

Hannah Davis: Human rights' advocate, Harriet Tubman, said, "Every dream begins with a dreamer who has the strength and passion to reach for the stars and change reality." Tubman's idea of using one's voice to influence the world correlates with a value of Ursuline Academy's *Serviam* motto, advocacy, which means using your voice to mold what is into what should be. In our metroplex, achieving equal rights for the mentally ill or economically disadvantaged is one of these unfilled needs that must be met. In a study conducted by the US Mayors Coalition, Dallas has one of the highest poverty rates in the country along with over a \$1 billion gap in food need. Knowing that my neighbors were suffering from hunger, in a country with our resources, made me realize that I needed to fix it; so, I joined the North Texas Food Bank's Young Advocates Council, which envisions a healthy America. Through this organization, I have not only provided over 500 families with meals and organized a fundraiser to supply 35,000 pounds of food to our metroplex, but I have involved my school, city, and policymakers in supporting a cause I believe in. For example, I advocated for better funding of the public-school meal system by drafting letters to my congressman. With these requests, I initiated funding for many of the food bank's student programs and prompted my congressman to volunteer at our holiday food drive. The Young Advocates also hosted a Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot where I involved my Ursuline Cross Country team in our mission. Through this advocacy, I enabled my community to find passions and help each other. In addition to my dream to eliminate American hunger, I have supported my belief in equal opportunity by volunteering on a congressional campaign that promises dissolution of the health crisis. In a Task Force on Homelessness study, researchers found that 43% of Texas homeless are mentally ill. Military veterans (including my father and relatives) are also frequently in dire need of affordable mental health care. Due to this disenfranchisement and its effect in my own family, I felt responsible for joining the

conversation on rights to wellness programs; so, I enlisted in a congressional campaign that promotes mental health awareness and battles the gap between poverty and medical care. I advocated for my nominee by calling voters and discussing psychological exam funding with politicians across Texas. One such event I attended was a panel hosted by a local radio station where voters could ask nominees about their policies. As an advocate, I had the opportunity to ask representatives questions about their plans for Dallas, which I centered around mental health initiatives. My advocacy opened a conversation between nominees about care coverage and enabled voters to learn which nominee would place this issue at the forefront of legislation. By utilizing my voice to spark conversation about an important need, I influenced my nominee's re-election. Overall, my advocacy through the food bank and campaign has benefitted the Dallas community, narrowing gaps between the impoverished and their basic rights. This service has also impacted my life - strengthening my beliefs, pushing me to find solutions to communal issues, and encouraging me to be a leader of change by sparking new conversations with friends, family, and the city of Dallas. Using my voice at the food bank and campaign, I have realized that although I am young and of limited experience, I possess power to help unite communities and solve issues. This mindset has centered my life and influences my outlook on *Serviam*. By voicing equal rights to mental health care and nutrition every day, I have realized that *Serviam* is not limited to large-scale projects; instead, its core value, advocacy, can be displayed daily and be just as impactful. With this new idea of how I can better serve my community, advocacy pushes me to regularly express what I believe in and strengthens my conviction in fulfilling these aspirations as I progress through Ursuline and beyond. All of you should adopt this same outlook on life and *Serviam*, becoming a daily advocate for a cause you are passionate about. I encourage you to be a dreamer and use your voice to change what is into what should be.