

# HomeFront Matters

WINTER 2017

## HomeFront & Starbucks – Improving Lives Together



These smiling faces, all from HomeFront's *Hire Expectations* program, will be greeting and helping Starbucks' customers. L to R are Shenise Mason, Malika Whiting and Bria Jones.

We're thrilled to announce that there's something brewing in the Capitol City. Starbucks is opening their first Trenton store at the intersection of Warren and Front Streets. The storefront will also be a customer service training site for HomeFront's *Hire Expectations* program.

But this isn't the first time HomeFront and Starbucks have partnered. "Starbucks has been an important part of our HomeFront family for a long time," Connie Mercer, HomeFront CEO and executive director, says. "They have donated commercial

refrigerators, freezers, many, many volunteer hours and delicious leftover baked goods for our families. And now Starbucks will have an even greater involvement with our families and their success."

The Starbucks Foundation believes in creating pathways to lifelong opportunity for those who have previously not been afforded opportunities to pursue their dreams. Now they have awarded HomeFront a \$50,000 grant that will impact young men and women by giving them the tools to earn a living wage and the skills and

training they need to succeed in a rapidly changing global economy.

"There will be 120 participants during the first year. This will be an intense mix of classroom lecture, online training and community work experience," explains Lynne Wise, HomeFront's *Hire Expectations* director. "Starbucks' 18-hour customer service training curriculum and our own soft skills training will take place at the Starbucks Training Center at 102 South Warren Street. Then clients will train at HomeFront sites throughout Mercer County. And of course, we're reaching out to our amazing community for guest speakers to provide work-place-focused insight and advice to participants," says Wise.

We wholeheartedly welcome Starbucks as they open new doors to help our clients gain the skills to become great employees with solid skills. "It's really more than a better job. It's about a better life," Mercer says. "It's about opportunities that change lives."

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## Notes From Connie's Desk

A hundred years ago, things weren't great for those living in poverty but they were more simple. People who needed money to feed their families would walk down the road and start knocking on doors looking for work—any work. Things are more complicated now.

I am reminded of my friend, Tony, a single dad, from the motel days. He was as excited as a child to get a job with a landscaping company until he began grappling with the reality of no car and three kids to keep safe.

The challenges for those with few resources or supports who desperately want to work are huge. In order to report to most jobs on a consistent basis, one must have training, an affordable home, probably a car, reliable child care and a living wage to pay for all these things. We grapple with these issues every day because we know that employment is essential to truly help our families achieve lives of dignity.

Thanks to our supportive community, we are making steady strides in helping families work

their way out of poverty. Our GED program helps parents finish a critical part of their education. Our job training and placement programs work one-on-one with each client. We are so excited that Starbucks is now a part of this initiative. We create affordable housing where we can, and lobby for change in the places where we can't, we have a growing car donation initiative and our childcare programs are a source of pride.

All of these critical supports that put our clients on the path to employment cost money. That is why your donations create a very special dynamic. The dollars that you provide enable parents to earn the money they need to make a stable life for their children. These children then can thrive and acquire the education they need to make a stable life for their own families in the future.

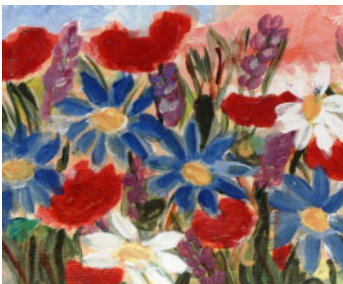
*Connie Mercer*

Connie Mercer  
HomeFront Founder and CEO

### WISHLIST:

- Large adult winter coats!!!
- Gifts for teenagers
- A volunteer car mechanic
- Vehicles in working order
- Gently used towels and linens
- Feminine hygiene products
- New socks and underwear
- Suitcases

To donate items or get more information, contact us:  
[MeghanC@homefrontnj.org](mailto:MeghanC@homefrontnj.org)  
or 609-989-9417 ext. 133.



### On the Cover

Each issue of *HomeFront Matters* features work created by an artist in ArtSpace. This issue's flowers were painted by Stephanie R.

## Paying It Forward with A Legacy Gift

*"We recognize how lucky we have been in our lives, mainly due to an accident of birth. We are inspired by all that HomeFront does to lift people up and out the cycle of poverty. We consider it a privilege to be a part of this wonderful organization."* — Annie & Craig Battle

That sums up how these loyal donors made the decision to name HomeFront as a beneficiary in their wills. Annie has been a standout volunteer for HomeFront for many years. She has put her artistic talents to great use in supporting ArtSpace, played a major role in organizing our annual ArtJam, and has been a driver for major HomeFront fundraising campaigns.

Please join Annie and Craig by choosing a legacy giving option that makes a lasting impact. For more information, visit us at [homefrontnj.org](http://homefrontnj.org) and click the Legacy Giving icon on the home page, or call 609-989-9417 ext. 107.





# KidZone!

*HomeFront kids are delighted with activities that nourish their lives and give them a vision of a brighter future.*



## Scoring Big On and Off the Court

Every winter 35 local young HomeFront basketball enthusiasts meet to practice at our Lawrence Community Center site. While having a blast and honing their athletic skills, they also develop confidence, learn teamwork and leadership, and make new friends. Not to brag, but HomeFront's senior team has taken first and second place in recent tournament seasons! The village supporting this dream team are our volunteers, HomeFront coaches and a sponsorship through Mathematica Policy Research. Local congregations and individuals provide weekly dinner and ongoing support as well. It's truly a team effort!



## Beyond Cute!

Hush! Don't tell this four-some that someone is watching them. Tucked neatly in the Atkinson Childcare Center cubbies, this cuteness is commonplace every single day.

Who's who or what? There were pirates, princesses, Spidermen, furry animals, Supermen and mermaids and many more spooky characters laughing and collecting candy thanks to the Junior League of Princeton who once again hosted a Halloween Trunk or Treat and many companies and schools that hosted parties, making the entire holiday spook-tacular.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



Holiday Open House  
December 9, 2017

## Week of Hope

JANUARY 13-20, 2018

SAVE THE DATE

March 22, 2018

CELEBRATE  
Help Us Honor  
Bernie Flynn, NJM CEO



## Women's Initiative Luncheon

May 6, 2018



June 10,  
2018

For details visit our website,  
[www.HomeFrontNJ.org](http://www.HomeFrontNJ.org)

## Spook-tacularly Sweet





# Our Community Cares

## McCarter Unlocks Powerful Voices, Infectious Spirits

Playwright David White and a team of McCarter Theatre teaching artists recently guided our parents in writing monologues about their experiences. “What I love most about working with the folks at HomeFront is simply being in the room with all of that unfettered, uplifting creativity. They’re hilarious, bawdy,



rowdy, thoughtful, honest and profound,” explains White. “We read everyone’s work out loud, they gave one another critiques and comments, then they picked up their pens and start writing again. But above all, we laughed! These women have powerful voices and infectious spirits that really need to be heard.” Their works were performed by McCarter professionals at our ArtSpace Open House in November.

*Hunger is not an issue of charity.  
It is an issue of justice.* –JACQUES DIOUF



HomeFront’s food pantry has a new name: Fran’s Pantry. Last month, we officially recognized Fran and Larry Sucharow, who have tackled the problem of hunger. When asked why they give, Fran said, “without food you can’t do

anything...without food you can’t succeed. The food pantry for HomeFront is the best way to help with this: having people come and not have to worry. We’re honored to be a part of it.”



## Summer Campers Infused With Dose of Japanese Culture

Among the numerous organizations supporting our kids this summer, Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, led by Kurt Douglass, organized Japanese-themed activities that included using chopsticks, making origami figures, and a relay race with plastic sushi pieces. Kurt and his team always find ways to connect with our families—donations supporting our services, toy drives, and preparing lunch for our men’s program at the Family Campus.

## Building Awareness of Hunger & Homelessness



To call attention to *National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week*, last month ArtSpace hosted an open house at our Family Campus, featuring an exhibit of client paintings and poetry and information on hunger and homelessness right here in our backyard. McCarter Theatre brought a very special touch with

performances of client stories. Over 200 visitors stopped by to see the exhibit, learn about volunteer opportunities, and gain a greater understanding of our clients through the actors’ performances.



# HomeFront Happenings

## Diaper Pantry Expansion

Did you know:

- Disposable diapers cost up to \$80 per month per baby, and cannot be obtained with food stamps.
- Without diapers, babies cannot participate in early childhood education.
- Without childcare, parents cannot go to work.



"We are so excited to expand our diaper pantry program to provide sufficient diaper supplies for HomeFront families," says Sarah Steward, HomeFront Chief Operating Officer. "Thanks to several generous donations that have paved the way, we are outfitting our newly expanded diaper storage facility and enhancing our diaper distribution efforts to create a sustainable program for years to come."

## Continuum of Care for Our Tenants & Clients

"They don't say 'good bye,' they say, 'see you again soon,'" explains one client who has lived in one of HomeFront's permanent, affordable housing units for the past year. What she says is absolutely true. Once a family is in a home of their own, we continue to maintain contact with them throughout their journey to self-sufficiency.



One way we do this is by hosting twice-monthly evening meetings for our tenants and transitional housing clients. Topics such as healthy cooking, budgeting and money management are geared to continuing to build their life skills. Our families are served dinner donated by volunteers before the program begins.

## The Keys to Drive Home

Let us recognize Rohan Joseph, a West Windsor-Plainsboro High School North student and founder of The Drive Home Foundation, whose goal is to help struggling families overcome challenges they face due to limited or lack of transportation. Working with HomeFront, he sources car donations, works with mechanics to fix if needed, then donates them to deserving parents. What a great idea! And Rohan, what a great gift you are to our HomeFront family!



*Every child is born with a heart full of hope...  
Keeping that hope alive depends on you!*

Each young life is full of bright possibilities. We nurture these possibilities all year long—not just among children, but also among parents.

We help and heal to the limits of our resources—a limit that is determined by the generosity of our community of donors.

This holiday season, we ask for your help so that our children and their families will continue to receive healing resources. Your help is more important than ever as many Federal and state budgets that would help support our efforts disappear altogether, ripping apart our safety net.

Please open your heart. Help keep the hearts of our children—and our families—full of hope.



**Every donation helps!** For each and every dollar you donate, HomeFront puts 90¢ directly toward programs and services. To give, use the enclosed envelope, or visit us on-line at [HomeFrontNJ.org](http://HomeFrontNJ.org).

Dear SANTA,  
My name is Eric. I'm 9 years  
old. For Christmas Instead of  
presants, can you give me  
and my mama a home to  
live in? Santa? We have been  
really good this year and  
we work so hard!

With Love,  
Eric A.

## Always Believe in Your Dreams

What a wonderful time of the year! It's a time  
when we can believe in magic, when dreams come  
true and when hope abounds. At HomeFront, we  
see dreams come true. We see miracles happen.  
And we witness hope in every family we touch.

To you, our reader, our donor, our volunteer—  
we wish you the happiest of holidays. We are  
so proud and honored that you are part of  
our HomeFront family.

— HomeFront Staff and Client Families



In addition to helping families like Eric's come  
home for the holidays, with the compassionate  
support of the community, each year HomeFront  
distributes thousands of holiday meals and  
Christmas gift wishes to grateful families.

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



— Anne Frank

How wonderful it is  
that nobody need wait  
a single moment  
before starting  
to improve the world.

[www.HomeFrontNJ.org](http://www.HomeFrontNJ.org)

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