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## Giving Thanks

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# Giving Thanks : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Wednesday November 23, 2016

## Giving Thanks

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By Eric Spina

Thanksgiving has been my favorite holiday since I became an adult.

It's about gratitude. It's about blessings. It's about family, friends and those in need.

Thanksgiving offers us a welcomed reprieve from the busyness of our lives. It's a time to slow down, reflect and give thanks for the abundance of blessings that God has bestowed on us. Karen and I are so thankful that our children will travel home from Skidmore College to spend the holiday with us. Theo, our tiny Yorkie with an oversized exuberance for life, will be overjoyed (and likely over-stimulated).

As I walk through campus and notice the gorgeous red and yellow-tinged leaves still hanging on, I count my blessings. They're immeasurable. I'm grateful for so much — my wife, my family, the campus community, our loyal alumni and the Marianists, who quietly and humbly show me every day what it means to live a faith-filled life in service to others.

I see that same spirit of faith, community, service and hospitality in action through the generosity of our students, faculty and staff. The campus community donated food and money for 540 Thanksgiving baskets to six local agencies, who distributed them to low-income families in Dayton. The Women's Center launched a drive to collect clothing and miscellaneous supplies for Hannah's Treasure Chest, a local non-profit organization that serves families in need.

Throughout November, students created awareness around the issues of hunger and homelessness in our neighborhood and around the world. At ArtStreet, they screened *A Place at the Table*, a documentary shedding light on food access issues, hunger, homelessness and the unjust structures that perpetuate poverty and hunger. In affiliation with Homefull, a dozen students last week participated in a national sleep-out at First Baptist Church downtown to experience for just one night how the homeless in our country live. Other students devoted their Saturday morning to working at the local urban farm, Mission of Mary Cooperative.

As students prepared to go home for Thanksgiving break, the Marianist Trinity student community on Monday night opened up their house for a Mass and candlelight prayer vigil for an end to hunger and homelessness. Our students continue to touch me with their selflessness, faithfulness, genuineness and generosity of spirit.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, I am thankful for the way we educate students to work for the common good. I'm appreciative of our willingness, as a campus community, to use our imagination and faith to shape a better world, to always be a force for unity and hope.

For all these blessings — and all of God's graces to come — I'm grateful.