How often does the average person encounter the face of poverty these days? Do we know it when we see it anymore? It used to be easily identified as the faces of the “street people,” the vacant staring faces of those leaning against old buildings or the slumbering faces of people sitting on sidewalks and subway grates. The faces of modern poverty are much more subtle and much more pervasive. They are elderly resigned faces standing in the grocery checkout line with just two items. They are the weary, anxious faces of those pouring your coffee at the local diner or pumping your gas or caring for your mom in the nursing home. They are the pinched, agitated faces of hungry school kids finding it hard to see a brighter future. All would like to fly far away from poverty but few understand how to make a sturdy pair of wings with which to do that.

This annual report is dedicated to the brave families who find their way to HomeFront and are willing to do whatever it takes to learn to make those wings – to lift themselves and their children up and out of poverty to soar into a better life. It is also dedicated to the loving and generous people who give of themselves and their resources to make it all possible because they believe that people can fly.
Friends,

Some mornings, as I make my way from the HomeFront parking lot into my office, I can’t help but think of the oft-quoted line from Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities*, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” The line for food bags regularly snakes out the front door and down the sidewalk. Soaring food prices and reduced safety nets always equal punishing hunger for those with very limited resources. The lines are not only getting longer, they are getting grayer. Seniors, many of whom have worked all their lives, are being hit hard by state and federal budget cuts for those in need.

However, there is plenty to report in the ‘best of times’ category. This has been a significant year for HomeFront in many ways. Thanks to an avalanche of support from every corner of the community, we were able to open our new diaper resource center with 200,000 boxes of donated diapers and wipes. Eventually, our plan is to have the capacity to serve all of Mercer County collaborators who need these supplies.

With a $1.5 million grant from the New Jersey Department of Health, HomeFront has joined forces with Capital Health, Catholic Charities and Rescue Mission of Trenton to launch “For My Baby and Me,” a comprehensive program for opioid addicted pregnant women who are determined to welcome their babies into a better world.

I am also proud to report that HomeFront has just started a new program, “Mandy’s Place,” a small residential home for especially fragile older ladies that will focus on quality of life and the physical stability of its residents.

These new programs are all very exciting for me and our staff but I think what warms my heart the most, and brings me great peace in these challenging times, are the major improvements we have made to HomeFront’s infrastructure. There’s nothing like the feeling that a strong infrastructure brings. It speaks to ‘forever’ and ‘safety.’ It’s that calm feeling you have in your home when a big storm is approaching but you know that your roof and windows are tight. This year, a major grant was secured to re-work the infrastructure of our Free Store, one of HomeFront’s oldest sites and a staple in the Trenton community. Another momentous improvement in HomeFront’s infrastructure that doesn’t involve construction crews was the establishment of an endowment last year, a significant labor of love and commitment by our Board of Directors.

Thanks to the people listed in this report, longtime and much-loved members of the HomeFront family and some significant new ones, I feel we are entering a new era of being pro-active and ready for the challenges ahead. For me, this feels like a joyous graduation from the years and years of being reactive and flying by the seat of our pants. I feel peaceful and hopeful and, most of all, grateful to each and every one of you.

With deepest thanks,

*Connie Mercer*

Connie Mercer, Founder & Executive Director

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**HomeFront’s mission** is to end homelessness in Central New Jersey by harnessing the caring, resources and expertise of the community.

We lessen the immediate pain of homelessness and help families become self-sufficient.

We work to give our clients the skills and opportunities to ensure adequate incomes and we work to increase the availability of adequate, affordable housing.

We help homeless families advocate for themselves individually and collectively.

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In 2017, there were 13,236 homeless children in New Jersey.*

Homelessness often occurs because people with low-paying jobs are enormously vulnerable to life events which they haven’t the resources to overcome. Helping a family avoid eviction with a rent payment in many cases is enough to prevent homelessness.

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423 families† received emergency housing assistance to keep them in their homes or to pay security deposits to acquire decent housing.

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When Delilah’s infant daughter Patricia had a severe concussion, Delilah had to drive to Philadelphia repeatedly to care for her and missed a lot of work. Delilah lost so many hours on the job that she didn’t have enough money to cover the rent. Facing eviction, she didn’t know what to do. HomeFront helped.

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* SOURCE: NJ Department of Education

† Statistics reflect numbers from the past year at HomeFront

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For over 28 years, HomeFront has made safe, permanent housing a reality for struggling families.

HomeFront helps stabilize clients in affordable housing and provides security deposits and case management assistance.

Anna’s son’s bedroom ceiling collapsed over his bed during a big rainstorm. Her landlord promised to fix it months ago. When it started getting colder, Anna knew she had to move her family, but she didn’t have money for a security deposit on a new apartment. HomeFront helped.
Last year, 230 families with 339 children were sheltered with dignity at our Family Campus and in our FreshStart transitional housing program while receiving intensive support.

HomeFront’s short term housing helps families rebuild their spirits, identify permanent housing, obtain remedial education, provides job training and placement, offers daycare, life skills classes, intensive counseling, and much more.

Shaquana’s apartment building burned down. Although she and her kids were rescued, her husband died. Shaquana and her children were brought to HomeFront, not only for shelter and food, but as a place to begin dealing with this tragedy. The caring staff worked with each member of the family to offer counseling and the support they needed to move forward. She is now in our Hire Expectations program and her youngest is in our childcare center. Shaquana said the hope HomeFront provided saved their lives. HomeFront helped.

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Most jobs in today’s labor force require a minimum of a high school diploma.

Last June, 22 HomeFront clients received their high school diplomas through our Hire Expectations program. This is an essential first step to higher wages and self-sufficiency.

73 long-term unemployed clients were successfully placed in jobs.

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Aida is on her way! She worked hard with her volunteer tutor and got her high school diploma, then took HomeFront’s Microsoft Office Certification course. With the help of her Hire Expectations mentor, she just got two administrative assistant job offers! HomeFront helped.

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Children deprived of proper nutrition during the brain’s most formative years score much lower on tests of vocabulary, reading comprehension, arithmetic, and general knowledge.*

In HomeFront’s beautiful Teaching Kitchen, we provide our clients, children and adults, with opportunities for practical, hands-on experience cooking delicious, nutritious and economical meals for their families.

* SOURCE: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University

Growing up in foster care, Roxanne never really learned to cook. Too often, her kids Kelsey and Dwayne, ages 6 and 9, ate chips and cookies for dinner. In the Teaching Kitchen at HomeFront’s Family Campus, Roxanne learned how to prepare a healthy vegetable-rich chili; she was surprised how delicious it was and her kids loved it too. HomeFront helped.
Volunteers are HomeFront’s lifeblood – our heart and soul. Nationally, over 25% of Americans volunteer.

HomeFront’s volunteers help in a thousand different ways throughout the year. From holding babies in our Atkinson Child Development Center, to running collections of urgently needed items or food, to providing professional consulting, to fixing cars, to advocating with legislators about homelessness, HomeFront’s volunteers make our work possible.

Last year, more than 1,600 volunteers worked over 52,000 hours with HomeFront.
No one can help everyone, but everyone can help someone.
The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.
– Mahatma Gandhi
When families become homeless, they need loving guidance to rebuild their spirits and get their lives back on track.

HomeFront’s family advocates provide intensive case management using an innovative evidence-based approach for assessing each family member’s needs, creating an independence plan, and measuring progress. Art therapy and community-based treatment programs for addiction, mental wellness, and domestic violence supplement our traditional case management.

When Lilly arrived at the shelter with her two children, she was depressed, scared and ashamed that she had failed. After she spent time crying, her case worker helped her think about the future, her dreams, and what she had to do to get there. She connected Lilly to a therapist for her depression, and arranged activities for the children while Lilly studied to get her high school diploma. Lilly’s case worker became her champion, mentor and guide. HomeFront helped.
13.5% of children living in New Jersey suffer from hunger.*

Not having enough of the right kinds of food can have serious long-term effects on a child’s physical and mental health, academic achievement and future economic prosperity. HomeFront operates two food pantries that are a significant source of nutrition for many families.

Over 23,000 individuals were fed through free bags of groceries distributed to hungry families through our food pantries.

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Celia Lidz

Leanne worked hard as a nurse’s aide at the local rehab center while her two girls were in school. But after she paid the rent, she never had enough money left to afford much food until her next paycheck. She and her kids often had to go to bed hungry, until she heard about Fran’s Food Pantry. HomeFront helped.

* SOURCE: Center for Food Action
Last year, our incredible team of volunteer doctors and nurses at our Wellness Center helped 542 clients.

It is no surprise that with all the chaos in their lives, few of our homeless adult clients had received much regular well care. HomeFront’s Wellness Center offers a range of non-invasive medical services including health screenings and referrals, chronic-illness maintenance, sick visit consultations, mental health screenings, domestic violence support, well-baby visits, acupuncture and other general services.

118 children received high-quality, trauma-informed child care.

Brenda had her hands full taking care of her kids, Jimmy and Tammi, 9 and 7 years old, when she became dizzy and had problems catching her breath. Thank goodness someone took her to HomeFront’s wellness center where her dangerously high blood pressure was detected by a nurse who called an ambulance and accompanied her to the hospital. HomeFront helped.
1 in 6 Mercer County children live in poverty and have limited access to enrichment activities.*

HomeFront started 28 years ago to provide despondent hungry homeless children warehoused in wellfare motels with their families, with warm meals, help with school work, outings to the park and trips to the beach and the movies. Joy, Hopes & Dreams, year-round extra-curricular children's enrichment program was born!

406 children made memories to grow on in our year-round Joy, Hopes & Dreams programming.

* SOURCE: NJ Department of Education
For children living in poverty, summer is often a time of dread. Summer can be scary for families living in poverty. Kids who the rest of the year are given breakfast and lunch at school no longer have enough to eat. Parents must find affordable childcare, so they can continue to work or too often the children are left to fend for themselves. HomeFront’s 8-week summer camp provides free breakfast, lunch and snack, academic enrichment and memories to last a lifetime.

Dinesh & Renu K. Singal
Allison & Barry Singer
Nadine & Scott Singer
Judith Singleton
Sirus XM Radio, Inc.
Sisters Of The Blessed Sacrament
Kathryn & Richard Slater
Carolyn Slaughter
Holly & Jack Hayon
Kathleen & Daniel Slothower
Stephen Slusher
Joanne Smallheer
Alicia Smith
George & Kathleen Smith
Janet Stern & George Theodoridis
George & Charlene Smith
Valerie & Ronald Smith
Dianne Steele
James & Virginia Stoops
Nancy & Richard Strom
Eric & Cathy Wendler
Joel & Karen Steinberg
Mo Lin Yee & Byron Lum
Mo Lin Yee & Byun Yoon
Nicholas Wurtz
Nicoletta Wraight
Devendra G. Subramanian
Swaraj & Geeta Telang
Kevin Sochocka
Tory Solomon
Susan Spaeth
Abbie Spector
Timothy Spence
Spin Doctor Laundromats, LLC
David & Patricia Strahle
Kathleen & Michael Strickland
Amy Vondrak
Voya Foundation
John Jackson & Ann Vaurio
John & Patty Willis
Thomas & Emma McAvoy
Mary & Joseph Wisnovsky
Caroline Wylie
Phillip & Maria Yang
Audra Witenborn
Bruce Witzel
Cynthia & Warren Wolff
Patricia Woffangel
Janet & Jack Wolinetz
Jill & David Wolk
Lisa Wolkind
Gordon Wood
Warren & Marcia Wood
Constance Woodford
Thomas & Rita Woods
Kamila Woodson
Mary Jane & John Wouters
Nicoleta Woosong
Elizabeth Wright
Judith Wright
Ralph & Kate Wright
Ellen Wry
Michael Yedidia & Greta Grossman
Karen Yee & Andrew Werth
Mo Lin Yee & Byron Lum
Margaret Yeng-Horson
Christina Yiacas
Iphigenia Yiacas & Michael Reis
Lee & Stephen Yonish

116 homeless or at-risk kids attended our glorious eight-week summer camp.

Anisha, 9, and her little sister Tia, 5, love school and also love HomeFront’s Camp Mercer. They were two of 116 children who spent each day having fun, reading, and shoring up their academics. HomeFront helped.
An estimated 41% of New Jersey households are considered among the “working poor” and struggle to afford the basics necessary to live a dignified life.*

HomeFront has two food pantries, the Diaper Resource Center, the Furnish the Future program, the Free Store, plus provides birthday and holiday gifts, and even matches clients with donated cars.

Francine & Alan Yorinks
Daniel Yurwit
May Yushin & Richard Lee
Mohammad Zaidi
Pam Zaitman
Jane Zamost & Gary Karlin
Peter & Josephine Zangrilli
Lindsay Zlep
Annie & Brian Zecher
Jeffrey Zepp
David & Suzanne Ziegler
Mary Zikos
Arnold Zimmerman
Ronald & Sallye Zink
Isabel Zisk
Elisabetta Zodeiko
Bonnie Zoller
Linda & Dennis Zultanski

SPECIAL THANK YOU
We received over $5,000,000 worth of goods and critical pro bono services throughout the year, from corporations, churches, civic groups and private citizens. Every item and service enriches the lives of HomeFront families – We, and they, thank you.

Firmenich
First Baptist Church of Princeton
First Baptist Church of Trenton
First Presbyterian Church of Hamilton
Terry Flanagan
Flutter Boutique
Bernie Flynn
Footstompers
Pam Ford
Carine Fram
Maria Frankenfeld
Elizabeth Freeman
Martha Friend
Elise Fritz
Debbie and Gary Gartenberg
Kris and Mike Gebhardt
Melissa Geist, Esq.

Over 3,900 visits were made to our FreeStore for necessary household items and clothes free of charge.

* SOURCE: United Way ALICE Report

Now that Erika has a new job at the paint factory, she and her disabled mom are moving out of their transitional housing into an apartment of their own. They picked out all the furniture and housewares they’ll need for their new home at our FreeStore and Furnish the Future warehouse and Erika got some new work clothes. HomeFront helped.
From our very beginning we’ve received generous support from the programs of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps* VISTA members have been fundamental in establishing and maintaining life-changing programs for our families.
HomeFront is as committed as ever to providing access to safe and secure housing, tools for success, basic necessities, and a nurturing environment for children to homeless and at-risk families allowing them to live with dignity as we work with them to break the cycle of poverty. In 2017, we carefully invested more than $10,650,000 in these efforts.

The challenge of reducing the number of homeless families in greater Mercer County continues. The critical array of services that HomeFront provides requires the ongoing support of our benefactors.

We are dedicated to being responsible stewards of the generosity of the many individuals, businesses, foundations, congregations, schools and government agencies who support us throughout the year with gifts of time and treasure.

Our fiscal health is stable as we once again experienced a clean audit and maintained a 4-star Charity Navigator rating for excellence in fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency. We proudly continue to ensure that more than 90 cents of every dollar go directly to supporting the families we serve.

— Anthony Stewart, HomeFront Board Treasurer

**FY 2017 Operating Revenue - $10,667,234**

- Government Grants: $1,329,223
- Corporate & Foundation Grants: $970,184
- Service Fees: $2,668,871
- Individual Contributions: $2,512,483
- In-kind Contributions: $3,088,470
- Miscellaneous: $118,003
- **FY 2017 Revenue Total**: $10,667,234

**FY 2017 Non-Operational Revenue - $2,357,368**

- Endowment: $2,025,000
- Misc.- Endowment Gains: $72,368
- Misc.- Mortgage Debt Forgiveness: $60,000
- Misc.- Building Capital Campaign: $200,000
- **FY 2017 Non-Operational Revenue Total**: $2,357,368

**FY 2017 Total Revenue**: $13,024,602

**FY 2017 Operating Expenses - $10,456,339**

- Emergency Services: $2,957,050
- Housing: $664,363
- Client Support Services: $5,959,225
- Management & General: $505,683
- Fundraising: $370,018
- **FY 2017 Total Expenses**: $10,456,339
Our Core Beliefs

We believe that families deserve safe, secure housing.

We believe that with the right tools, education, job and life skills training, all families can succeed.

We believe that families need basic necessities to live a life with dignity.

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