



WINTER 2018

## The Best Holiday Present Ever: New Homes for Fourteen Families

"It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas" as 14 working poor families each unwrap one of the greatest gifts of all this holiday season: a safe and secure home. Thanks to Homes by TLC, in partnership with HomeFront, the first residential complex of its kind opened in Ewing, New Jersey to help families facing hard times achieve dignified and stable living. In stark contrast to most affordable housing units, the Ewing complex accommodates large families with enough space for mistletoe, Christmas trees and loved ones all around.

Beyond the physical walls, each home unwrapped comes complete with a real chance at stability in a tranquil environment coupled with good schools, green spaces, play areas, transportation and grocery stores. Families can feel proud as they walk into their beautiful spacious units, reinvigorated with dignity and now able to provide uncrowded, comfortable living for their families.

The apartment project was made possible by financial support from the Department of Community Affairs' HOME Community Housing Development Organization and the Shelter Support Program, Ewing Township's



Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Mercer County's Housing Trust Fund, Wells Fargo and their recent investment through the Priority Market Program, Reed Smith, New Jersey Manufacturers

*A person earning New Jersey's \$8.60 minimum wage would need to work 131 hours per week — or 3.3 full time jobs — to afford a two bedroom apartment.*

and several private contributors.

HomeFront will provide job coaching and preparedness, daycare, a food and furniture bank as well as life skills training and case management for residents of the complex. The property, which boasts a spacious yard, off-street parking and central laundry facilities, has an

apartment mix that consists of six four-bedroom units, four three-bedroom units, three two-bedroom units and a one-bedroom unit.

Homes by TLC, which has been developing and managing affordable housing projects in partnership with HomeFront over the past 18 years, still sees a huge unmet need for more projects for working poor families in Mercer County.

"I've never had my own bed — never mind my own bedroom and I can finally sleep in my own room after all these years..." said one tenant. "I just can't believe how beautiful this apartment is. I've never lived in an apartment like this — I wish my parents could see this, they would be so proud."







## Notes From Connie's Desk

### WISHLIST:

- Extra-large adult winter coats
- Gifts for teenagers
- Twin or full blankets and sheets
- Low-sugar cereal
- Children's socks and underwear
- Vehicles (in working order)
- Large diapers and pull-ups
- Personal & feminine hygiene products
- Linens and towels

To donate items or get more information, contact us:  
[getinvolved@homefrontnj.org](mailto:getinvolved@homefrontnj.org)  
or 609-989-9417 ext. 137.



### On the Cover

Each issue of *HomeFront Matters* features work created by an artist in ArtSpace. This issue's winter scene was painted by Shanell.

Many years ago an editorial assured Virginia that yes, there is a Santa Claus. We beg to differ. We at HomeFront know for a fact that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of Santas in our community.

Again this year individuals, congregations and corporations will exemplify the holiday spirit by making sure that homeless, and recently homeless children and their parents share in all the things that make Christmas special.

First of all, HomeFront staff will ask each child to submit a 'wish list' for two special presents. Their parents would never be able to provide them, but our caring community will make sure these wishes come true.

A few days before Christmas, parents will pick up all the necessities for a Christmas they could otherwise only dream of. Each family will receive a food basket with all the ingredients for a special meal that

they can prepare at home. They will also be given a Christmas tree and, most importantly, they will pick up the presents that their children had wished for.

Virginia would be overwhelmed by all the Santas in our area — from the companies and congregations to all the individuals who simply answered a child's request. She would have seen small faces shine in rare moments of joy and delight, and have seen

their parents' faces glow with the knowledge that there are so many people who care about them and their children.

Our community is truly

blessed with people who do, indeed, personify the spirit of the season. Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.

Connie Mercer  
HomeFront Founder and CEO

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## Holiday Donation Dock Closure

In an annual holiday miracle, our warehouse transforms into a Santa's Workshop during December. So, due to space limitations, we limit donations. From December 3 into early January, we will be unable to accept clothing and housewares. We will accept mattresses, box springs, frames, small dining room tables and small dressers. We will continue to provide resources to clients during this time and will reopen our donation dock early in 2019.



table organization without paying income tax on the transaction. You also will not need to itemize your taxes in order to make an IRA charitable distribution. Reach out to your financial planner to learn more about this mutually beneficial way to make a gift.

As you may know, once you turn 70.5 you are required to take funds out of your Individual Retirement Account (IRA). Those who meet the age requirement can transfer up to \$100,000 per year directly to a chari-

# KidZone!

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

## AmeriCorps NCCC Lends a Hand



This fall, HomeFront got a helping hand from a wonderful group of AmeriCorps NCCC participants. During their six weeks with us the team was tireless, sorting thousands of backpacks for our *Back to School* drive, painting, landscaping, cleaning and organizing. We are so grateful for their commitment to service.

## Ghostly Goblins and Freaky Fun Stuff



HomeFront kids had a blast celebrating the spookiest time of the year.

## Our Kid Is King

Congratulations to Esko — one of our *Joy, Hopes, and Dreams* volunteer Group Leaders — for being voted Trenton Central High School's 2018 Homecoming King.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### A WEEK OF HOPE

JANUARY 19-26, 2019

*Home Is Where the Heart Is*  
Open House at 1880 Princeton Ave.

February 12, 2019



**ArtJam**

March 29 –  
April 15, 2019

April 14 | 10th Annual  
2019 Women's Initiative  
Spring Luncheon

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

## Tutoring Supports Our Children



As HomeFront kids dive headfirst into the new school year, we always have their backs. Our comprehensive tutoring program assures that no child falls behind.

## Diaper Challenge Continues

Teams of volunteers have been hard at work in our new Diaper Resource Center. Since announcing this new program, we have more than tripled the monthly number of diapers we have been able to share with families struggling to make ends meet. Donations are still sorely needed and always welcome – especially of larger size diapers and pull-ups.





# Our Community Cares

*What makes us tick? You do! From our very beginning, our volunteers and donors have been and continue to be our heart and soul. Here are just a few wonderful examples of what happens when our community steps in.*

## PSE&G: Generously Supporting HomeFront's Resource Network

Imagine a bedroom without a bed, a kitchen without any food or a closet without any clothes. Fortunately, with partners like PSE&G to support it, our Resource Network ensures that struggling families get their basic needs met. We provide furniture, food, household items, diapers, clothing, cars and access to lawyers, mechanics and dentists — Whatever is needed.



Furnish the Future helps clients create livable homes.



Donated cars help parents get to work and get their kids to activities.

## Shine on, SHINE!

Thirty-five *Hire Expectations* clients have benefitted tremendously by having SHINE as part of their lives. SHINE is a volunteer-run program whose mission is to help HomeFront clients succeed. They do this by working individually with clients to identify their unique strengths and matching those strengths vocationally. To date, 80 percent of the clients who have participated in the workshops have secured better-paying jobs, entered training programs or have begun higher academic pursuits. SHINE complements our *Hire Expectations* program and truly gives each and every client holistic service.



SHINE volunteers Jennifer Wilson, Jeanne Besser and Amy Lustig



Volunteers from Johnson & Johnson help at the Diaper Resource Center.

## FreeStore Update:

We are excited to announce that our *Restore Our FreeStore* campaign has been a major success! With your help, we raised the required cash match to be eligible for \$300,000 in government funds for the restoration of the FreeStore, our well stocked retail space downtown where families in need can directly access the clothing, appliances, housewares and linens that are so generously donated to HomeFront. We are planning for renovations to begin in early 2019 and we look forward to showing off our new accessible, energy-efficient and enlarged FreeStore later in the year.



Clients shop the FreeStore for gently used clothing.

# HomeFront Happenings

## Artful Collaboration Brings 25 Years of Creativity, Joy and Love to Kids in Need

More than two decades ago, when swarms of bewildered, disillusioned and grief-stricken homeless kids lived in grim motel rooms along the Route 1 corridor, HomeFront volunteers often struggled to just get food to them.

Consumed with despair and confusion, these kids cried for healing and longed for a path out of hopelessness. The truth is they needed more than just food alone, they yearned for an outlet of hope. With deep concern, Anne Reeves from The Arts Council of Princeton reached out to HomeFront with an inspirational vision to use art as a catalyst to evoke the dignity and fervor that these kids so desperately needed. It began with one Thursday night of arts instruction, and then another and another. It was amazing to see kids, once depressed, being completely transformed by the power of art.



Every Thursday was an adventure and a chance to create something new in their lives. From the first Arts-Exchange 25 years ago to the present, this partnership between The Arts Council of Princeton and HomeFront continues to provide weekly, year-round arts instruction to children with families currently living in transient circumstances. November 29, 2018, marks the official 25th anniversary of the very first ArtsExchange in 1993.

## Busting Myths About Homelessness

- In the U.S., more than 3.5 million people are homeless every night, and 1.35 million are children.\*
- Over 60% of HomeFront families have at least one adult working 40 hours per week.
- Providing housing to a homeless person is 3x less expensive than having them remain homeless.\*\*

SOURCES: \*Open Door Mission \*\*Vox.com 2015

*Please come visit the HomeFront Family Campus!  
Contact Liza Peck at [LizaP@homefrontnj.org](mailto:LizaP@homefrontnj.org) to schedule a tour.*

## Year in Review

In the past year at HomeFront:

**127** families with 173 children lived in HomeFront's permanent, affordable, service-enriched housing.

**230** families with 339 children received intensive support and were sheltered with dignity at our Family Campus and in our FreshStart housing program.

**492** families furnished their new homes with beds, bureaus, tables and couches through our Furnish the Future program.

**3,900+** visits were made to our FreeStore to obtain necessary household items and clothes free of charge.

**406** children made memories to grow on in our year-round Joy, Hopes, & Dreams programming of educational and enrichment activities.

**1,600+** volunteers worked over 52,000 hours

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

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

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

## Celebrate your Birthday With a Facebook Fundraiser!



A small Facebook feature is doing a lot of good – and it's a virtually effortless way to help HomeFront families. Birthday fundraisers, in which users can request that their friends donate to a cause for their birthday, have raised over \$300 million for more than 750,000 nonprofits since it started in 2017. It's easy to do, and you can pick HomeFront as the charity you're asking your Facebook friends to support.

Thank you for thinking of us. And happy birthday!



*“The ache for home lives in all of us,  
the safe place where we can go...”*

*— Maya Angelou*

We wish each of you  
the kind of holidays  
that will delight the child  
within you.

We feel your warm hand  
in ours everyday.

— HomeFront

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)



GUIDESTAR



*No one is useless  
in this world  
who lightens the  
burdens of another.*

*- CHARLES DICKENS*



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*Helping families break the cycle of poverty*  
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