

# HomeFront Happenings

Summer 2024

## THE HOMEFRONT RESOURCE NETWORK *A Legacy of Service*

HomeFront began over 30 years ago as a group of volunteers delivering meals and groceries to hungry families. Since then, it has evolved into a sophisticated social service organization with more than 30 programs to help families become—and remain—stably housed and thriving. One of our core values, instilled at our founding, is the belief that families should have the basic necessities they need to live a life with dignity.

The Resource Network, a cornerstone of HomeFront, encompasses the Choice Pantry, Diaper Resource Center, Furnish the Future program, FreeStore and our seasonal drives. In 2023 alone, there were 21,575 visits to our Choice Pantry, over 2 million diapers and wipes distributed, and 3,888 shopping sessions at the FreeStore in Trenton.

We are often asked, “Are you seeing an increase in need?” The answer is a resounding yes. More families are relying on the Choice Pantry and the Diaper Resource Center, with both seeing significant increases in demand compared to last year.

Dylan O’Neill, Director of the Resource Network, confirms, “The need is great and grows greater every day. The Resource Network works tirelessly to provide our neighbors with the essential items they require to build a strong, stable, and secure foundation for themselves and their families. Our goal is not only to provide basic necessities but to do so in a

way that enhances families’ overall sense of dignity, self-worth, and agency. We see the unseen, hear the unheard, and provide for those who have been otherwise forgotten.”

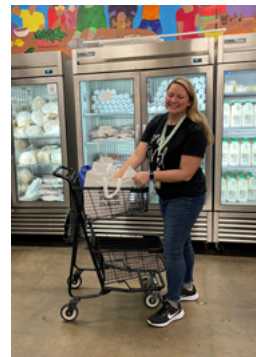
One poignant example is a couple who recently took in their three grandchildren when they urgently needed a

*“For the first time in my adult life, I had to ask for help and I’m just grateful I was able to find HomeFront. The baby has diapers, my granddaughter has school supplies, and I have ingredients to make meals that are nutritious.”*

— A CHOICE PANTRY VISITOR

safe place to live. Unprepared and overwhelmed, they arrived at HomeFront in tears, frustrated and scared. Our team was able to calm them, reassure them, and provide nearly everything they needed to get settled: car seats, pack and plays, clothing, shoes, school supplies, toys, beds, dressers, and bed sheets. Over several days, their comfort and relief grew increasingly apparent.

A week after receiving the final items, the couple returned to thank the Resource Network team. It was a moment that highlighted the profound impact our community of volunteers and donors has on families in desperate need, underscoring the importance of our mission.



## Our Summer Wish List

- Shelf Stable Food
- Period Products
- Diapers
- New Air Conditioners or Fans
- Back-To-School Supplies

See more of our most needed items by scanning the QR code:



To donate items or get more information, contact us at (609) 989-9417 x107, or [getinvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:getinvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org)

*Thank you for trusting HomeFront with your donated items.*



### On the Cover

Our newsletters feature work by artists in ArtSpace. This issue's painting is by Megan S.

*Note that we change the names of clients to protect their privacy.*



### The Importance of Volunteers:


## Join Us at Our Upcoming Open House

We could not accomplish all that we do at HomeFront without our dedicated volunteers, who play crucial roles throughout our organization. Volunteers assist at our Family Campus, help in our Choice Pantry, tutor children in our after-school programs, provide job training and mentorship, help with fundraising events, support our healing ArtSpace initiatives and more. Your time and talents can also help transform lives and build a brighter future for everyone in our community.

**We invite you to learn more about how you can make a difference at our Open House at our 1880 Princeton Avenue location, on Thursday, September 26th, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

This event is an excellent opportunity to meet the HomeFront team, hear firsthand from volunteers, and see the impact you can make in the community. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information!

We look forward to seeing you there. *Together, we can create lasting change!*



## Children Helping Children PERFORMATHON

*musical growth through evaluation and encouragement*

Special thanks to all the young student musicians and their parents whose time and efforts made the 2024 New Jersey Music Teacher Association's (NJMTA) Children Helping Children Performathon (CHCP) a huge success again this year! The NJMTA CHCP is an opportunity for students of all levels and ages to perform for both artistic enrichment and community service.

For six years in a row, the NJMTA has sponsored this event — raising money for

HomeFront's *Joy, Hopes & Dreams* children's program which provides after-school, weekend and summer activities and experiences for hundreds of local children impacted by poverty, housing instability and homelessness.

**We are happy to say the Performathon raised \$11,395!**

Every dollar raised helps provide kids with hope for a better tomorrow and a pathway to get there.

# KidZone!

*HomeFront's children's programs ensure that children who are facing housing instability or living in deep poverty have a vision of a better future.*

## SPRING HIGHLIGHTS: Children's Programs Engaging Activities & Memorable Events

This spring, *Joy, Hopes & Dreams* organized a variety of exciting activities, from bowling trips and movies to two Easter Egg Hunts and a delightful children's play, "Peter Pan," at St. Ann's School in Lawrenceville.

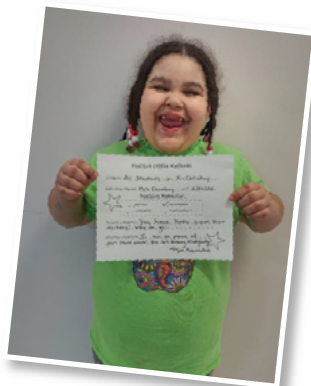
JHD also celebrated Read Across America at the Family Campus with Rays of Hope Ministries. Approximately 25 high school students and staff members from Rays of Hope joined our youngsters for a day of reading, bookmaking, bookmark crafting, and other literacy-encouraging activities. The day captured the joy of reading and each child left with a book of their choosing.

This spring has been truly unforgettable, filled with enriching experiences that fostered learning, creativity, and joy.



## Children's Champion: Grace's Journey

When six-year-old Grace arrived at the Family Campus, she had never attended school, and was nervous about starting. Family Campus staff worked quickly to get her enrolled and ensure that her school experience began on the most positive note, providing new school clothes and a fresh hairstyle. As they anxiously waited for her school bus to return on that first day, they asked Grace to let them know how her day went. They were thrilled when she stepped off the bus with a big smile, shouting "GOOD!" Every day since, Grace returns from school beaming and eager to share her accomplishments. To keep her on par with her peers, she receives after-school help in the Educational Success Center. We are all incredibly proud of her progress and spirit.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

For the most up-to-date details, visit our website, [www.HomeFrontNJ.org](http://www.HomeFrontNJ.org)



This year's **Back-to-School Drive** to collect backpacks with supplies and back-to-school outfits and uniforms for all ages runs thru Aug 16th.



Eight Weeks, July - August

Sponsor a child or Host a Wonderful Wednesday!



Be a part of the fun at the Carnegie Center in Princeton. Learn more about volunteering, racing on the big day, or sponsoring this event — Follow the QR code to visit us online, email [GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org) or call 609-989-9417 x107.



## CANgineering

Support our Choice Pantry by hosting a team building CANgineering event this summer! Teams compete to build structures using canned goods, which are then donated to our Choice Pantry. This creative activity collects donations while encouraging spirited competition among local organizations. For details, email [GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org).

JOIN US  
**HomeFront Open House**  
**Thursday, September 26th**  
**5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

# Our Community Cares

*Our unwavering volunteers, donors, and staff stepped up even higher to ensure HomeFront families had the support they needed. We are, indeed, better together.*

## HomeFront's Women's Initiative:

# Celebrating Joy, Hopes and Dreams

On Sunday, April 21, over 300 attendees gathered at Grounds for Sculpture in Hamilton, NJ, for HomeFront's annual Women's Initiative Spring Luncheon. The event supported HomeFront's children's programs aiding local kids affected by poverty and homelessness.

The Women's Initiative, founded over 15 years ago, brings together local women to support HomeFront's comprehensive services, including shelter, educational and employment support, basic necessities, health and wellness programs, and enrichment activities for children.

Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson emceed the event, highlighting the impact of HomeFront's *Joy, Hopes and Dreams* (JHD) program. She praised the resilience and achievements of current and former participants. "It was an incredible afternoon filled with inspiration and generosity," she remarked.

JHD offers academic enrichment, mentoring, tutoring, and recreational programs

a minimum of six nights a week, providing a safe space for children while parents focus on supporting their families.

Former participants Wilmeris and Natayah shared their experiences, from attending Camp Mercer to their college years at Kean University. Their stories underscored the program's lasting impact, with Wilmeris reminiscing about the joyful bus rides and Natayah recalling the excitement of the school bus arriving.

Chris Marchetti, JHD Director, was honored for his 25 years of leadership. He expressed gratitude for the recognition, emphasizing the collective effort of the team and the courage of the children and families. "I'm just the person holding the flashlight," he said. "The real heroes are the kids and parents who find their way through the dark."

We are grateful to all who attended and supported this uplifting event, celebrating the successes and future potential of HomeFront's children and families.



Former JHD participants Wilmeris and Natayah tell their stories.



Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson with our own Sarah Steward.

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## ArtJam 2024, Bringing it HOME . . .

The concept of "home" transcends mere physical spaces—it embodies the essence of safety, comfort, and belonging. ArtJam's special exhibit, "Bringing It Home," offered a profound exploration of this theme through the lenses of art and poetry. By engaging with the community and supporting those facing housing challenges, the exhibit not only showcased creative expressions but also reinforced the communal spirit and the shared human experience of seeking a place to call home.



Special thanks to all that attended — and participated in — this year's ArtJam, a collaboration with Art Against Racism and local poets in the community



# Here @ HomeFront

Interested in a tour? Email [GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org) to learn more.

## Building Hope & Opportunities

### 26 New Apartments Open in Hopewell Township

HomeFront, along with our longtime affordable housing partner, Homes by TLC, and builder Lennar proudly announced the opening of 26 affordable rental homes in the Hopewell Parc development. This project represents a remarkable collaboration between the non-profit and private sectors to address the critical need for affordable housing in the region. Through innovative design, sustainable construction practices, and a shared commitment to community welfare, Homes by TLC, HomeFront, and Lennar are delivering tangible solutions to combat homelessness and housing insecurity.

As HomeFront CEO Sarah Steward said in her remarks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, "I'm passionate about homes and making sure people in our community have access to

quality homes....to develop and achieve what they're capable of, achieving their potential."

Residents will have access to HomeFront services such as job training, child support, life skills education, and access to groceries and basic necessities. Those living in the 26 apartments will pay no more than 30% of their income on rent, ensuring affordability and stability.

This collaboration exemplifies a holistic approach to community well-being, fostering stability and success for local families.



## Empowering Journeys: Candace's Path to New Horizons



Candace's story is a powerful testament to transformation, resilience, and the unwavering support of the HomeFront community. Her journey began in March 2023 when she joined the Hire Expectations program. As a single mother working as a waitress, Candace aspired to achieve more for herself and her child.

Through Hire Expectations, she discovered her talent for customer service, which led her to apply to flight attendant school—a life-changing decision.

Having never been on a plane before, Candace faced significant challenges. However, the HomeFront team provided comprehensive support, enrolling her in flight school, teaching her how to navigate TSA, and even driving her to the airport for her first flight to Seattle to attend flight attendant school. The Atkinson Child Development

Center nurtured her child, while Health and Wellness programs provided essential support. HomeFront's Rental Assistance program offered crucial aid during tough times, ensuring stability.

ArtSpace became Candace's creative sanctuary, where she rekindled her passion for art. Daily visits and participation in ArtSpace shows added depth to her journey of self-discovery.

Candace expressed heartfelt gratitude for the HomeFront team's unwavering support. From the mentors and counselors at Hire Expectations to the dedicated staff who guided her along the way, each interaction was impactful.

As Candace embarks on her journey to the skies, we celebrate her determination and the transformative power of community support. Join us in wishing her the best as she spreads her wings and soars to new heights. Candace will be graduating from flight attendant school this September.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS: ARTSPACE & TREASURE TROVE EVENTS IN AUGUST

**ArtSpace Summer Showcase: Friday, August 16th, from 12-4 p.m.**

**Connie Mercer Family Campus (101 Celia Way, Ewing) Blue Garage Art Gallery!**

Join us as we highlight the beautiful pieces of art created by the families we work with through the Campus, our Lawrenceville location, and the children from Camp Mercer! *Help us celebrate their creativity!*

**Treasure Trove Customer Appreciation Sale:**

**Saturday, August 17th, 10-4 p.m. and Sunday August 18th, 12-4 p.m.**

**31 West Broad Street, Hopewell**

HomeFront's Treasure Trove is a thrift store located in the heart of Hopewell, NJ that specializes in vintage, collectibles and all things decorative. All of our funky and fun merchandise is donated and proceeds from sales fund HomeFront's 30+ life changing programs. If thrifting is your bag — *this sale is for you!*



# We are feeding more families than ever, and WE NEED YOUR HELP

Our commitment to feeding the hungry has not wavered since our earliest days of bringing food to homeless families living in area motels. Our impact goes beyond simply putting a meal on the table.

*There are many ways you can help —*

**GIVE FOOD** Donate food or organize a food drive on our behalf. Visit our website for a full list of needed items and tips on organizing a successful drive.

**MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION** Our ability to buy in bulk means your donation has even greater impact.

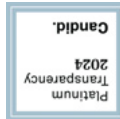
**VISIT US** Learn more about our food pantries and our work by taking a tour! To set up a time—or if you have any questions—contact us at 609-989-9417 x107 or [GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org).

**GIVE ANY AMOUNT TODAY AND HELP US FEED A FAMILY TOMORROW**

You can make a donation of any size by visiting [HomeFrontNJ.org](http://HomeFrontNJ.org), by scanning the QR code, or by calling 609-989-9417 x107.



Help Us Save! If you'd like to receive *HomeFront Happenings* online, let us know and we'll add your name to our paperless list. Contact [HomeFront@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:HomeFront@HomeFrontNJ.org).



*I alone can not change  
the world, but I can  
cast a stone across  
the waters and create  
many ripples.*  
— Mother Teresa

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