

HomeFront Happenings

Spring/Summer 2023

THE FAMILY PRESERVATION CENTER

Sheltering Families for Over Twenty Years

The HomeFront Family Preservation Center (FPC), our emergency shelter program, recently celebrated its 20th anniversary in March. Over the last two decades, the FPC has helped nearly 3,000 families who have experienced homelessness. By offering services such as on-site childcare,

job training, intensive case management, and other life-changing programs designed to help families break the cycle of poverty, the FPC has had a significant impact on the communities it serves. HomeFront's innovative "one-stop shop" model has been nationally recog-

nized for its effectiveness and highlights the importance of providing comprehensive support services for families impacted by poverty and homelessness.

HomeFront's Family Preservation Center underwent a remarkable expansion in 2015, transforming from its initial beginnings on the grounds of the Katzenbach School for the Deaf into a fully-fledged wraparound resource. The opening of the Family Campus marked a significant turning point for HomeFront, as it now encompassed all the services that a family requires under one roof. HomeFront's Family Campus provides an array of support, from tutoring and health and wellness assistance to skill-building activities such as art and cooking classes. Thanks to HomeFront's expanded program, families in need now have a central hub where they can access an array of essential services and support throughout their journey towards stability and independence.

Gianna's story is a powerful example of the transformative impact that the Family Campus model can have on the lives of families in need. After leaving an abusive relationship,

Gianna was struggling with depression and feelings of hopelessness. Thanks to the support of her family advocate, Gianna was able to create a plan for herself and enroll in our Hire Expectations job training program. Shortly thereafter, Gianna was able to find stable employment and move into

her own apartment, providing stability and security for herself and her young son. Her son continues to attend the Atkinson Child Development Center within the Family Campus, where he receives high-quality care and education. Through the dedication and commitment of the

HomeFront team, Gianna was able to turn her life around and create a bright future for herself and her child.

According to Sheila Addison, the director of the HomeFront Family Campus, a shelter must be much more than a place to eat and sleep. By providing a range of specialized services under one roof, the FPC has helped families achieve stability and build a brighter future for themselves and their children. "Almost everyone that comes to the shelter is dealing with significant trauma. They often struggle to move into an apartment and become self-sufficient because there are so many barriers in front of them," said Sheila.

"It is HomeFront's most important job to stabilize our families and then get them prepared to move on to independence. There is nothing more special to me than when I run into former shelter residents at the grocery store or the mall and they tell me how well they are doing. We give families the tools and resources they need to be self-sufficient, but more importantly, we give them hope for a different life."



Our Wish List:

- Cars in working order
- Individual bagged snacks, juice, and water
- Kid-size bathing suits, gently used or new
- New beach towels
- Kid-friendly bug spray and sunscreen
- Kids' reusable water bottles
- Handheld fans/misters
- New sports equipment (football, soccer ball, kick balls, etc.)
- Outdoor water activities (water balloons, sprinklers, etc.)

To donate items or get more information, contact us: at (609) 989-9417 x107, or getinvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org
Also see our Amazon wishlist: [tinyurl.com/HomeFrontMNI](https://www.amazon.com/homefrontmni)

Last year, 88 kids made memories to last a lifetime at our eight-week summer camp, Camp Mercer.



On the Cover

Each HomeFront newsletter features work created by an artist in ArtSpace. This issue's scene was painted by Megan S.

Spring Helps Hope Blossom

I love spring at HomeFront. We're a place that operates on hope, and I think I love spring because hope feels even more abundant — the weather is warming, flowers and leaves are blooming, and even the impossible seems possible.

One gorgeous Saturday morning in May the HomeFront family gathered at the Princeton Country Club for one of our great spring traditions: our Mother's Day picnic hosted for over two decades by our friends at Mathematica. HomeFront volunteers made it a special afternoon: face-painted kids made gifts and tributes for their moms, snacks and games were abundant, the bingo challenge was full of suspense, and our volunteer DJ got us all on the pavilion dance floor, joyful to be spending an afternoon celebrating HomeFront moms.

If you attended our Women's Initiative event in April, you got to hear from Shafika, a former resident of our emergency shelter. She shared her family's story of incredible struggle but also incredible triumph. Shafika and her kids had previously experienced homelessness and clawed their way out — only to be met with more hardship after a house fire. At her second stay at the Home-

Front Family Campus, she rebuilt again, finding support for her kids, a new job, and new home.

The Friday before the picnic was a big day at the Family Campus: our parents who had been studying for their high school equivalency were set to take their final test. Shafika only needed to pass one more subject to achieve her diploma, a goal she dreamed of constantly. The call came late Friday afternoon: Shafika passed and had achieved her diploma and her dream.

On Saturday, we took a pause in the picnic to celebrate Shafika and her



Shafika and Sarah

amazing accomplishments. We danced and laughed together, honoring her and all the HomeFront parents who inspire us with their dedication, commitment, and love. With spring in the air, all things seemed possible. That morning on the dance floor, we were reminded that hope and hard work makes the impossible a reality at HomeFront every day.

Thank you for sharing our hope!

Sarah Steward
Chief Executive Officer, HomeFront

Smart Ways to Give — Leave a Legacy

We would be honored if you would consider joining HomeFront's Legacy Society with a gift in your will. It is an easy way to make a long-lasting impact on our work in the community. For more information, email HomeFront@HomeFrontNJ.org or call 609-989-9417 x107 so we can schedule a time to discuss.

- With a charitable gift of appreciated securities held long-term, the donation you make and the deduction you get are greater than they would be if you were to sell the shares and donate the cash proceeds instead. That is because when you donate shares, **you avoid paying the capital gains tax.**
- Once you turn 70.5 you are required to take a distribution from your Individual Retirement Account(s) – [IRA(s)]. Those who meet the age requirement can transfer up to \$100,000 per individual, per year, directly to a qualified charitable organization — and, the donated amount is excluded from a person's federal taxable income.

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

Our Kids are Climbing to the Top!

Our Joy, Hopes, and Dreams (JHD) program has continued to offer new and exciting opportunities for the kids under HomeFront's care! Thanks to a partnership with Morgan Stanley, the past year has been filled with coding and STEM classes. These classes provide our kids with a deeper understanding of science, technology, and other STEM fields, which are vital for their future success in the workforce. Not only have they been able to learn new skills, but the program has also fostered strong relationships between the children and the coders. To show the kids that anyone can pursue a career in STEM, they even had an opportunity to visit the Morgan Stanley main office and meet coders of all backgrounds.



In addition to the various academic enrichment activities, the JHD kids participate in fun weekend activities. More recently, Cristina, a long time tutor and HomeFront supporter, took our kids on an adventure to go rock climbing at Rockville in Hamilton. Twenty kids and teens harnessed up and conquered the many climbing walls at the center. Although many were intimidated, it did not take long for everyone to face their fears and give the climbing a try. By the end, they were going up and down the rock walls like they have been climbing all of their lives! The youngest participant, little JoJo, climbed all the way to the very top...twice! And when he made his way down, he looked up and confidently proclaimed, "I'm Spiderman!" It was a fun, empowering experience for everyone involved.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For the most up-to-date details visit our website, www.HomeFrontNJ.org



The school year may not have ended yet, but HomeFront is already looking forward to next year. Many students impacted by poverty and homelessness go back to school without the proper supplies to start the year ready for success. This year's **Back-to-School Drive** will kick off in July to collect backpacks with supplies and back to school outfits and uniforms for all ages, with an emphasis on clothing for middle and high schoolers.

You can make a difference by sponsoring a child or children or organizing a drive in your workplace or congregation.



You can be a part of the Halloween fun by helping us make this year's run, walk and festivities are the best ever — To get involved, please call 609-989-9417 x107 or email us at getinvolved@homefrontnj.org to learn more about volunteering on the Run committee, racing on the big day, or sponsoring this event.

Our Community Cares

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

Another Diaper Challenge Completed and a Full Tractor Trailer Received!



In our annual Diaper Challenge we encourage local businesses and organizations to get involved and donate diapers and baby wipes. This year, we collected nearly 400,000 diapers and wipes in just two months!

Huggies, through a partnership with the National Diaper Bank Network, visited HomeFront's Diaper Resource Center with a tractor trailer of 52 pallets of diapers in tow! Their generous donation sponsored two months of diaper distribution through our food pantries.

The average parent spends between \$80 to \$100 a month diapering their baby, and the costs have risen significantly in the last year due to inflation. Any parent knows that raising a child comes with a host of challenges and for parents impacted by poverty and homelessness, always having a clean diaper for their child can be a luxury. HomeFront is on track to distribute over 2,000,000 diapers and baby wipes by the end of the year.

We always need support to sustain this important program, whether you choose to organize a drive at your workplace, make a financial contribution to the Diaper Resource Center, or volunteer to wrap diapers. Email GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org or call 609-989-9417 x107 to learn more.

Goblins, Ghouls...and Runners!



Get ready to lace up your running shoes and put your fitness to the test for HomeFront's Halloween 5K/1 Mile Run/Walk and Family Fun Day! Whether you choose to participate virtually or in-person on October 29th at Carnegie Center in Princeton, NJ, you can look forward to a lively and enjoyable experience for the whole family. By taking part in this event, you will be supporting HomeFront's critically important *Joy, Hopes, and Dreams* (JHD) program.

This program provides children who are experiencing housing instability with access to vital services,

including enrichment, mentoring, and tutoring. JHD participants have access to a wealth of activities and programming, including regular tutoring sessions, art classes, exciting field trips, STEM education, coding lessons, music instruction, sports and fitness programming, life skills coaching, and even college preparation. This event is your chance to help ensure that this essential program remains fully funded and accessible to the children who count on it year after year. Start training now and we will see you on race day!

Taste of Hope a Delicious Success

HomeFront hosted our first ever A Taste of Hope at the historic Trenton Farmers Market on Sunday, June 4th. Seven local restaurants and businesses supported the event with a delectable farm to table four-course tasting menu, local wine from Terhune Orchards, live entertainment, amazing shopping, and even more amazing company.

Proceeds from the event will be used to support HomeFront's critical work in the community, aiming to address fundamental needs through its Resource Network. The night was a resounding success, with both guests

and participants coming together to make it an evening to remember. With A Taste of Hope garnering unprecedented support, we aim to make it a regular annual event in our community, with the hope of spreading more cheer and joy in the years to come.



Interested in a tour? Email GetInvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org to learn more.

Reaching Higher through Hire Expectations

HomeFront's Hire Expectations job training program is proud to announce the successful graduation of its latest class of clients. The program is delighted to celebrate the accomplishments of these hardworking individuals who have completed their training as phlebotomists, certified nursing assistants, and patient care technicians. With these valuable skills, our clients are now well-equipped to embark on fulfilling and enriching careers in the medical field and make a positive impact in the lives of others.

The intense training regimen involved months of dedicated study and real-world training in externships. These experiences have allowed our clients to gain valuable, hands-on experience working in a variety of healthcare settings, including laboratories, hospitals, doctor's offices, nursing homes, and rehabilitation facilities. As they begin their exciting new careers, these graduates will be able to apply their



Hire Expectations staff and HomeFront CEO, Sarah Steward, pose with recent graduates and one infant born while mom was in the program!

newfound knowledge and skills to make a positive difference in the lives of their patients and coworkers alike.

Fun Meets Fashion at SewingSpace Student Fashion Show

In a heartwarming show held in April, SewingSpace, part of our therapeutic art program, showcased the impressive skills of its students by hosting a special fashion show exclusively for HomeFront staff. These students, most of whom had never sewn before enrolling in the program, completed the core curriculum and created stunning outfits for the occasion. The students' progress was a source of pride for them, and the chance to celebrate their newfound talent was truly meaningful. SewingSpace welcomes around fifteen students per session throughout the week. One of SewingSpace's designers, Ninfa, expressed her amazement at having created something she can confidently wear and reflected on how much the program has impacted her life. She said, "For me, HomeFront has been my second home. I've learned so much about myself through the artistic process. Since I arrived here my health has improved, and I feel very thankful to be part of this beautiful program."

Medarda "Josie" Cardona, HomeFront's SewingSpace Instructor, is passionate about inspiring others to tap into their creativity to craft unique, sustainable pieces. Nowadays, sewing is often overlooked due to the rise of fast fashion and industrialization, resulting in the loss of a valuable and fulfilling skill. This is why Josie believes it's crucial to encourage people to create their own clothes, using existing materials and upcycling them into fashionable and eco-friendly pieces. By doing so, we can reduce our impact on the environment and make a positive difference.



SewingSpace participants and HomeFront staff model hand-sewn clothing made by our very own clients.

Sponsor a Camper and Change a Life!

Summer is a time of adventure for many kids, with families traveling to the beach or attending camp. Unfortunately, for children experiencing housing instability, summer can mean hunger and loneliness. That is where HomeFront steps in to make a difference. Thanks to the support of our caring community, we provide a safe, nurturing environment for these children to learn, grow, and make lasting friendships.



Camp Mercer, our eight-week day camp, serves children aged 5-15, providing them with opportunities to try new activities, uncover talents, and build self-confidence. Sadly, government funding for children's programming and summer camps is limited, and so we rely on the generosity of our supporters to continue this vital work. With your help, HomeFront can ensure that every child has a summer to remember, filled with joy, laughter, and priceless experiences.

\$250 sponsors a camper for a week — \$2,000 for the full eight weeks.

Visit www.HomeFrontNJ.org or call 609-989-9417 x107 to make a gift or learn more about Camp Mercer.

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



Where flowers bloom,
so does hope.
— LADY BIRD JOHNSON

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HomeFront
Helping families break the cycle of poverty

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