



# U-LEAD THE WAY

*The Interact Club has partnered with U-Lead Athens in pursuit of reforming education and immigration policy in both Athens and the state of Georgia.*

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**F**or junior Naomi “Zulley” Huaman, the issue of immigration is not simply a march on the capitol or writing letters to a politician. It’s her life, and she has to deal with it every day.

“My grandma and my mom got deported when I was five,”

Huaman said. “I don’t want to see another five-year-old, three-year-old or two-year-old get their parents taken away from them. I don’t want that to happen to anybody, not even my worst enemy. I will do what is possible to help them and prevent them from being like me.”

This year, Huaman joined the Clarke Central High School Interact Club to inform peers of the real issues that undocumented or underdocumented students face.

“I never thought of being in Interact in the first place,” Huaman said. “Both of my parents and my grandmother, who raised me, are deported. I was just a grumpy person, grumpy with life and (English department chair Ian Altman) told me to go to (Interact adviser Ashley) Goodrich.”

The club’s focus during the 2014-15 school year has been aligned with this issue.

“What is most important to me is just that students who are underdocument-

ed can see that there is a community here who wants them to be successful and wants to do anything and everything we can to be there for them during hard times,” Goodrich said.

The culminating event for Interact: DREAMfest 2015, a festival held on April 4 at Nu i’s Space featuring speakers, live music and local artists.

“(Co-director of Athens U-Lead) Betina Kaplan shared with me what she thought was so profound about the event: that the students created this posi-

tive space and it created these healing effects where people felt that they could share their stories,” Goodrich said. “That was very healing for them. We even had people whose minds changed.”

Huaman says she felt the effects of the positive space personally.

“It was an unbelievable thing that happened,” Huaman said. “For me, it’s the best day of my life.”

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**NAOMY “ZULLEY” HUAMAN,**  
**Junior**

Students received aid in planning DREAMfest from Athens U-Lead co-director JoBeth Allen along with the other directors, Kaplan and Cedar Shoals High School English department teacher Matt Hicks. U-Lead is a local organization that offers CCSD students help in the college application process.

“(Hicks, Kaplan and I) asked the students what they needed most in terms of support,” Allen said. “They told us the things that we (now) do every Thursday night, which are trying to find colleges, applying to colleges where they can be

accepted, applying for scholarships, studying for the SAT and ACT and also some work with document renewal.”

Allen and her colleagues soon became local activists on this issue. She notes similarities in current education policy, particularly Board of Regents Policy 4.1.6, to policies in place before the Civil Rights movement, especially within the state.

“As soon as I learned about this, the parallels with the segregated University of Georgia were just so obvious and appalling,” Allen said. “It was like sort of falling into a bad dream where you go back 60 years.”

In addition to working with Allen on DREAMfest, Interact Club has also hosted panels throughout the year that have featured U-Lead directors and volunteers.

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**JOBETH ALLEN,**  
U-Lead Co-director

“I think it’s important for students to hear from other people besides their teacher,” Goodrich said. “And (U-Lead) does incredible work in the community, so we really did a lot of first semester just learning the laws, the policies and hearing the voices of undocumented students.”

The proceeds of DREAMfest, approximately \$3000 in total, are all going towards U-Lead.

“It was completely student-centered with students running the show, students in the show,” Altman said. “The grown-ups were there to enjoy it and marvel at the kids’ brilliance.”

Additionally, friends and family of the CCHS senior class started a GoFundMe fundraiser that will also contribute funds to U-Lead. The goal is to raise \$30,000, and over \$12,000 has already been donated to date.

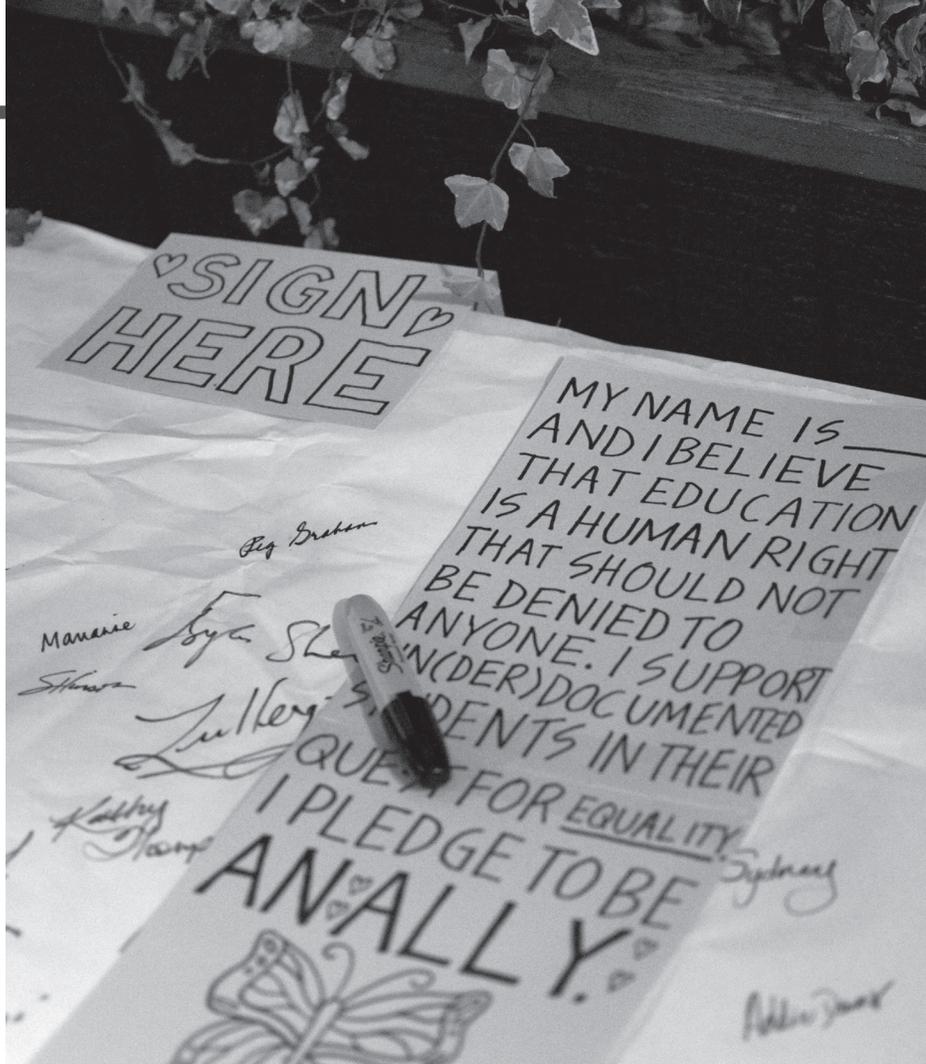
“For me, if I knew that I didn’t have those barriers to pursue an education I would love for someone to give a gift in honor of U-Lead students,” Goodrich said. “Because I think that would probably be as a student one of the best gifts anyone could give me.”

The Interact Club plans to continue focusing on this issue next year, and has even bigger ideas for DREAMfest 2016.

“We’re brainstorming how to allow it to reach more people and have a bigger impact,” Interact Club officer and junior Emma Clarke said. “Next year we’ll be focusing on actually changing the policies, speaking to senators and trying to get immigration education reform.”

The commitment to support peers like Huaman through these hardships, however, will remain steadfast.

“We want to celebrate victories with them, and we’re here in whatever capacity they need us to be,” Goodrich said.



**Opposite:** SPREAD YOUR WINGS: Butterfly illustrations, a symbol for the Clarke Central High School Interact Club’s DREAMfest 2015, hang at Nuci’s Space on April 4. “DREAMfest was festive and it was fun,” English department co-chair Ian Altman said. **Top:** PLEDGING TO FIGHT: The pledge Interact Club students created as a manifesto for DREAMfest. **Above:** HEAD: Junior Naomi Huaman shares her personal narrative at DREAMfest. “Everybody was hugging me, patting me and crying with me,” Huaman said.