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GIFT CARDS FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE PROVIDE ACCESS TO VITAL SERVICES

 RETAIL

HandUp gift cards can be given to a homeless person in need, and redeemed at a local drop-in center to buy food, clothing and transport.

Passing a homeless person on the street often stirs up an instinctual desire to help, but handing over a cash donation is not always the most positive action, since the money will only provide a very short term solution. We have seen a number of initiatives offering alternative ways to help — such as the [WeShelter app](#), which informs outreach teams about homeless people in need and simultaneously unlocks donations from corporate sponsors. Now, [HandUp gift cards](#) are another such tool — enabling citizens to provide those in need with access to the food and products they need, as well as connecting them to services and resources to help get them off the street.

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HandUp is a public benefit company that organizes crowdfunding for homeless people. Those in need can sign up to the community, and team members help them to decide upon specific goals. In the past recipients have raised money for things such as dental work, a mattress or a laptop for schoolwork. HandUp gift cards are a new tool, which the company recently launched in San Francisco. The cards — which have a value of USD 25 — can be bought in advance by residents and then handed to a homeless neighbor on the street. The card directs the recipient to a local drop-in center, where they can redeem it to purchase food, clothing and transportation. They will also get access to the vital homeless services.



Google is currently matching all gift card purchases, meaning donors receive two cards for USD 25. Donors can also request that HandUp distribute the cards they purchase. Could other charitable donations be managed in this way?

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Email: info@handup.org

Website: www.handup.org/giftcards