event, we do have a webinar on Wednesday for those farther away. Do you want to share what the topic of that webinar is?

Taylor Teichman:

Yeah, sure. So we do, we have a webinar scheduled as part of our ECYEH learning series that we have taking place for the 2024/2025 school year. We're offering a webinar every month throughout the school year. And so on Wednesday, November 13th at 10:00 AM we have Dr. Jessica Houston joining us to explore well-being strategies for educators, supporting students experiencing homelessness and vulnerable students across the education platform, I should say.

So we're really excited to have her joining us. She's a top 50 speakers globally, and so we're very honored to have her joining us from Atlanta, Georgia, for that webinar.

Matt Butensky:

Great, yeah. And as was shared, we do have digital content that's available for download, like flyers that could be posted in schools or your organization advertising Red Shirt Day, which is Friday, November 15th. We can all say it together now.

Sonia Pitzi:

ECYEH, we can.

Matt Butensky:

ECYEH. And we also have a virtual background that you can use during your meetings and other events that you have coming up next week or throughout the month of November, of course. So yeah, we have a whole toolkit available that you can learn more about this important week.

Sonia, anything else you wanted to share or emphasize during our episode today?

Sonia Pitzi:

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No, again, just reiterating the importance of education for our students who are experiencing homelessness and how we can create that to be a priority without it being a burden, that this law exists, and there's a reason it exists, it's to reduce and remove any barrier to an educational path of success. So with that knowledge, we can help these students just be students and be able to just sit in a classroom and just be a student, be present, and not worry about the outside stuff. It's still going to be there. We're not going to eliminate that worry, but we're going to diminish it a lot.

And just, again, I can't emphasize enough how wearing red on November 15th is just such a great thing and such a simple ask. I really feel it is a simple ask for folks to post. People are on socials all the time. I'm technology challenged and I still can do some of the things. And while my nieces and nephews will say Facebook is for old people, I fully embrace that because I know how to post onto Facebook. I don't know how to post on the other ones, but we have that, we have our handles for both X and Instagram. I need to make sure I didn't say-

Matt Butensky:

And Facebook.

Sonia Pitzi:

And Facebook. I needed to make sure I didn't say Polaroid and tweety bird. That's usually what I-

Matt Butensky:

Twitter.

Sonia Pitzi:

Yeah, so we encourage people to do that with the hashtags because it really is just impactful. And I've always said that we provide the ripples and the ripples just gather into just this wonderful wave of success, and enough waves, can you imagine enough waves connecting from Pennsylvania across the country? We really can set it up for a tsunami of success. And I think that's great. And I always say that together we can make a difference. And as we say in Region 3, ECYEH, we can. So it's a great way to do it.

Matt Butensky:

Well said, well said. And you can find the Facebook page @ECYEHPA. So again, share on Facebook at their page @ECYEHPA.

Taylor, any final thoughts from you?

Taylor Teichman:

I am excited and ready to roll next week. I've got my red ready, and I'll be at the resolution press portion of the event following my webinar, I hope, so I'm ready to jet on over there. And I appreciate you, Sonia, for always leading the charge with our awareness week.

Sonia Pitzi:

Well, I appreciate the support. It'll be good to see you.

Matt Butensky:

Yes, Sonia, we appreciate all you do all year long because we know that it's way more than just a week in November. It is a 365 day a year effort, and it does take effort every day by someone to continue to make a difference and help our students experiencing homelessness.

So with that, we are going to close this episode of I Will Be Your Voice: Stories of Homelessness and Hope. You can learn more about the toolkit we shared about today at ecyehpennsylvania.center-school.org. And we hope you tune in again for our next episode. Take care, everybody.

Taylor Teichman:

Bye.