

Amal Hassan  
University of Michigan- Dearborn



### Silent Witnesses: A Hunger Banquet

Amal Hassan graduated from the University of Michigan- Dearborn with a Bachelor Degree in English and Sociology. She is now serving her Alma Mater as the Michigan Campus Compact AmeriCorps\* VISTA at the Civic Engagement Project, where she is responsible from planning events that promote engagement and awareness.

Amal focused on hunger and homelessness in Michigan this semester. She wanted to look at the issue from the inequality in income in Michigan. At Silent Witnesses: A Hunger Banquet, each attendee would be given a card at random that determined which type of family income she/he would be placed in. Depending on their income status, they would sit either at adequate tables, or on chairs, or on the floor near the trash. To add an extra touch, each group was to be served a different type of meal: from healthy and filling, to unhealthy and small. To promote the event, two days before people involved built a small home made out of cardboard boxes and newspaper. It had statistics and photos of poverty. The flyer was written on small pieces of cardboard and posted around school.

The event turned out to be great and had speakers from the community, including Randy Dillard, Director of Volunteer Services at United Way, and Father Bob McCabe, a published writer in Hour Magazine of Detroit. Following the speakers, dinner and a few reflection activities, including videos and discussions took place. This event inspired students, faculty and staff to be aware of recent issues and they learned how they could become involved in our community. Some students even asked to have the event again next year.

Two other organizations partnered with them: Volunteer Dearborn and Amnesty International.

**A note from her Supervisor, Bill DeGenaro:** Amal's program raised awareness about hunger and also established a higher level of empathy among attendees. Amal brings energy to all of her projects at UM- Dearborn and the Hunger Banquet is no exception. Faculty, students, and other members of the campus community had the chance to bond with one another while learning about an important social issue. Given the state of our economy in Metropolitan Detroit, this event is timely.