

## Serving seniors: Kids to dress as 'waiters' in a holiday feast for lonely elders

BY JOHN LAUINGER

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Alan Chajet, 13, of Rego Park, will be wearing his sharpest suit this Thanksgiving - but not because his parents want him to look "GQ" for the holiday.

Chajet, an eighth-grader at Public School 144 in Forest Hills, and more than 30 Queens kids will dress like waiters and serve a Thanksgiving feast to 50 seniors at an American Legion Hall in Forest Hills.

Chajet is a member of a youth service group known as Kidz Care Junior Civic Association. This will be his second time serving charity - with a side of turkey, gravy, mashed potatoes, stuffing and pie.

"As the seniors started coming in, we would take their coats and walk them to their table," he said, recalling last year's feast. "We waited on them like a restaurant would."

Kidz Care has more than 100 members. They range in age from 6 to 18 and hail from five public schools in Forest Hills and Rego Park.

Last year they served 39 seniors, many of whom would have otherwise spent Thanksgiving alone.

As of last week, 50 seniors had signed up for this year's feast, which will be catered by a local Boston Market and paid for through donations.

Chajet said serving turkey to his elders made him "feel good on the inside."

"I got to help out a bunch of senior citizens and give back to the community that raised me," he said.

After more than a decade of being alone at Thanksgiving, Glenda Kuller of Rego Park said she "needed" someone to care for her. She said she knows she is not alone.

"A lot of people are terribly, terribly isolated from their families and the greater community," she said. "They really need to connect with a source who reaches out to them, symbolically, and says, 'I am here for you.'"

As Kidz Care prepares its charitable cornucopia, Jamaica High School students will help arrange Thanksgiving dinners tomorrow for some of Queens' neediest residents.

More than 60 students from the school's football team and boys' and girls' basketball teams will package and distribute turkey dinners as part of a large Thanksgiving meal program coordinated by Allen AME Church in Jamaica.

The students participate in a nonprofit youth mentoring program called Academics in Motion. It uses sports to teach life skills to children in traditionally underprivileged communities.

Preparing Thanksgiving meals is a perfect way to practice life skills, said James Barrow, who administers the program at Jamaica High School, which happens to be his alma mater.

"It teaches them that they have to help out people who have less than them - and that they are privileged when they might think they are not," he said.[jlauinger@nydailynews.com](mailto:jlauinger@nydailynews.com)