

# HOMEFRONT Happenings

WINTER 2025

## *The Heart Behind Our Work— And How You Help Families Move Forward*

At the end of every year, as HomeFront families and staff alike feel the outpouring of care from our community during the holidays, I'm reminded of why we do this work. And why I'm so grateful for people like you—who see the need in our community and rise to meet the challenge.

For over three decades, families have counted on HomeFront. And our commitment to them has never wavered, no matter what present or future uncertainty might come.

**Our mission—to end homelessness in Central New Jersey—and our five Core Beliefs both inspire us and ground us in our commitment. These Core Beliefs, described in more detail in this newsletter, form our program areas. But they also reflect the vision we have for our community, where every family is not only stable, but thriving and hopeful.**

When a family first comes to HomeFront, they often feel that hope is in short supply, overwhelmed by the struggles of everyday life. But they have such incredible strengths and accomplishments, like Amanda and Eli (see right). Government funding cuts only add more difficulties for families like Amanda's as they strive to remain stable. And families can't afford to lose more.

Because each family is unique, and there often isn't a single factor that brings a family to HomeFront, our comprehensive services mean we can craft an approach to fit exactly what each family needs. And helping families become—and remain—stable is how we fight homelessness in our community.

**HomeFront is able to do what we do—for as many people as we serve—because of caring people like you. Last year, with your help, we provided shelter, food, and transformative assistance to 30,321 unique individuals.** Every bit that our community contributes makes a difference.



My best wishes to you and your loved ones this holiday season. Thank you for caring!

*Sarah Steward*

Sarah Steward  
Chief Executive Officer, HomeFront

### Amanda & Eli's Story

Amanda felt hopeless. She was pregnant and living in an abandoned house in the dead of winter with no running water or electricity. Her boyfriend was abusive, and they both struggled with substance use. She knew she needed to get help, but she had no family in the state to turn to. Luckily, someone told her about HomeFront.



Amanda delivered a healthy boy, Eli. Here's the two of them when they resided at the HomeFront Family Campus, where Eli also attended the Atkinson Child Development Center. Amanda also received her phlebotomy certification from Mercer County Community College, with the help of our Hire Expectations program.



Now, living in one of our permanent affordable homes.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Visit [HomeFrontNJ.org](http://HomeFrontNJ.org) for details and up-to-date news.

## Treasure Trove Holiday Boutique

**November 12-December 21.** Treasure Trove, our store in Hopewell Borough, will be stocked with unique holiday-themed items for seasonal shopping in addition to the usual array of vintage and collectible items. Proceeds benefit HomeFront programs.

## MLK Day of Service (Virtual)

**January 19, 2026.** Honor Dr. King and help local families in need with an at-home volunteer activity.

## Winter Food & Hygiene Drives

**January 2026:** Organize a drive to collect these needed items for families.

## Week of Hope

**February 9-14, 2026.** Join us for a variety of volunteer and educational opportunities that make a difference.

## Diaper Challenge

**March 2-May 10, 2026.** Collect diapers to keep babies clean, healthy, and dry.

## Smart Ways to Give: Now and for the Future

- Once you turn 72 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 – the donated amount is excluded from a person's federal taxable income.
- Reach out to your financial planner to learn more about this mutually beneficial way to make a gift.
- We would be honored if you'd consider leaving HomeFront a gift in your will. For more information, email [MeghanC@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:MeghanC@HomeFrontNJ.org) and we can schedule a time to discuss.



» Explore other tax-smart gifts at: [HomeFrontNJ.org/Planned-Giving](http://HomeFrontNJ.org/Planned-Giving)

## Our Wish List

- Infant and toddler coats
- Humidifiers
- Shampoo, soap, deodorant
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Lip balm, tissues
- Cleaning supplies
- Period products
- Cold medicine for adults and children
- \$25 ShopRite & Walmart gift cards

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



Questions?

Contact us at (609) 989-9417 x112, or via email at [getinvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:getinvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org)



## On the Cover

Our newsletters feature work by artists in our therapeutic ArtSpace programs. This issue's painting is by one such artist.

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

# Our Five Core Beliefs:

*These values, which are shared by all of you who support our families, inspire and ground us in our mission to end homelessness in Central NJ. They also inform our programs and services. Lastly, they reflect the vision we all have for our community, one where every family is not only stable but thriving.*

## We believe that families deserve safe, secure housing.

Stable housing is the foundation of a family's life. But rents are rising faster than we have ever seen, and affordable options are severely limited, pushing families to the brink of eviction and homelessness. We can't end homelessness only by responding once it happens. We have to ensure families never experience it in the first place. When families face the crisis of homelessness, we provide emergency shelter and help them rebuild with support and resources.

■ A family in our permanent housing told us, "I could write you a book about how HomeFront's staff and donors have made the quality of our lives increase. We could never thank you enough! I hope I can impact someone's life as much as you all have impacted mine." This year, we broke ground on 4 new duplexes—what will become **8 affordable homes**—in Ewing with our housing development partner, Homes by TLC.

■ During Laura's pregnancy, she couldn't work. Her husband, Eduardo, had to reduce his work hours to care for her. They got behind on their rent and bills and felt completely overwhelmed. Our **Housing Stability** team helped with their back rent, as well as food, clothing, diapers, and gifts for the holidays.



These Welcome Home buckets, generously donated by members of Abiding Love Lutheran Church, set families up for success.



Laura and Eduardo's children celebrating the holidays.

**\$39.99 per hour** is the wage needed to afford a two-bedroom rental home in New Jersey at HUD's Fair Market Rent, according to National Low Income Housing Coalition.

**450+ people** are safe under a HomeFront roof on any given night, the majority being children.

## We believe that with the right tools, all families can succeed.

Many jobs don't provide enough hours or high enough wages for parents to sustain their family. We provide them with the support and resources needed to hone their strengths and develop new ones that open doors for a brighter future—whether through getting their **GED or other education or through job opportunities and training.**

■ Mental and physical health issues led Melissa and her daughter to fall on hard times. "Coming to HomeFront and Hire Expectations every day was a relief. While my daughter was at school, I was...in a bright environment where there were computers, resources, and lots of encouragement from the program staff and other clients." HomeFront Staff also helped Melissa reactivate her expired nursing license. She then went on to receive her Bachelor of Science in Nursing and now works as a nurse full-time.



Melissa was also introduced to ArtSpace during her time in Hire Expectations.

Employees from Innophos volunteered in Hire Expectations, helping clients practice interviewing and resume writing.



**Stagnant wages and under-employment lock families out of opportunities to increase their earning power, skills, and resources.**

**Our Hire Expectations program helped 226 adults with education and employment opportunities last year.**

## We believe families deserve basic necessities to live a life with dignity.

Groceries and basic necessities are much more expensive, a pain especially felt by those with barely any room in their monthly budget. Our Resource Network provides food, clothing, diapers, hygiene items, furniture, housewares, and more to families free of charge. This also enables families to save money that they can put toward other expenses, like rent.

■ Victoria, a client of our **Choice Market Food Pantry**, told us, "After losing my job, money was very tight for my family... 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."

■ Nina, a client of our **FreeStore**, explained what it meant to her. "I needed shoes and clothes, and I didn't have money to buy any... It was a great blessing to me because in the moments where I needed it most, this place has embraced us to be able to provide everything that we need."

Four generous women, all the way from Maine, arranged a period supply drive while they were in the area for the Women in Energy Conference.



**1 in 7 children** in New Jersey face hunger, according to Feeding America.

**1,699 families a month, on average, visited our food pantries last year.**



Karla learned about our pantry from another one of our programs and now shops there once a month for her family.

## We believe that personal wellness – whether physical, mental, or emotional – is critical to ensuring thriving families.

Medical care is unaffordable or inaccessible for many families impacted by homelessness or poverty. Many are trying to heal after experiencing trauma or hardship. We help families move from surviving to thriving—whether that's connecting them with healthcare providers or health resources, to enabling creativity and healing through our therapeutic art programs.

■ Janae told us, "When I first arrived [at the Family Campus], I didn't have a primary care provider and didn't fully understand the importance of having one. Now... I feel empowered to take charge of my health." Our **health access** partnership with nearby Capital Health has made such a difference for families experiencing homelessness.

■ "I've been through a lot in my life," Abby said, "and **ArtSpace** was the place I healed the most. Just being allowed and guided to express myself in a tangible way has made every day so much easier for me. ArtSpace and the wonderful volunteers have truly changed my life."



One of our cooking and nutrition classes in the Family Campus Teaching Kitchen. Thank you, Rolling Harvest Food Rescue, for running this one!



Our ArtSpace and SewingSpace volunteers hang client artwork for exhibitions, run art classes for families, and so much more.

**Access to medical care, healthy foods, and stable housing affect one another and enable families to have a stronger, healthier quality of life.**

**We supported families' health needs 3,281 times last year.**

## We believe that children nurtured by love and support will grow on a path to realizing life's possibilities.

We partner with parents and kids to ensure families have the tools they need to thrive together – from intensive services at the emergency shelter at our Family Campus, to licensed childcare, year-round enrichment programming, and summer camp. One of the main focuses of our Children's and Family Support programming is to help children who are facing housing instability reach their educational, emotional, and physical potential.

■ Aimee, a mom of a child in **Joy, Hopes, & Dreams**, told our team, "I am so grateful to have my son participate in this program. He is doing much better in school, and I can work later and make more money to pay my bills."

■ When Joey, his brother and father arrived at HomeFront's emergency shelter, they had already missed the first month of school. With help from our **Children's Champion** program, Joey and his brother were re-enrolled in school. Under the guidance of our Literacy Specialist in the after-school tutoring program, Joey made incredible strides and was able to confidently read at grade level. He came to love reading.



11-year-old Lucy made these Halloween treat bags for HomeFront kids!



Toddlers in Atkinson Child Development Center explore foods and textures.

**142 children** thrived in our year-round academic and enrichment program, **Joy, Hopes, and Dreams** last year.



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*“The joy of brightening  
other lives becomes  
for us the magic of the  
holidays.”*

- W.C. JONES



**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)

## Families can't afford to lose more. Your compassion makes lifelines possible this holiday season.



**The lapse of SNAP benefits in November caused more hardship for families already struggling to get by. We expect to see ripple effects impacting families for weeks. As this newsletter goes to print, uncertainty around longer-term funding for food assistance still looms.**

*SNAP is about food, but it's more than that. Across New Jersey, 827,000 residents — including 300,000 children — depend on it to make ends meet. The SNAP crisis has made visible what we see every day: parents struggling to feed, clothe, and house their families. One disruption can upend their stability.*

*But never forget: it's our community, and we can do something about it. Please give today. Your gift will allow us to meet urgent needs in the days and weeks ahead and help families stay stable.*

*To you — our reader, our donor, our volunteer — thank you for standing with families facing hardship. We wish you peaceful holidays with your loved ones.*

— The HomeFront Team