



Scholarship Contest Winner

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Essay Topic: Describe a problem facing your community and explain how you would help address or solve it. Discuss the impact your solution could have on others.

Imagine a dinner table: creamy mashed potatoes whipped together by your sweet grandmother, a tender beef steak straight from the hot grill, and yes, those delicious, crispy, golden brown homemade fries that your mom makes. For many families, this meal is a given. For thousands of other families, this meal is a luxury that they could never afford on any given day.

Food insecurity is a global problem that affects millions of people, and the state of Michigan is no different. According to feedingamerica.org, roughly 1 in 6 people face hunger in this state. That hit me hard, especially as a high schooler in a class of 295 students. It meant that roughly 50 students in the class of 2026 at my high school were unsure if they had enough food for the week.

Earlier this year, I was able to participate in my school's National Honor Society (NHS) Turkey Drive, helping to provide food for 30 families and over 100 people in the surrounding area. It was truly a rewarding experience to see firsthand how willing students were to donate food to the communities around them. However, while this experience was eye-opening for me, it also helped me to come to an important realization: food insecurity is not just a seasonal issue around the holidays. For many families, it is a challenge they face year-round.

To address the issue of food insecurity that families in my school community face, I would first work to create a school-based food support system that happens throughout the year, not just around Thanksgiving. I would use my position as an NHS officer to create and lead monthly food drives throughout the school year in partnership with the Greater Lansing Food Bank. Students could bring in non-perishable items like canned goods, dry grains, and spreads each month. These donations could then be distributed to student families who sign up, alongside perishable goods brought in from the food bank. In addition, this would work alongside the NHS, as members would be able to volunteer, spread information, and run the drives under my direction.

Furthermore, adding a pantry in the cafeteria could include a "take-what-you-need" shelf, allowing students in need to access free food in a convenient way. This pantry could be regularly stocked through partnerships with the Greater Lansing Food Bank, ensuring students have consistent access without any barriers.

The impact of monthly food drives would not only help students and their families deal with food insecurity but would also lead to better education results. When students have access to food, they are better able to focus in class, participate in extracurricular sports and clubs, and gain lifelong skills.

Ultimately, addressing this issue ensures each student has the resources and opportunities needed to succeed both within and beyond the classroom without the worry of basic needs. To me, helping alleviate food insecurity means ensuring that meals are a given every day of the year, not just a privilege for a few, but a reality for everyone. Because in a community that supports one another, no student should have to wonder where their next meal will come from.

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