**Rome Teachers "Talk Turkey" with the Community**

Rome TA members have discovered that one way to communicate is by "talking turkey".  Over the past two years the members of the Rome TA have accepted a "Turkey Challenge" from the union's Public Relations committee.  The teachers from various departments/buildings posed challenges of "who could raise the most turkeys".  While the friendly battle lines were drawn by the members, the union would match the turkey total with a donation of their own.  This was orchestrated during Thanksgiving time the past two years with the local Rome Rescue Mission receiving roughly 400 turkeys from the Rome TA and its members.

According to Donna Burch, Developmental Director, of the Rome Rescue Mission, "because of the generous support of the Rome Teachers Association and their turkeys, we were able to serve the least, the last and the lost.  The mission is a hand up, not a hand out".  Donna gave thanks to the RTA as the turkeys generated a total of over 600 Thanksgiving day meals this year which were "served at the mission, delivered to those in need, and picked up for take-out".

Life in Rome is not unique.  The population of this former thriving blue collar city has steadily dwindled.  The poverty rate has climbed.  Most of its elementary schools include, in excess of, 80% on free/reduced lunch.  State and local political decisions have hampered the city rather than helped.

Rome TA members are also not unique.  Members care and care enough to take action.  In addition to the "turkey challenge", the Rome TA has an ongoing collection and distribution program, through its "Children's Fund" for its students and students' families in need.  Money is internally raised periodically and staggered monthly article donation drives are conducted (school supplies, hygiene month, cold weather gear, undergarments and books are examples of collection outreaches).

While Rome does conduct efforts which may be unique, like any blueprint for success: we steal ideas from others.  Below is a list of some of the initiatives that we have conducted over the years in our effort to give back and to elevate our community.

Feel free to contact us at rometa01@gmail.com if something piques your curiosity.

* You Must Be Present to Win - Attendance Program which runs throughout the school year and wraps-up with an end of year Ice Cream Social for students and parents.
* Support Our Student Athlete Events - Members attend events to show support and provide athletes with homemade goodies or other treats for after the game.
* Books for Babies - Local parents of newborns are provided with a special first book. This program is run with the help of Rome Hospital.
* It Starts With Us - The Tolerance, Bullying and Acts of Kindness program includes a full school day of activities designed/carried out in each building with the day culminating in a district wide activity to promote tolerance and kindness and recognize the destructiveness caused by bullying. This was followed by a weekend of community activities including special presentations, movies, and a community walk. This is a joint Union, Teacher Center, District program spearheaded by the Rome Teacher Center and RTA.
* Halloween Safety - over the years we have provided special Safety flyers for parents, reflective Halloween bags for students, etc.
* Missing and Exploited Children - for years the union provided the materials for each elementary child to have his/her picture taken and for a packet including the photo to be put together for parents to assist law enforcement in case the child ever went missing.