

Mission Possible holds cereal drive

Mission Possible, a club in its second year at AHS has organized and participated in multiple community service activities throughout the school year. Mission Possible activities and events are focused on giving back to underprivileged communities.

Each month, the club sets a new focal point that activities are centered around. In the month of November, the main focus for Mission Possible is hunger within the community.

On Nov. 3, club members participated in a meal packaging event hosted by the non-profit organization Rise Against Hunger. The organization coordinates the packaging and distribution of food and other aid to people in developing nations.

In accordance with their focus for the month, Mission Possible will be hosting a cereal drive in which items will be donated to a local food bank, the Arlington Food Assistance Center (AFSA).

The club began collecting cereal boxes on Nov. 19 and will continue collecting them through Nov. 30.

“Although we live in a relatively affluent country, there are still families struggling to make ends meet due to high living costs,” Mission Possible president Maisha Maliha said. “Kids and families need a balanced breakfast to help them remain focused and satisfied throughout the day.”

Mission Possible asks that cereal boxes donated are low-sugar such as Cheerios or Rice Krispies. Boxes for donations are being collected in English teacher Sean Hardy’s room (270).

Last month, Mission Possible focused on giving back to

children in local hospitals and community centers.

The activities that this entailed were collecting and donating children's books as well as making crayons that were donated to patients at INOVA Children's Hospital.

"My favorite part about making crayons was the process of breaking them down and molding them as well as donating them to the patients of a local hospital," senior Ruth Seyoum said.

With a new goal each month, Mission Possible aims to aid various segments of the local community through their activities.

"Through Mission Possible activities and events, we are able to come together as a community and help those who are less fortunate than us," Maliha said.

Mission Possible makes crayons for INOVA

Mission Possible, a club in its second year at AHS has consistently focused on giving back to the community through various service activities. This includes having different donation drives such as for children's books or participating in food drives for underprivileged communities.

As the club launched again for the school year, their first project was to make crayons to be donated to patients at INOVA Children's Hospital.

Approximately 15 Mission Possible club members gathered over the weekend to take part in the process of making the crayons. The process consisted of peeling and breaking the crayons

followed by melting them down. Afterwards, club members used silicone molds to create crayons of various shapes, sizes and color combinations.

“My favorite part of the process was breaking the crayons because it was easier than peeling the labels off of them,” senior Ruth Seyoum said.

After four hours of melting and awaiting for the crayon molds to set into their colorful and creative shapes including heart and animal-shaped designs, Mission Possible members organized and prepared the crayons for delivery.

The crayons will be delivered to children at INOVA Children’s Hospital as club members hope to provide patients with more comfort and happiness.

“I am excited to donate the crayons that we made to our local children’s hospital,” Mission Possible President Maisha Maliha said. “I hope it will brighten someone’s day.”

Senior Profile: Amelie Trieu

For the last three years, I’ve been on the Fairfax County Student Human Rights Commission. It’s a county sponsored Commission that features high school students. It’s two students per school, so I am one of AHS’ representatives. I have been doing that for three years now.

This year I was elected chair [of the commission]. So through that we conduct projects pertaining to human rights as well as civil rights. I have carried out certain campaigns around the county as well as at AHS.

I also work for a nonprofit called Growth Inspiration through

Volunteer Education (GIVE). It was founded by two of my friends from middle school, so it is a high school founded and a high school run nonprofit.

So what we basically do is we try to foster community service in education across the county. It started in Fairfax. We had one location and the past four years we have spread to Loudoun County, Alexandria and Arlington. So we have a total of about 20 centers.

So what we do is we have AP/PSAT book drives, and we do that throughout the year. Another thing we do is a free tutoring program on Saturdays and Sundays.

In the summer as a member of the core team or the executive board, I work on fund raising, I write grants. We do bake sales. Every member would have to contribute at least \$200, sometimes \$300, and we get that through bake sales. So over the summers I spent a good month or two doing that, [and] writing annual reports for the nonprofit. We are registered as a 501(c)(3). We do tax returns, we do a lot of reports and we have to write grants. So I work on that. I primarily work on public relations and editing and writing those grants.

One of the biggest things we (GIVE) do is the tutoring Center. So personally throughout the school year I run the tutoring center at Lincolnia Community Resource Center. They [the kids] will end up going to Annandale. Basically we provide tutoring services and mentoring. That's the main thing that GIVE does. In the summer we would create a whole stem curriculum. We figure out what each student needs for their grade level. To be eligible to go to the tutoring program you have to be on free or reduced lunch.

For example at my location they go through a social worker. So to register for our program, they have to go through the social worker, who would recommend what they do, and we would work hand-in-hand with the social worker and the center.

So at my center, for example, they are very low income. They are immigrant families and some of them I work with, about four or five, who are special needs kids. So we have to fit with the curriculum. We are trying to foster a sense of community as well as leadership among the kids.

So for example I teamed up with key club, AHS's key club is really invested in that.

When "Read Across America" is coming up, next month, we promote GIVE's other venture, we wrote a children's book titled *Being Different is what Makes us Special*. It's about bullying and diversity in elementary schools. It's actually featured in Apple-21 and right now they are making it into an audio book. So we read that to the kids and ask them questions.

Give has also worked with SHRC and it is approved by the school board, it is approved by the curriculum specialist at Fairfax County Public Schools. We take the questions and guidelines that she helped us create and we try to bring those to our students at our tutoring centers.

They [the founders of GIVE] are freshman in college right now and so they have been working on this for 3 years and I have been working on it for 2. Once they left for college this year, it got handed down to us. We have got new members coming in, so that is how we carry down the structure of the pyramid.

I'm really interested in pursuing a job for public service or the government. I really liked it [these volunteer opportunities] because I was able to help my local community and address and understand global issues. So for example, previously, I have only worked with nonprofits doing paperwork inside but I've learned to communicate others like with the social worker, with kids. So I work hands-on and really fostered through those skills.

We learn issues that are attainable to government and it

really help me develop my interest in governmental affairs. I got a lot of responsibility with those two groups in particular, because it's like a full-time job. I really appreciate it because I have meet so many interesting people. With SHRC every year I go to their fair housing luncheon and they have people from the Department of Housing and Urban Development and they talked to us.

About three years ago, my first year on the commission, I met a man who was just a lawyer at the time and now he is the Secretary of Transportation. It was really cool talk about these issues that we don't really learn. And it really helps me with school.

I am more certain about what I want to do in my future [because of my community service]. I feel satisfied because I help create that atmosphere, that environment, or that project, or program. I also feel more responsible, I know what I'm doing. I am responsible for other people. I know how to take responsibility better than I used to.

Giving Back to the Community

Even though winter never seems to end, spring fast approaches, and with it the due dates for community service. This transition leaves some students scrambling to meet the requirement. However, community service involves so much more than meeting a requirement.

“Part of Government, part of our curriculum, is citizenship [and] learning to be a good citizen,” Government teacher Margaret Richburg said, “ A big component of being a good citizen is giving back to your community.”

The Middle Years Program (MYP), a part of the IB program, values community service, because it helps the students become better people and benefit the world.

“The mission of the IB program, which covers both MYP and DP (Diploma Program), is about gaining a better understanding of the world around you and how you can make it a more caring, peaceful world,” MYP coordinator Linda Bradshaw said, “So community service is a pivotal component, allowing students the opportunity to help other people.”

The Diploma Program of IB, includes the Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) program to help keep diploma candidates well-rounded and not just focused on academics, according to CAS coordinator Lindsay Zurawski.

“That being said, I think AHS students are some of the most well-rounded I have ever seen,” Zurawski said. “They do sports. They do community service on their own without a program telling them they have to. They do art. They do music. They are just incredible in what they do and what they come up with.”

Community service has been a reality for many generations.

Richburg volunteered on political campaigns, with the Red Cross, and with park clean ups, when she was in high school. “It gave me experience, responsibility, giving back to the community, learning from others, learning through experience,” Richburg said.

Bradshaw volunteered at the hospital, because of ambitions to go into medicine. “It was really beneficial to me because then I could get a taste [of a job in the medical field],” Bradshaw said. “It wasn’t on glamor and glory like I thought it was. I thought it was very beneficial. I thought it made me a stronger person. I learned empathy. I learned to manage my time, and just see new things.”

Community service helps students learn about their community and connect to what they are learning in their classes.

“For instance,” Richburg said, “with Government, we talk a lot in our curriculum about Government’s involvement in health care and other things like that. So if a student volunteers at a nursing home, hopefully they can make some connections there with cost of healthcare and things that they are learning about in the classroom or get an idea about the value that society places on the elderly.”

Students themselves benefit when they help their local community, as well as their neighbors and community members.

“The freshmen and sophomores have an opportunity to really help the community,” Bradshaw said. “A lot of [freshman] and [sophomores] don’t have transportation, so they are encouraged to do any kind of service that is free. Voluntary service, such as babysitting, helping the elderly neighbors, tutoring kids, or even helping within our building.”

Community service builds students’ pride and confidence.

“I think it benefits them personally, because first of all you get the experience and the pride in knowing that you helped your community or you helped a specific individual in your community achieve a goal. That’s a big confidence builder and point of pride,” Zurawski said.

Community service matures and transforms the students into traits that are mentioned in the IB learner . It encourages them to be inquirers, knowledgeable thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective.

“It makes [students] more knowledgeable, it makes them thinkers, learners, all of the learner profile. It connects in their everyday life and in school,” Richburg said.

Community service is not just about the students, but also about the community-at-large. Students' service have long and short term benefits.

Bradshaw has seen that organizations partner with AHS because of involved students. "I think that makes us stronger as a school when we do more with our surrounding areas because then everyone is going to benefit," Bradshaw said. "I think as an Annandale pyramid and at the top of it being the high school, it's our responsibility to help support all the levels of the students below because eventually they're going to feed into us as well. So I think the partnership with our elementary schools has been very beneficial."

Community service helps and improves AHS as a whole.

Zurawski has seen that students have helped at AHS, with cataloging theater props, tutoring, running clothing and book drives. "So I've seen a lot of time and a lot of goods go from our school out into the community to help in so many different ways," Zurawski said.

Community service helps students consider occupations and vocations for their future.

"It kind of gives you a sneak peek of [a future job]," Bradshaw said, "It really is the mission of the school that it's not just students that are in Government that should be doing community service in our building, it's everyone."