

A Heart for Service: An Interview with Freshman Philanthropist Ethan Hill

By Cullen Durant

Years ago, after seeing a need with his own eyes, Altamont freshman Ethan Hill founded a nonprofit called [Ethan's Heart: Bags 4 Blessings](#), which provides care packages and food to homeless people in Birmingham. What started as sympathy for a homeless person grew into a fully functioning nonprofit. Ethan's work has been recognized by civic groups and highlighted by news outlets including [ABC 33/40 news](#) and [Al.com](#). *The Acta Diurna* interviewed Ethan to learn more about his work and the motivations behind it.

How long have you been doing this work?

I've been doing this for almost eight years now.

What motivated you to start?

My mom and I were in the car and we saw a homeless gentleman under the freeway, and it really resonated with me because I didn't think he should be out there. There are more fortunate people like us, who have families and homes, while he had nothing.



What is it specifically that you all do?

So we have a mobile unit – it's called the Ethan's Heart free mobile store and educational unit – and it goes out to homeless encampments around Birmingham. It provides them with [things they tell us they need], which cuts down on waste and the amount of volunteers needed to serve the purpose. So we have care packages, and I'm able to stand at the door [of the vehicle] and give them exactly what they need, whether that be toiletries, snacks, things of that nature. I can provide what they need without wasting anything.

So what do you believe are the biggest issues in our world?

Honestly, I think homelessness is a big one. I have to say that ... but I also think about [related] things like food insecurity and housing insecurity – not just homelessness, but also those *at risk* of homelessness ... because these people are still people like us. They still have children, they still have jobs, they still have commitments, but they have to worry more than we do.

Is it ever difficult juggling it all – school, golf, and keeping the organization going?

For sure. You know, especially going to this school, we definitely have a lot more to do than the average student. But I've been here for three years now, and I've gotten acclimated to the workload ... After a while I got used to it, but it was a process at first.

Given the success of Ethan's Heart, are you looking toward a career in philanthropy in the future?

I could be. It's a genuine option, but you know, I'm just 14 right now, so I'm still trying to keep my opportunities open. But it wouldn't be something I would be opposed to.

What is the most fulfilling part of the work for you?

I have to say, really just going out and being able to help people and see the smiles on their faces after I provide them with something that I know that they genuinely, really need.