

# National period day breaks silence surrounding period poverty in LR

by BROOKE ELLIOTT  
features editor

Every person who menstruates will spend roughly seven days of every month bleeding. Despite the mental and physical distress that menstruation can cause, most people rarely speak about their periods to anyone but their closest friends. According to a study by Plan International, 82% of teenage girls are embarrassed to even buy sanitary products in public.

National Period Day, October 29, focuses on breaking the stigma and silence surrounding periods, in order to ensure the comfort and wellbeing of every person who menstruates. On National Period Day, around 100 protesters and activists gathered on the steps of the Arkansas State Capitol to donate period products, learn how to help those suffering in period poverty, and to fight back against the tax that labels crucial menstrual hygiene items non-essential. Period poverty, which affects the homeless population of Arkansas most, is a lack of crucial access to period supplies and products.

Period@Little Rock helps those who need but cannot afford menstrual hygiene products by donating pads, tampons, and diva cups to the homeless and impoverished. Period@Little Rock organizer Katie Clark was inspired to become an activist by reading Nadya Okamoto's book, *Period Power: A Manifesto for the Menstrual Movement*.

"I didn't know period poverty was a thing," Clark said. "I reached out to all of the high schools and middle schools in Little Rock and asked 'Is [a lack of period products for student use] an issue for y'all?' and [many] responded and said 'yes.'"

Other speakers at the event described their own experiences with period poverty. Former Central High student Desiree Holmes works at local nonprofit Our House, which serves homeless and low-income families.

"Periods are common, but period products are [considered] a luxury," Holmes said. "According to the Always™ Survey, nearly 1 in 5 American girls has either left school or missed school entirely because

they did not have access to period products."

Holmes described how fortunate she was as a teenager to have access to period products and a support system--resources that many young women lack.

"My freshman year at Central High School, my cycle started while I was in class. I called my mother on my cell phone and waited for her to bring me some pads... I was so embarrassed, but I was going to be okay," Holmes said. "Unfortunately, my example is not the case for every young lady. According to Always™, 143,000 girls in New York alone have missed school because their family couldn't afford period protection. Imagine what that number is in Little Rock."

One way protestors fought period poverty was by donating to charities like the Arkansas Women's Outreach, an organization that provides menstrual products to the homeless and impoverished. Pam deGravelles described how the organization began its mission in 2015 to serve the community with free, desperately needed

period supplies.

"Two women who did not know each other connected on Facebook and said 'I wonder if there is a need for feminine hygiene products among the homeless women in [Arkansas]?" deGravelles said. "They polled the women [at a homeless meeting place] and found out that [the women] have no access to period products at all, and they thought 'Wow, this is definitely the population we need to serve.'"

Arkansas Women's Outreach has grown rapidly since its founding. "We serve over a thousand women a year, and we distribute over \$30,000 worth of period products each year," deGravelles said.

Katie Clark closed the rally by announcing that over 200 packages of pads and tampons had been donated during the event. Period@Little Rock and Arkansas' Women's Outreach will continue their work in the city, and accept volunteer help through their Facebook and Instagram pages. Find out more about the national period poverty movement at [period.org](http://period.org).

## Cook's Corner



art by PHOEBE RABORN

### Banana nut bread

Erica Gourley, freshman

½ cup room temperature butter  
1 cup sugar  
2 eggs  
2 cups flour  
1 tsp baking soda  
¼ tsp salt  
1 cup mashed bananas  
½ cup chopped pecans  
1 tsp vanilla  
1 tsp cinnamon

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Add all ingredients except vanilla and cinnamon together and mix until combined, then add vanilla and cinnamon to batter.
3. Pour into prepared loaf pans, bake for 35-40 mins.

### Bread pudding

Loni Rainey, art 1 teacher

5 eggs  
1 tsp cinnamon, ground  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 tsp nutmeg, ground  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1 loaf Challah bread, cubed and cut into 1 inch pieces  
2 cups whole milk

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 9 x 13 baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Place the bread onto the prepared dish and spread it evenly. Set it aside.
2. Take a large mixing bowl and stir in sugar, eggs, milk, nutmeg, vanilla, and cinnamon until mixed well.
3. Pour mixture over bread in the baking pan and ensure the bread is coated well. Allow it to soak for about 15 minutes. (This is when I add my additional ingredients. If you are adding fruit or chocolate, you can cut your sugar to ¾ cup.)
4. Place the bread pudding in the oven and bake for 30-45 minutes or until golden brown.
5. Remove the bread pudding from the oven and allow it to cool before serving.



photo by OLIVE SHUFFIELD

Seniors Connor Gustafson, Carson Eldridge, Reagan Kholer, and Reece Forrest follow along with their music in before school rehearsals for Madrigals. All four are in the bass section.



photo by OLIVE SHUFFIELD

Sophomores Gerry Cheng and Juan Estrella sing along side seniors Connor Gustafson and Carson Eldridge in their choir rehearsal for Madrigals.