

# Maggie and the Mission

By ReadWorks



Maggie pulled her red hat over her head as she stepped into the cold. Her brother, Jamie, had taken Maggie to her favorite diner after school to get a cup of hot chocolate. As they sipped their warm treats, Maggie told Jamie about her homework. Her teacher had asked Maggie's class to brainstorm community service projects the class could do together. When it started to get dark outside, they headed back home.

*Yuck*, she thought as her rain boot landed in a big puddle of slush. January was not her favorite month in New York City. It was cold and wet, and she could hardly play outside! They began their trek back home. She dreamt of her warm bed as a cold wind whipped past her. The block was empty—the two were the only pair walking down the snowy sidewalk. Well, at least that's what Maggie thought. All of a sudden, out of the corner of her eye, she saw something move. Maggie stopped in her tracks. She looked toward the source of the movement in curiosity. A bundle of blankets was piled on top of several cardboard pieces that had been placed over the sidewalk. Maggie stepped closer. She didn't see any movement anymore. But then, out of the blankets emerged a man. He wore an old, ragged jacket—it looked like one Maggie had seen in movies, the kind that soldiers wear. There were holes in the elbows. On his hands he wore dirty black gloves, and the fabric for the thumb on the right hand had been torn off.

“Hello!” Maggie said, wishing she had more blankets for him.

“Well hello, could you help a fellow out?” he replied in a deep voice.

“Oh, I don’t have anything...” Maggie said, as she felt around her pockets. Jamie pulled out a dollar bill from his wallet and placed it in the man’s hands.

“Thank you so much,” he said.

Maggie and Jamie smiled at him and kept on walking.

Once they arrived home, Maggie told her dad about the man on the street. He was busy preparing dinner.

“It’s really hard for them out there, especially during the winter months. The homeless shelters in the city don’t have enough room for everyone,” he told her.

Her dad went back to cooking, but Maggie couldn’t stop thinking about the man. During dinner, she remained quiet and thought about what she could do to help those without a home. She figured it would be perfect for her class’s community service project.

Once she finished eating, she rushed to the computer to do some research. She found the Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress that had been published by the U.S. government in January 2013. It said that 610,042 Americans were homeless on any given night. That meant one in 514 people. Maggie could hardly wrap her head around that number. She tried to look up different homeless shelters around New York City.

She clicked on a link. “The Bowery Mission, Rebuilding Lives Since 1879,” Maggie read aloud. The Bowery Mission is an organization that provides meals, shelter, and services to the underserved population.

“Jamie!” she called out. “I found something that we can do!”

As he started to walk toward her, she excitedly told him about the volunteer opportunities at the Bowery Mission. They could sign up to serve meals to the homeless.

“Last year, the volunteers were able to provide more than 382,400 meals to the homeless in New York City!” Maggie said, pointing to the computer screen.

She looked up information on how to volunteer to tell her teacher the next day. They could help prepare meals, serve them, and clean up afterward. And the next time Maggie walked down the block, she packed a granola bar and a banana to give to the man she’d seen on the street.