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# Shelter

THE ANACORTES FAMILY CENTER NEWSLETTER

Volume 9

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## AHS Students Deliver!

When does a simple request for donations of non-perishable food become a gigantic FOOD DRIVE?!? When it's in the hands of Maddie Ward, Conner Thomas, and their fellow students in Leadership Class at Anacortes High School.

It's customary for AHS classes to hold a competition during Homecoming Week, and the Anacortes Family Center was pleased to be the beneficiary this year. With Maddie (in the photo at right), the AHS student body president, at the helm, the Leadership Class of seniors and juniors organized a battle between all four grade levels to see which could donate the most food. They set up bins outside the school's administrative offices and watched as they filled up more than once. The results seemed to surprise everyone: all together the AHS classes delivered 5,000+ food items to stock AFC's shelves--a record-breaking outcome, according to Maddie.



Conner (with Maddie in the photo above) remarked that evidence the food drive was in full swing could be seen in our local Safeway. "Toward the end of the drive, the shelves of ramen noodles were completely empty!" he recalled.

Working with AFC Facilities Manager Kate Metcalf, the students delivered the food a few weeks ago. Shortly thereafter, the kids also brought a check for \$2,511 raised during Homecoming Week through "quarter wars." The four classes challenge each other to round up as many quarters as possible and competition is fierce. Naturally the senior class won the 2024 contests. Maddie



Senior class won the 2021 contests. Maddie commented that even school staff members were surprised at the results of the drive.

Maddie believes the activities Leadership Class organizes, and the process of making things happen, is an important way students can be inclusive. "All different kinds of kids participate," she noted, "and people really do come out of their shell. Kids respect each other."

Conner, who serves in a business management role for Leadership Class, explains that the group "likes to center projects around helping the community." And he's well aware that some of the people in unstable living situations in Anacortes are his fellow classmates.

In fact, AFC is currently working with nearly 50 individuals who are in school in Anacortes. The AFC Leadership Class and every parent and student who contributed can rest assured that the food drive directly helps people they know.

If you'd like to help people in your community this season, please [visit our website and donate](#) whatever amount you are comfortable with.

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### **A Story with a Soundtrack**

Everyone loves a "where are they now" story, and we have one that comes with its own soundtrack! You may remember Ashlyn Solowey, who graduated from our program in September. AFC housed the then high school student for a few months when a chaotic family situation drove her into homelessness in spring. As we got to know her through our programs and activities, we were struck by Ashlyn's resolve to follow her dreams. We wrote about her on our Facebook page and Anacortes American reporter James Matson also [published a piece](#) on the determined young woman.

You'll recall that Ashlyn graduated from Anacortes High School while she was with us, and prepared to attend Western Washington University to pursue a college degree and launch a career in music. For a taste of how she's doing, [listen to an EP](#) (extended play) Ashlyn just released under the artist name Topiary Teahouse while you read the rest of this update.



Ashlyn is finishing her first term at WWU in Bellingham. She auditioned for and was accepted into the school's Symphony Orchestra and she joined the University Choir as well as smaller ensembles. Ashlyn also completed a math class and a philosophy class which explored the existence of God. She reports she "really liked my classes this fall, especially the professors."

You won't be surprised to find out that Ashlyn has more plans. She's chosen a class in personal finance for next term which she's excited about. She will also continue with the same kinds of music courses and performances, and she's working on a full-length album.

On the personal front, Ashlyn will spend Christmas with her boyfriend and his family, and she'll take some time to see her mom and a few others when she's back in Anacortes. As for next year she says, "I'm planning on securing a house/apartment in Bellingham this spring with some friends, so I'm really looking forward to that!"

In our work, we've seen many times that a dose of hardship can help fuel a path to the future filled with intention, energy, and even joy. Even while she endured turbulent times, however, it was clear to us that Ashlyn already had plenty of fuel to move her forward. We were honored to help for a few months.

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## **Dine & Shop is Two Months Away!**

Mark your Calendars for February 11th!

It's not too early to mark your calendar for the 2025 Dine & Shop event. We've scheduled it for Tuesday, February 11th. Once again, generous business owners will donate a portion of their restaurant or retail proceeds that day. It's a great time to get out of the house and enjoy yourself dining and shopping. It helps Anacortes entrepreneurs too, boosting receipts after a post-holiday winter slowdown.



What's that? You'd like to volunteer to help out? There are lots of opportunities, from taking signs and posters around town to selling raffle tickets. For information, email [Heather@anacortesfamily.org](mailto:Heather@anacortesfamily.org).

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## **Most Needed Right Now**

We've decided what WE most need right now is a regular newsletter feature letting you know what kinds of items we could use most. Our needs change from time to time--some are seasonal (think swimming goggles) and some pop up for no reason we can identify (remember Facebook posts asking for undies?!).

Right now we could really use gift cards in small amounts. Cards from TJ Maxx, Walmart, and Target can help parents buy gifts for their kids. A \$10 or \$20 card from Safeway can be used for gas to drive to holiday gatherings, or for extra food when their youngsters are out of school. A Starbucks card can buy someone in need a meal and a warm drink to boost their spirits.



If you love the opportunity to choose specific gifts, we have re-established our "wish list" on Amazon. [Find it here](#). We wish you and your loved ones the happiest holiday season!

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