

Acting on a Great Idea

Noah's Ark Project helps shelter the homeless

By Jodi Werner Greenwald with Matt Olin | Photo by Ray Sepesy



Noah Rupp, 15, a rising sophomore at Providence High School, had a creative spark when he visited Asheville in November 2016 with his dad, Mark. The two felt “chilled to the bone” walking outside at night and wondered how people living on the streets could stand it. Noah “felt called to make a change,” he says, and the two began Noah’s Ark Project (NAP), www.noahsarkprojectusa.org. NAP provides sleeping bags for homeless people, many of whom won’t seek shelter or can’t meet shelter rules. *Responses were edited for brevity.*

Creatively — how have you tackled project challenges?

The first challenge was the sleeping bag itself. We decided on key requirements our “shelter” would need — to withstand the elements, be windproof, waterproof and warm, yet durable, lightweight, packable and easy to take with you. After a lot of searching, we found a sleeping bag made from material inspired by NASA, and my dad helped me negotiate the price down to \$15 per bag with a minimum order of 1,000.

What have you learned from this experience that has surprised you?

How much people genuinely care. I have met and talked to so many people through this project, and so many have been overwhelmingly supportive, both financially to the cause and emotionally by sharing their kind words of encouragement.

Has the project led to other creative ideas?

I designed Noah’s Ark Project to be fluid. I’ve been focused solely on putting our resources into the sleeping bag project, but am open to helping people in other ways if it makes sense for NAP.

How much money have you raised to date?

Just a little over \$15,000!

Our first 1,000 sleeping bags have been ordered.

Tell us about your distribution.

We will be working with the Urban Ministry Center in Charlotte to distribute the sleeping bags. They do a lot of work with the homeless, and we will be going to wherever they live to hand them out. We have a similar contact in Asheville, and we will be driving up there to do the same thing.

What’s next?

Sleeping bags don’t last forever (no matter how well they’re made), so we don’t see stopping anytime soon. We will continue to raise funds to provide all unsheltered homeless with a sleeping bag. I also plan to expand our reach covering North Carolina and branch out from there.

What else would you like to share with the Ballantyne community?

Stick to an idea. I know so many people who have great ideas and never follow through on them. The world would be a lot better if people followed through on the positive ideas they have. ©

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Share with us your creative projects and you could be featured on this page. Contact Jodi Greenwald at jgreenwald@ballantynemagazine.com. The magazine staff reviews submissions and consults with Matt Olin at CreativeMornings/Charlotte, www.charlotteiscreative.com.

