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Web Essay: Wanted: 10,000 Volunteers

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Robach cites poverty rate: Assemblyman Joseph Robach, R-Greece, said the concentration of poor children has grown since state aid formulas were created.

Written by
BRUCE POLLOCK and
HANK SHAW
Guest Essayists

It's time for a massive mobilization to [help poor children](#) in our community. It should be our No. 1 priority. We cannot afford to think small. Or we risk losing another generation to dysfunction and despair.

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The statistics are startling. And they should make us sick to our civic stomach. The Rochester child poverty rate is the seventh highest in the nation. Which means that 27,000 children wake up every morning to face one tough obstacle after another — everything from poor nutrition and [lead poisoning](#) to crime, violence, hopelessness and drugs. And there are another 12,000 children in the county who face a similar uphill fight.

Of course, education is a proven path out of poverty. But our schools are struggling with shockingly low graduation rates. And we can't expect them to solve a problem of this magnitude on their own.

We must also put an end to magical thinking. We will not find pots of funding at the end of the rainbow or perfect programs that will

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Bruce Pollock

double the graduation rate. Instead, we all have to take responsibility for [solving this problem](#). We have to dig in, do the hard work, and help one child at a time.

In 2005, a blue-ribbon panel led by [Albert Simone](#), who was then President of RIT, issued a "call to arms" urging the community to recruit 10,000 volunteer tutors and mentors. It's time to issue that call to arms again, because, according to the national United Way, "research proves that caring volunteers working with students of all ages, have the power to help kids boost academic achievement and put young people on track for a bright future."

Raising a volunteer army is also practical and affordable, since much of the infrastructure is in place. The Rochester Area Community Foundation, the United Way, Wegmans, the Rochester Jewish Coalition for Literacy, faith-based institutions and other organizations support volunteer tutoring and mentoring.

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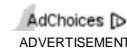
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