

From the *desk* of the *Editor*

Share hope during the holidays

The costumes are ready, the pumpkins are carved and the candy is ready to go. Halloween is here. Everyone loves free candy and we, the Index Editorial Board, are no exception. But the delightfully spooky end of October also can mean something more.

No, not just the beginning of November, but also the onset of the holiday season.

As the weather quickly begins to cool, Thanksgiving and Christmas decorations start filling the stores. Advertisements for Thanksgiving dishes and Christmas presents are quick to follow. There's no doubt the holiday season is a great time of year, full of food, family and festivity. But not everyone has that privilege.

Every year, during the holiday season, food insecurity becomes a buzzword — but what does that phrase mean? Food insecurity is “a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food,” according to the USDA Economic Research Service. In the United States, 14 percent of households were reported as being “food insecure” during 2014, with 5.6 percent reporting very low food security — their normal eating patterns were severely disrupted and food intake was reduced during the year because of a lack of money or other resources to obtain food, according to the same website. While 14 percent might not seem like a huge number, that percentage translates to 17.4 million households, with 6.9 million reporting very low food security.

We, the Editorial Board, believe food is not a privilege, but a necessity. As such, we encourage you to donate to your local food bank. Donations do not have to take the form of money or non-perishable food, but also can be in the form of volunteering time or helping arrange food collection drives.

In Adair County alone, about 5,000 residents are considered food insecure and 1,500 of them are children, according to a Nov. 7, 2013 Index article. This directly affects the Kirksville community, because many Kirksville residents are dependent on food banks to feed themselves and their families.

Although there have been concentrated efforts to provide food for residents in need, these efforts fall woefully short of meeting the food insecurity needs of Adair County residents. During 2012, Adair County received just one-third of its necessary food — 430,000 pounds out of 1.2 million — to meet citizens' food insecurity needs, according to the same article.

This does not mean Truman State students and members of the Kirksville community should give up. There are many ways to make a difference in someone's life. Hope's Kitchen, for example, offers hot, fully prepared meals to anyone in the Kirksville area and serves about 400 meals a month with the help of community volunteers, according to its website. Volunteers like you.

We, the Editorial Board, encourage you to find ways to help out this holiday season. Pay a visit to the SERVE Center in the basement of the Student Union Building to sign up for service events, or log onto the TruService website to see what events are coming up. For example, tomorrow, Oct. 30, the SERVE Center is hosting Trick-or-Treating for Canned Goods, according to the TruService website. Volunteers will be going door-to-door on certain streets asking for food and monetary donations, according to the TruService website.

If that doesn't appeal to you, see when you can volunteer at Hope's Kitchen to provide meals or go online to see when local food banks are hosting food drives and sign up to help. There are many options for you to get involved with service, especially as the holiday season begins.

We, the Editorial Board, hope you will take an interest in volunteering this year. The holiday season is a time for giving thanks. Make it a time to give hope as well.



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Guest

COLUMN



Taylor Thompson

Taylor Thompson is a senior communication major from Cape Girardeau, Mo. who has been taking Truvada for more than three months.

PrEP usage can reduce HIV rate in LGBTQ community

In the minds of many college-aged gay men, HIV is a thing of the past — something that could never happen to them. However, this demographic makes up 19 percent of all new HIV infections each year and is the only age group to show a significant increase in infections, according to a CDC study analyzing the rate of HIV infection between 2008 and 2010. Plain and simple, this statistic is alarming. It shows the decades-old mantra of “no glove, no love” is not working on its own. New infections could be reduced drastically amongst college-aged gay men if more knew about and took Truvada.

Truvada, commonly known as PrEP, is a blue pill taken to prevent HIV transmission. Studies have shown it to be 99 percent effective when taken daily. Let me just repeat that. Truvada is 99 percent effective at preventing HIV transmission when taken daily — the same rate of success as when a condom is used properly. Unlike a condom, Truvada doesn't break when the going gets rough or fail to get used in the heat of the moment. As a pill that can be taken with one's morning routine, Truvada is ready to go when you're ready to go. Furthermore, in a two-year study done by Kaiser Permanente, a San Francisco-based medical facility, involving more than 600 individuals — mostly men who have sex with men — 100 percent of the participants remained HIV-free. It should be noted PrEP's effectiveness depends on how often the pill is taken. While daily adherence equates to an impressive 99 percent success rate, that number drops significantly to 76 percent if taken only twice a week, according to a July 22, 2014 AIDSmeds article. Therefore, an individual's level of protection not only depends on Truvada, but also their ability to commit to responsible and daily usage.

However, just because one is on Truvada doesn't mean one should stop using condoms. While Truvada is highly effective at preventing HIV, it does not prevent sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhea or syphilis.

Because of this, continued condom usage is recommended when taking Truvada.

This summer, I made the decision to start PrEP. On a personal level, I knew this was the right choice for me. Although I've always been a proponent of proper and frequent condom usage, I wanted to make sure I was protecting myself from HIV as best I could. Although it's uncommon, condoms can break, and that was not a risk that I was willing to take with my life. Daily usage of a pill — coupled with condom usage — was something I could implement responsibly into my life and commit to.

I've been taking Truvada for a little more than three months, and I couldn't be happier. Choosing to start PrEP has been surprisingly empowering for me. It has given me confidence and allowed me to take charge of my sexual health. I no longer find myself obsessively stressing about my HIV status or experiencing an overwhelming sense of dread when waiting for test results to come back. Instead, I find myself able to more fully enjoy my sexuality and all of the experiences that come with it.

While openly confronting HIV may seem intimidating at first, taking charge of one's health and knowingly protecting oneself is well worth the sense of unease that comes with trying something new. HIV is scary, and unfortunately, it's a reality many in our community find themselves living with. For the first time throughout the 30-plus year history of this plague, however, there's a proven and realistic tool for preventing HIV transmission. It's called Truvada, and more college-aged gay men should be asking themselves if it's right for them. After all, college should be about making friends, taking classes and having new experiences — not fretting about your HIV status.

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the academic year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor-in-chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the editor-in-chief, managing editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor-in-chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

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