



Street Sleeper

Helping the Homeless with Recycled PVC Sleeping Bag

Thousands of homeless people in Cape Town, South Africa, have vinyl sleeping bags to protect them from the elements, thanks to the Street Sleeper project.

Street Sleeper is the brainchild of Oliver Brain, a social entrepreneur who was looking for a way to help the homeless in his community. His original concept: build a sturdy and sustainably sourced urban survival sleeping bag that would last a long time, stand up to the elements, and double as a daytime pack that homeless people could use to carry their belongings.

As Brain started exploring materials, he noticed the city had a lot of advertising billboards that end up in landfills once they've served their purpose. He had a solution.

Blending sustainable innovation and simple design.

“I decided to create this platform for people and focused on one element: providing temporary shelter,” Brain explained. “It was then that I noticed our city is plastered with PVC advertising billboards that can't be recycled after use. I had found my material - it was plentiful, flexible, waterproof, and strong - and wanted to be upcycled.”

Since Street Sleeper began in March 2014, over 6,000 homeless people have received the recycled vinyl sleeping bags.

The South African Vinyls Association (SAVA) quickly signed on to help Brain, including donating an industrial sewing machine that is used to convert the used PVC billboards into waterproof, windproof survival sleeping bags. SAVA also provided practical tips on occupational safety and health and helped raise early awareness about the project.

SAVA CEO Delaine Bezuidenhout noted that his organization was “impressed by Brain's passion for the less fortunate, and the practical solution he found for recycling billboards that were destined for landfill.”



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