

HomeFront Matters

SUMMER/FALL 2019

A Win for the Kids — 25 Years in the Making

When the group of volunteers who started HomeFront first began working with motel families, love, compassion, food and clothing were their top priorities. However, as the complexities of

sweeter this past spring. The Atkinson Child Development Center provides a place of healing for little ones, six weeks to five years, suffering from emotional, physical and developmental delays resulting from the horrific experiences of their young lives. Up until last spring, this vital program was largely funded by private donations and was operating at capacity.

“Seeing children in pain blossom into healthy happy kids at the Ccenter is the best feeling in the world, but we couldn’t grow that

course, it doesn’t cover the entire monthly cost for each child, but it gives us the wiggle room to add staff and open up 20 more slots!” Mercer says. “Wow! 20 more kids who can experience the magic; 20 more parents who can go to work knowing their children are well cared for.”

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The miracles that happen at HomeFront are made possible by generous donors, but that support is never taken for granted. The relentless search for other sources of funding is a price we willingly pay so kids have the chance they deserve!



finding a way out of homelessness and the toll such crises took on kids became clear, founder Connie Mercer and a team of dedicated volunteers would spend hours looking for private donors, writing grant applications and pouring over government documents looking for the money they needed to establish programs that would make a real difference.

That is why 25 years of pounding on the heavy door of government bureaucracy made one victory all the

program without taking money away from other programs,” explains Mercer, “and I felt that would have been irresponsible. The Atkinson Center, open to children of families in residence, but also to those in our WorkFirst and transitional programs, has been at capacity for a long time.”

That recently changed when, after years of advocacy on the federal and state level, the State of New Jersey approved paying for subsidized daycare for homeless children. “Of

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THE Drive Home

The Drive Home, in partnership with HomeFront, is committed to providing struggling single mothers with vehicles of their own so they can take a step closer toward independence for themselves and their children.

Have a car to donate? Visit HomeFront's website or call us at (609) 989-9417 x117.

WISHLIST:

- Cars in working order!
- Volunteer speech therapist
- Coats especially large and XXL adult sizes
- Linens and towels
- Strollers and infant car seats
- Canned proteins (tuna, chicken, beans)

To donate items or get more information, contact us: getinvolved@homefrontnj.org or 609-989-9417 x137.



On the Cover

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

SuperStar \$500,000 Match for HomeFront's Future

This spring, Jane and Simon Hallett, two long time loyal friends of HomeFront, learned about HomeFront's Endowment Campaign developed to protect our future and allow us to remain resilient during future economic downturns and in the face of shrinking government budgets. After meeting with us, Jane added impetus to our goal of raising \$5 million by October 1, 2020.

The Halletts have committed to match every dollar contributed towards HomeFront's Endowment Campaign up to \$500,000 (a Superstar level gift). "Simon and I are aware that there is so much uncertainty about funding, and HomeFront's work is so vital, that it is important for HomeFront to have a guaranteed source of funding for the future. Our donation is a vote of confidence in the wonderful work that HomeFront is doing now and an expression of our faith that HomeFront will be around for many more years to continue this work.

Double your impact today and build a better future for HomeFront families tomorrow. We would love to talk to you. Please phone 609-989-9417 x103.



Doing Good with Canned Goods



The InsiderScore team took home "Best In Show," for spelling out the name of an analytics tool they provide, called inFilings, in tuna cans.

Some may say CANgineering is a CANTastic way to spark your creativity and make a difference this summer! To help stock our food pantry shelves, HomeFront hosted its inaugural CANgineering competition; a creative teambuilding experience and a way to collect much-needed food through a

spirited contest among Mercer County corporations.

This summer, Johnson and Johnson, Billtrust and InsiderScore competed, building sculptures out of donated non-perishable goods. What a great way to ensure our pantries are stocked — and have a blast while doing it!

KidZone!

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

Helping Kids Go Back to School Ready to Learn

At HomeFront, we do whatever it takes to ensure that even the most vulnerable child will experience the pride of starting school the right way. This means that all our children will be outfitted with a set of new clothes, sneakers and a backpack full of the things they need to start their year off ready to succeed in the classroom.

Additionally, we are able to provide assistance throughout the year to cover costs associated with field trips, school photos, yearbooks and all of the other things kids do throughout the year. It is Our Back to School Fund which allows us to do this.

As with all our campaigns, the heart and hands of HomeFront are our supporters. If you would like to contribute to this special fund, visit our website or email homefront@homefrontnj.org.



A Summer of Fun

Our campers are learning something new every day, making lifelong friends and visiting museums, boardwalks and the zoo. Each week, an extraordinary local business visits camp to provide lunch and fun activities. HomeFront's Camp Mercer provides eight weeks of day camp, two nutritious meals per day (plus a snack) and academic enrichment each morning for over 100 local homeless and at-risk children. Camp also enables our parents to continue working while school is out and keeps their kids safe and learning.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Coffee with Connie & Sarah

10 a.m. Oct. 11th,
at the Family Campus
RSVP to MeghanC@HomeFrontNJ.org



Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week
November 16 - 23



Holiday Market
November 22 & 23

For details, visit our website,
www.HomeFrontNJ.org



Bristol-Myers Squibb to Receive Building a Better World Award

Join us on Sept. 26, 5:30 p.m. at Terhune Orchards for a farm-to-table dinner celebrating Bristol-Myers Squibb.

Bristol-Myers Squibb has supported HomeFront from the beginning over 25 years ago. Employees have rallied for our major drives, helped at our summer camps and have responded to our every call for help.

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available at www.homefrontnj.org or call 609-989-9417 x133.

Our Community Cares

From our very beginning, volunteers and donors have been our heart and soul. Here are just a few wonderful examples of what happens when our community steps in.

Rock & Rolling for Hope

Approximately 900 runners and walkers and over 50 volunteers came out on June 9 to support HomeFront's summer camp and year-round programming for local children who are homeless and at-risk.

With 12 local rock bands lining the race course, great weather, delicious refreshments, games, informational booths, and even a "rock star" hairdo booth (thank you La Jolie!), it was a wonderful gathering of new and loyal HomeFront supporters.



Congratulations to our overall event winners: For men – Caleb Brox (1st place), Nicholas Farr (2nd place), and Adhitayan Tamilselvan (3rd place). For women – Emily Moini (1st place), Carrie Brox (2nd place), and Danielle Gargione (3rd place). And a very special thanks to our sponsors and volunteer planning committee!



HomeFront's Women's Initiative: A Decade of Caring

This year, we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Women's Initiative, a cadre of caring and committed women who lend their expertise and support to help break the cycle of poverty in our community. A decade later, the Women's Initiative is 1,068 members strong and has raised over two million dollars through a variety of events and individual contributions.

What an amazing group of like-minded women dedicated to making a real difference!



Amy Vogel and Lisa Smukler founded the Women's Initiative in 2009 and have been central to its ongoing success. Because of them and their committees, the initiative has become an important funding source for HomeFront's children's programs.

The Pennington School: Making a Difference

This past June, Connie Mercer, founder and executive director, was honored to give the commencement speech at the Pennington School – a school whose relationship with HomeFront has spanned over two decades of participation and powerful community service. Pennington School's headmaster, William Hawkeye, said, "Each year at The Pennington School, I offer a theme for the year to the school community and this past year our theme was, 'Make a Difference.'"

The unanimous vote for commencement speaker was Connie Mercer. Who better than Connie to speak to the seniors about this idea of 'Making a Difference'? Connie did not disappoint! She was, quite simply, one of the best graduation speakers I have ever listened to. Inspirational, funny and full of great advice, including, 'Never spend so much time looking ahead that you forget to look around. Keep gratitude and appreciation in your heart for all the many small gifts that are given to you every day.'"

HomeFront Happenings

Please come visit us! To schedule your tour, email us at homefront@homefrontnj.org

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Welcome Back Governor Murphy

HomeFront was again honored to host Governor Phil Murphy, Commissioner of Health Shereef Elnahal and Commissioner of Human Services Carole Johnson at a press conference highlighting New Jersey's investment in fighting the opioid epidemic.

Family Campus Director Sheila Addison introduced the Governor and highlighted our participation in the *For My Baby and Me*, a collaborative program spearheaded by Capital Health in conjunction with HomeFront, Rescue Mission of Trenton, Catholic Charities and the Trenton Health Team.



The Governor echoed his praise for the *For My Baby and Me* program and also used the occasion to announce his intention to nominate Mercer County's Judy Persichilli as the next Commissioner of Health. Before the Governor left, he visited with the kids in Camp Mercer — another special day at the Family Campus.

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Clients Advocate for Themselves

"I never thought my voice mattered or that I could make real change. This day was an eye-opener for me." —Kayla

On Legislative Day, June 10, our clients and staff took to the State House to champion low-income housing issues and meet with legislators to voice their struggles, concerns, and ideas about affordable housing. To continue the conversation more immediately, both clients and legislators/advocates plan on having Town Hall-style meetings at our Family Campus to create real, measurable change.

Family Campus Embraces Green

The Ewing Green Team and the Township of Ewing honored HomeFront's Family Campus for embracing environmental sustainability in our daily management practices, including: installation of a roof-top solar panel system that lowers energy costs by up to 40%; new LED lighting in parking lot light fixtures; new energy efficient lighting; upgrades in garages, and modeling strong business recycling practices.



Ewing Councilwoman Kathy Wollert, HomeFront COO and Ewing Councilwoman Sarah Steward, Celia Bernstein, Evan Crumiller, Ewing Green Team, Councilman Kevin Baxter, and Councilman David Schroth.

Ewing Mayor Bert Steinmann says "HomeFront, an organization that serves the most vulnerable members of our community, has long embodied an ethos for selflessness and care for the community at large. Their work towards making their campus sustainable is extremely impressive, but not surprising as it reflects a compassion — and willingness to do the work — that we have come to expect from this wonderful organization."



Caps and Gowns Signal Bright Futures



HomeFront tripled the joy that comes with graduation and opportunities for a brighter future! First, our preschoolers from The Atkinson Child Development Center participated in a “Moving On, Moving Up” ceremony. That same week, ten *Hire Expectations*’ adult students walked at a graduation ceremony and received their New Jersey State High School Equivalency Diplomas.



Adding even more reason to be proud, 11 high school seniors—HomeFront alumnae from nursery school or *Joy, Hopes and Dreams*—graduated from local area high schools. “It’s hard to explain the joy,” says HomeFront’s lead preschool teacher Shaneica Kutisha, “that comes from seeing kids I had in preschool 13 years ago walk the stage knowing that they’re headed off to college.”

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



Donate your old car
today – Change a life
tomorrow.
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www.homefrontnj.org

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