



Members of UNITE work at PADS of Elgin.

## Be the Change

Over the years, as I visited my grandparents in Chicago, I observed the suffering of people who live without resources. What struck me at a very young age was the familiarity I began to have with specific individuals. I soon became aware that the spare change I shared did not do enough to significantly improve the quality of life that these now familiar faces had endured.

This issue hits close to home. When my uncle was a teenager, he, his three other siblings, and his parents were evicted from their home because they could not afford their mortgage. To survive, he worked two jobs and went to school full-time to help pay for the basic necessities while striving to improve his economic situation long-term. This story is a constant reminder to treat people with human dignity and give them the tools to change their circumstance.

As an organization, UNITE focuses on combatting homelessness in Barrington and the surrounding communities through fundraising activities

both at the local high school and within the greater community. To complete such activities, UNITE relies on the help of volunteers of all ages. So far, we have over 75 members and we hope that this number continues to grow. Our vision is not only to provide essentials for the less fortunate, but to destigmatize homelessness for our volunteers.

On the first and third Wednesday of every month, UNITE takes a group of volunteers to PADS of Elgin, a homeless shelter that provides breakfast, dinner, a place to sleep, and job opportunities for those in need. On such days, UNITE serves dinner and helps sort the pantry and donation room.

UNITE's philosophy is to provide the essentials for those less fortunate and the skills needed to help get people back on their feet. This requires attacking the root causes of homelessness, as well as providing the tools for individuals to bring themselves back into an economically stable life. As they say, "If you give a man a fish, you can feed him for a day, but if you give a man a fishing pole, he will be able to eat every day." At the moment, due to our

size, UNITE is focused on dealing with immediate concerns by providing necessities such as food, toiletries, and clothing. However, our end goal is to work with other groups to create opportunities for job training as well as affordable education, housing, and healthcare options. We want to give people the fishing pole, not just the fish! 🎣



Alina Khan is a sophomore at Barrington High School where she founded UNITE, a not-for-profit to combat homelessness. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact UNITE at [unitetheworld@gmail.com](mailto:unitetheworld@gmail.com), or donate directly to PADS of Elgin. The shelter's phone number is 847-608-9744 and they can provide a list of what they need.