

The Egalitarian

Teens Against Homelessness Help 200 People in Need

Story and Photos
By Pasmah Kaid

Hudson County has the second highest homeless population with 822 homeless people, representing 9.6% of the statewide homeless population. The high percentage of homeless individuals in Hudson County, influenced the founders of Union City High School's Teens Against Homelessness (TAH) Club, Joan Almendarez and Denia Diaz, to create a club solely dedicated to helping the homeless in the community. Denia was personally influenced when she recalled mission trips she would go on with her father to help the homeless in Honduras, whereas Joan got the idea of creating a group of people to help the homeless when she watched a YouTube video of individuals who went to Walmart to purchase useful items to give to the homeless.

Despite both being influenced by different experiences, they combined forces to treat the large number of homeless in Hudson County by creating the club.

The process to create the club took a total of seven months, according to a statement from Joan and Denia. They originally planned to make a one year campaign and get other clubs in the school involved. However, realizing the original plan would not be enough to help the homeless going forward, they decided to make a club for more permanent assistance. Both Joan and Denia described the process as strenuous and long, but worth it when it got approved earlier this year by the principal, Mr. Ryan Lewis. Mrs. Esperanza Marquez-Urbe and Ms. Laura Barbieri, who looked over the initial proposal and are the current co-advisors of the club. They assisted in making the proposal a reality. Ms. Nadia Makar and Mr. Henry Sanchez also helped with the process of fine tuning the proposal before it was approved.

Many UCHS students volunteered to help out and took on important roles in the club. Joan Almendarez and Denia Diaz are the co-founders and co-presidents, Allyson Perero is the secretary, marketing is run by Angel Gongora and Charisse Marcelino, Aisha Gallardo is head of social media, Christina Maldonado is head of finance, and Arlin Hernandez is head of event planning and fund raisers. These different departments, run by different students, however,

work collectively to help the club as a whole. Members of the club, no matter the grade, can also contribute in anyway they see fit.

Most recently, on November 14th and 15th of this year, the TAH club coordinated an event in which more than 40 students came together to make sandwiches for the homeless. Both underclassmen and upperclassmen volunteered to bring in sliced bread, ham, cheese and/or napkins. With the contributions made by the students, the club was able to create and donate nearly 200 sandwiches total to the PERC shelter, a local facility located at 111 37th Street near Park Avenue. Administrators there accepted the ham and cheese sandwiches as well as snacks brought in by students. Everyone's efforts paid off because they were able to feed almost 200 people in need.

The club is planning to have this event once every other month, as well as an ornament fund raiser, a holiday themed scavenger hunt to raise money for donations, and even helping other shelters such as the Hoboken Shelter by making lunch and dinner, in the upcoming months.

The TAH club is doing a great service to the community by simply existing and the efforts of all members, creators and advisors isn't going unnoticed.

See the advisors if you would like more information on the club.



Thanksgiving? No Thanks

By Christopher Martinez

Thanksgiving is coming closer and closer (cue the Jaws music), so that means the inevitable arguments and inedible food that accompanies having extended family over for dinner. Awkward talks, disgusting desserts, and weird family members are all the rage for Thanksgiving, and for you, fellow reader, will need to know how to avoid all these interactions in order to have a slightly bearable Thanksgiving.

To get things started, if you ever encounter a distant relative who is fiercely insisting that you two know each other and who asking uncomfortable questions about your life's purpose, all you need to do is to grab your food and slowly (without breaking eye contact) walk away from the situation and eat it in your bathroom (or the in shower if this person is persistent). Make sure your footsteps sound as quiet as a mouse so it doesn't appear like you're moving at all through a dining room that suddenly feels like Times Square on New Year's Eve. If that proves too hard for you, you can always move to another seat by making an excuse for why you are switching seats, like breaking a chair leg by "accident" and choosing a seat near your mom, dad, or sibling in order to feel a little bit less anxious around possible problematic members. This however, can possibly backfire and led them into thinking that you hate said family member, making them hate your guts

and have their fragile heart broken into very small pieces. Which is why you should never have come down to eat dinner with the family in

the first place unless you accept being mauled by all of them. The best bet is to hide some food into your pockets and pretend to be sleepy; while they believe your sickening lie and betray their everlasting trust, you can finally enjoy your food, alone, with no one with whom to celebrate it.

Moving on from making bad blood and depressing memories, if you ever received the worst dessert that tastes like a rotten apples that have been in the garbage for the past decade from the loving aunt who honestly cares for you but that same sweet nature cannot be transformed into her baking abilities, kindly deny it and say you're full, or you can pretend to have an agonizing stomach ache that is ripping you apart and rush to the bathroom, staying there until everybody leaves, and leaving you alone in the bathroom for the whole night, unless you find someone already there hiding from that same distant relative. Then you might need to find another hiding spot.

Awkward family members and rancid food might be bearable to handle, but the one thing that is always the hardest to deal with is talking politics with the whole family. This is such a gamble because, in one scenario, your whole family agrees on a certain party and before you know it, your whole family becomes a Utopian society with no problems to be seen and all speak with angelic tones to one another; or in the other scenario, otherwise known as reality, you will be hiding inside of a closet, shaking in your boots and holding a plastic spork while your whole family fights to the death after disagreeing about a person or a wall. Picture Samson with a turkey leg. In case of this dangerous scenario, whenever the conversation is starting to look grim, just talk about strange things. For example, talk about that weird looking cat that's been living in the attic for the past six months and no one will get rid of it because its glaring eyes scares them deeply. Or demonstrate how fast you can eat a pumpkin pie. After you consumed the whole pie (with your aunt looking on) and regret every single minute of it due to the amount of stomach pain it brought, you can (maybe) finally have a Thanksgiving dinner without calling the police because of one of your family members is missing his left arm and he swears he came in with one.

With these tips and tricks, may you have a safe Thanksgiving and wonder...

Is a day off from school worth it?