

## Serving Our Socks Off

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Socks. Many of us have more than we need or care to count (and several without a match). Many of us don't really even think about socks, but most likely if you are reading this article, you aren't homeless. When you are homeless, socks matter – a lot.



At National Aviation Academy (NAA) we strive to cultivate opportunities for team members and students to participate in community and professional activities that will enhance our qualities of life. After hearing about a local sock drive, we knew we could help and utilize the opportunity to work together and make a difference. We jumped into action and set out to collect 1,000 pairs, but with the donation of some very generous students and staff – the campuses quickly surpassed that objective and collected 3,561 pairs of socks which was the largest donation received for the [103.3 AMP RADIO](#) collection

drive in Boston, MA. Along with the nine other qualifiers, we collectively raised over [41,000 pairs](#) to benefit the [Boston Rescue Mission](#) and the homeless community it serves.

At NAA, mediocrity is not an option. It was a true grassroots effort that started with a modest goal and was fueled by a collective passion for public service. What started as a single, simple cardboard box with “SOCKS” written in black marker, eventually spawned dozens of smaller drives spurred on by others. Whether it was through the combined efforts of our Tampa Bay campus shipping us socks 1,362 miles north, or one single student generously donating almost 700 pairs and selflessly refusing to accept any recognition, or driving 45 minutes with seats pushed up to the steering wheel and attempting to manage our foot pedals with six inches of legroom, everyone who participated was able to help in their own way. Through this, we learned one of the most important lessons of servant leadership: No matter how small the act, even if you are just donating one pair of socks, it can always make a difference, especially when paired with the power of teamwork.



While waiting for the socks to be counted, staff heard firsthand accounts of some of Boston Rescue Mission's success stories which was proof enough of the true value of all our hard work. How something seemingly so small, average, and ordinary like a sock can mean so much to someone when they have next to nothing in material possessions. To them it is not just a sock - it represents

warmth when it is cold, cleanliness when they feel dirty, and shelter and safety when they feel exposed.



Garrett Connolly, Student Services Manager of NAA's New England campus, spearheaded the sock drive initiative, but it was the student body, especially the student council, staff, and faculty at both campuses who came together and embodied the true spirit of community service. The generosity of our students with their time and money to support this great cause was appreciated and recognized. The student body benefits

from having an active Student Council consisting of representatives from each class who are seen as role models among their peers and earn valuable leadership experience while serving their fellow students.

At NAA, we believe service builds character and it molds us into better versions of ourselves. This is something we try to instill whenever we can. We strive to show our students the importance of working as a team and the value of that comradery philosophy through community service and giving something back. Thanks to the overwhelming support of our students, staff, and community we were able to take one small step forward into a brighter future; one small step, with a new pair of socks.

Additional photos and a write-up of the event can also be found here: <https://1033ampradio.radio.com/galleries/the-tj-show-sock-drive-finalists-in-studio>