

## Furniture Banks

Reusing Mattresses to help people and the planet



## What is a Furniture Bank?

- A big warehouse that receives sorts, processes and distributes furniture and furnishings to low income clients such as those referred through homeless shelters



## Why is furniture critical to ending homelessness?

- Homeless shelters do not have space or staff to process furniture
- If used furnishings are provided to families in the 1<sup>st</sup> year out of homelessness, they recover for good and are out of the social services system forever



## The Wish Project Furniture Bank

- 15,000 sq ft warehouse in Lowell, MA
- Give free furniture to families in need
- One of ~ 80 in the USA
- Furniture banks save 1% of overall tipping fees in cities where they exist
- We reuse 700 tons of goods per year
- We furnish 1,000 apartments each year
- 36,000 people get goods/ yr.



## Our Problem

- A shortage of used mattresses to give to our local poor families.



## A National Problem

- An estimated 85,000 families experience homelessness each night in the USA
- More than 2/3 of the homeless are children
- Most families that go into homeless shelters get help and are ready to be housed again within one year
- Their first big hurdle is furnishing that apartment



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/thomashawk/> / CC BY-NC 2.0

Find out more at the National Alliance to End Homelessness  
[www.endhomelessness.org](http://www.endhomelessness.org)



## Our Problem is Your Solution

- **6.3 million hotel mattresses** 4.2 million hotel rooms with 1.5 beds per room according to the American Hotel & Lodging Associations (AH&LA)



## Supply and Demand

- The biggest single shortage for furniture banks in the US is for beds
  - The ones from homes are worn out (low supply)
  - A family only needs 1 couch but needs 4 or 5 beds
  - Demand is high due to the economy and bed bugs (higher turnover in low income homes)



*For more information contact: the National Furniture Bank Association  
Facts are based on our involvement with this group over the past 5 yrs.  
[www.help1up.org](http://www.help1up.org)*



## Why we love large lots of used hotel mattresses

- Higher quality than home mattresses
- Large quantities 100-200 at one time
- Fulls and Queens are premiums.
- Kings can be placed



The  
Wish  
Project  
www.TheWishProject.com

## How many beds are needed in US?

- ...there are 6 million units of affordable housing .... and there are 7.7 million such families who qualify (*National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). 2006. Out of Reach.*)
- Each unit is an apartment and many have 2 or 3 bedrooms
- Families move and battle pests ongoing so they replace beds much more frequently than homeowners



**6–18 million?**

The  
Wish  
Project  
www.TheWishProject.com

## We take more than beds



Appliances, lamps, bedding, furniture and more  
Must be suitable for small apartments  
No big armoires!



## Cost comparison:

For 240 mattress sets:

- **Recycling** 240x2=480 pieces x \$25/piece to recycle  
**\$12,000** (this cost is coming down thanks to local recycling efforts)
- **Trash:** Dumpster  
**\$5,000**
- **Donating: Trucking costs**  
**\$900 total in trucking**
  - Trucking is a tax write off
  - 3 truckloads (80 mattress sets/truck)
  - \$300 x 3 trucks (Boston to Lowell)



## Trying something new can be challenging



The  
Wish  
Project  
[www.TheWishProject.com](http://www.TheWishProject.com)

## Not all items are good for furniture banks



- Headboards
- Huge armoires
- Desks
- Mini bars
- Anything huge

The  
Wish  
Project  
[www.TheWishProject.com](http://www.TheWishProject.com)

## Who pays for the trucking?

- Furniture banks are nonprofit charities
- Most have small budgets
- Some can afford the trucking but most would appreciate help paying for the trucks or to have them delivered
- It is a tax write-off (the mattresses and transportation)



## When to Recycle Vs. Donating

- **If most are king sized.** These are best sent overseas (IRN)
- **If most of the others are damaged:** dry rotted, grossly stained, have bugs, or have broken box springs.
- **If they have been left outside in the rain.** If they do get wet, let them dry naturally before giving to anyone- they are heavy!

Note: Please do not store outside, in trailers or in barns for long periods of time as mice love to nest in them.





## Donation Saves Money and Time

- Save money! Dumpsters are expensive
- It takes time to arrange to ship overseas
- Space to store them hard to find
- Just load the trailers and they go away



## And don't worry....

- At The Wish Project, we heat-treat all the mattresses and furniture to ensure that they are pest and egg free
- Safe - no chemicals



## Thermal Vs. Chemical Remediation

- **Heat is faster for large scale treatment:** 2 tons of goods in 4 hours
- **Heat is safer:** No residual chemicals
- **Effective:** Heat kills all stages of bugs at once. Chemicals only kill adults, not eggs.



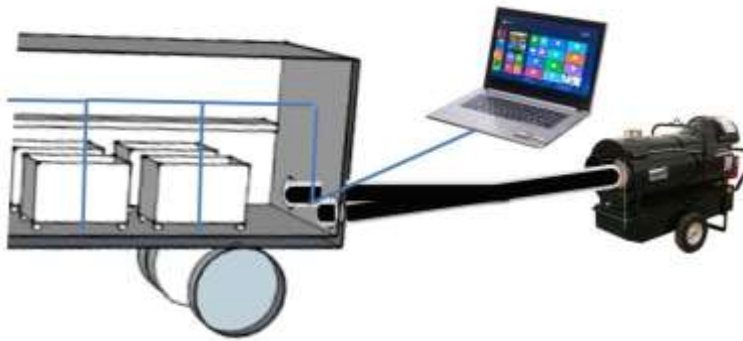
The  
Wish  
Project  
[www.TheWishProject.com](http://www.TheWishProject.com)

1. Purchased a 45' long x 10' by 8' Insulated Trailer for large scale heat treatment
2. Cut and installed 8' garage door in the side
3. Installed lift gates, side and rear



## The Thermonator: Thermal Extermination

The Wish Project heat treats the mattresses to ensure no pests or eggs are alive before we give them out.



## Large Scale Sterilization: 4 hours of active heating

60 Full sized mattress sets or  
28 Couches or  
70 chairs in One Heat Cycle  
2 Tons per cycle



## 10 years of success with large donations



Radisson

Sheraton  
HOTELS & RESORTS

BOSTON  
UNIVERSITY



HOTEL  
PROVIDENCE



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY



## Be kind, give us a bit of time....

- It takes a few days to line up trucks. Work with us, and we can help each other out.



National listing:

[www.furniturebanks.org](http://www.furniturebanks.org)

We are one of 8 in MA

The Wish Project  
Donna Hunnewell  
978-441-WISH (9474)  
1 A Foundry Street  
Lowell, MA 01852  
[donna@theWishProject.org](mailto:donna@theWishProject.org)



Together we can all sleep better tonight



Donna Hunnewell Executive Director Lowell, MA



# Questions?



[www.TheWishProject.org](http://www.TheWishProject.org)