

COMMUNITYSERVICE

Students help local families through Ecumenical Hunger

By Hazel Jaimez

On any afternoon, most students choose to finish their school work or take another elective, but six Eastside students would rather spend a couple of hours helping those in need in East Palo Alto.

Every Friday, the volunteers go to Ecumenical Hunger to distribute food to low-income families through Step by Step.

“It helps me realize the amount of need there is,” said senior Javier Magana, a leader of Step by Step, “It makes me feel happy to help.”

Depending on the size of a family, the volunteers hand out different-sized boxes of foods. Volunteers go around aisles of food to fill up the boxes based on rules for how many cans of which food can go in which sized box.

Lakuna FisiiHoi, a local resident who usually goes to Ecumenical Hunger once a month, went there on October 15 with his mother to help load food into her car. He found out about the program through friends and other relatives.

“It is great that she is treated right,” Lakuna said of his mother as he waited to receive his share of food. “There’s really nothing negative that I can say about this place because all it does is great work with our community.”

The program with Eastside started three years ago when a few students wanted to work at a place that distributed food and clothing. DJ Williams, who was a student at Eastside at the time, had volunteered at the Ecumenical Hunger program and told Linda Filo, the art teacher, about it. Linda decided to organize the program at Eastside.

At the beginning, students would volunteer about once a month. The following year, more students started going more often. Now it happens every Friday.

Senior Erika Gallegos and juniors Charlotte Tenisi and Roshana Smith raise awareness at Eastside about Ecumenical Hunger through e-mails and through conversations with friends.



PHOTO BY RUMAANA KHAN

Senior Vashon Guidry sorts cans of vegetables, fruit, and sauces in the food aisles.

Sophomore Oscar Estrada, a new volunteer in the program, said he and the community both benefit. “Even though I was having fun while helping the community, I noticed how much people appreciated my help and work.”

Sophomore Angelica Garcia said that volunteering at Ecumenical Hunger makes her feel good about herself. “I feel more comfortable with my actions because I know that I’m not only helping myself, but others as well.”