

# HomeFront Matters

SPRING 2019

## Sharing Stories of Hope, Grit and Resilience with NJ's First Lady



Tammy Murphy (middle) with *For My Baby and Me* mothers and Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (second from right).

In late February, we were honored to welcome New Jersey's First Lady Tammy Murphy to the HomeFront Family Campus. She came with Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson, Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli and other key officials to meet with women enrolled in *For My Baby and Me*. This program is a unique collaboration that improves the long-term recovery and health outcomes for pregnant women struggling with addiction who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their babies.

HomeFront is one of five community partners working together to deliver specialized, outpatient care to this extraordinarily vulnerable population. This effort is led by Capital Health in partnership with HomeFront, Catholic Charities, the Rescue Mission of Trenton and the Trenton Health Team.

As Tanicqua, a new mom who recently gave birth to twins put it, "I've been clean for seven months," prompting applause around the room. "It's a blessing to have so much support around me. I'm blessed every day. I'm blessed to be sober. And I'm blessed to have a place to lay my head at night. Homelessness and running the streets, living that lifestyle, made it impossible to get clean. All this here helped me get out of that. Now I can be the kind of mom my babies deserve."

*Photo courtesy of Catholic Charities.*

## Through the Crisis and Beyond

Although we are dedicated to caring for families once they move out of our Family Preservation Center, there is limited dedicated funding to allow us to ensure staff support during this transition and beyond. Without it, we are sometimes forced to prioritize care for families in immediate crisis—until now. A new pilot program will formally extend HomeFront's case management and other Family Campus services to continue to help our families cope with barriers to becoming stable, self-sufficient and thriving.



When Nancy Lifland came to visit over the holidays, she listened as we expressed our frustrations and the need for dedicated funding to formalize our aftercare program. Nancy's generous contribution, combined with existing support from the Lydia Collins deForest Charitable Trust, will allow HomeFront to offer increased continuity of care to help our families stay on the path toward a better, more stable future, and give them the ongoing assistance they need to get there.

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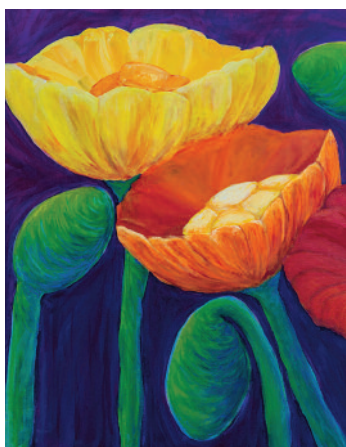


## Notes From Connie's Desk

### Our Wish List:

- Cars in working order
- Diapers and baby wipes (especially size 2++)
- Family size personal hygiene products
- Canned proteins and low-sugar cereal
- Beach towels for summer camp
- New socks & underwear
- Small ACs and fans

To donate items or get more information contact us: at (609) 989-9417 x137, or [getinvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org](mailto:getinvolved@HomeFrontNJ.org)  
Also see our Amazon wishlist: <https://amzn.to/2Im5hzV>



### On the Cover

Each *HomeFront Matters* issue features work created by an artist in ArtSpace. This Spring issue's flowers were painted by Aileen O'Neill.

In late February, I met a newly homeless family who had come to us after spending a frigid night in their car. Their homelessness, having come quickly, caught the couple by surprise and they were terrified. However, their eight-year-old daughter, Maya, was being very brave. I watched as she comforted her weeping mom and then smiled and said hello to clients in our lobby as she made her way to the toy cabinet. Later, when she, munching Cheerios, left our office with her family, headed to our Family Campus, the waiting room felt a little darker.

Thanks to people like you, HomeFront was able to offer this family a room at HomeFront's Family Campus and the tools that will allow Maya to reach her potential and maybe change the world with her sweetness. Maya is the reason for HomeFront.

About a year before, a trusted financial advisor gave me a stern talk about how HomeFront was living "paycheck to paycheck" — without a savings account — each year trying to raise enough money to give all the Mayas and their parents the help they need for a secure home and the tools to become self-sufficient. "A stable home is built on a strong foundation," he explained, "and HomeFront doesn't have one. Your

risk is that one day HomeFront will have to choose who to help and who to turn away."

I have shied away from the word "Endowment" previously because the present need is so great. Finally, I had to acknowledge that for HomeFront, building a strong tomorrow needs to start today. After much consultation with our Board of Trustees and the community, we started an Endowment campaign, and now through October 2020 we will work hard to raise \$5 million.

These dollars will become the workhorses that generate around \$200,000 as a secure starting point each year. One day, maybe 20 years from now, when another Maya stumbles into crisis, your gift to HomeFront's Endowment will ensure that there are strong arms to catch her, and to give her what she needs to change the world.

Thank you,

Connie Mercer  
*HomeFront Founder and CEO*

**P.S. Please call me to discuss this — (609) 989-9417 x103 — I am starting to love talking about endowment!**

## Building a Strong Tomorrow Starts Today

Wise investments ensure the future of those we care about. At HomeFront, we invest in our families and their children. We give them the tools they need to break the cycle of poverty as they grow.

HomeFront also realizes the importance of investing in our own future so that in economic downturns, with government cutbacks or when needs expand, we never let our families down. We need your help to build a "savings account" to allow us to weather inevitable tough times in the future. We are kicking off our Endowment Campaign now. A donation of any level, above your normal annual donation, will be gratefully accepted as an investment in our future.



**Please contact Connie (609-989-9417, x103) to learn the many ways a gift can be made. A strong tomorrow starts today.**



## The Warrior Way Leads to 3rd Championship!

The HomeFront Warriors, sponsored by Mathematica, and coached by the Lawrence Community Center's own Deb Bellamy, have won their 3rd championship while competing in the Mid Jersey Basketball League (MJBL). The team was put to the test last month but could not be held back. Each game presented new obstacles from size and sharpshooting, but in every case, we pulled ahead with smothering defensive and unwavering mental focus.

***Congratulations to our young men and Coach Deb for another great season!***



## Homage to Dr. Seuss

Our little ones celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday with a March read-along. Parents and friends of the Atkinson Child Development Center were invited to read and share their favorite Seuss stories with our eager listeners. They celebrated with a pizza party when the group read nearly 100 books!

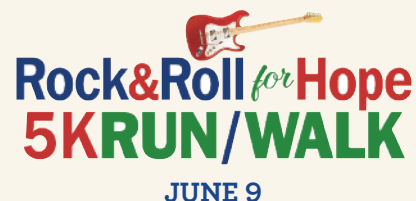


## Key Social Skills Are Developed Everyday in Our Children's Programs



## UPCOMING EVENTS

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



## Cooking with a Cause Camp Cooking & Caring For Community Kids Ages 9 to 12

**AUGUST 26-30**

## Building a Better World Celebration

**September 20**

## Sign-up for Camp Cooking & Caring

*Cooking with a Cause* is back this summer! With the guidance of culinary and social service professionals, your kids can begin their journey toward being good cooks and good citizens.

Classes will be held at HomeFront's state-of-the-art, fully equipped Teaching Kitchen and taught by CIA trained Chef Chris Crawford, a food industry veteran who brings culinary arts alive for emerging chefs.



If you know someone who would like to attend, call Liza at 609-883-7500 x315 or email [LizaP@homefrontnj.org](mailto:LizaP@homefrontnj.org)



# Our Community Cares

## Celebrating a Decade of Caring: ArtJam and Women's Initiative Spring Luncheon

This year, two of our favorite annual events, **ArtJam** and the **Women's Initiative Spring Luncheon**, turn 10! Turning a vacant storefront into a colorful art-filled



pop-up gallery each spring, HomeFront's **ArtJam** invites art lovers to experience a double win — buying artworks they love AND supporting a good cause. "ArtJam is so important because it brings together professional artists, undiscovered artists who have experienced homelessness and the community. It is a celebration of creativity," says Ruthann Traylor, director of HomeFront's ArtSpace/SewingSpace.

The annual **Women's Initiative Luncheon** highlights the Women's Initiative's mission to mobilize a cadre of 1,000 caring and committed women of all ages to lend their expertise and support to help alleviate family homelessness in our community. Lisa Smukler, one of the Women's Initiative Co-Chairs says, "We are so excited to be celebrating our tenth anniversary of helping local families in need. The Women's Initiative has grown into an army of women who are always there to lend their skills and resources to our most vulnerable neighbors."



## IKEA & HomeFront: A Partnership Built to Last

This winter we were delighted to establish a new partnership with IKEA whose vision, like ours, is to create better everyday lives for people.

Picture a family in a real home. In that vision, you'll see parents and kids sitting around a table sharing a nourishing meal or sleeping in beds with clean sheets—their clothing stowed away in dressers—not in garbage bags. Thanks to a steady



stream of furniture and houseware donations from our partners at IKEA, we are helping to turn that vision into a reality for more homeless and very low-income families.

**Special Note:** *If you're handy with an Allen wrench and are interested in joining our furniture assembly team, please reach out to us at 609-989-9417 x137.*

## Featured Volunteer: Steve Hammond



For over four years Steve Hammond has generously volunteered his time and talents tutoring WorkFirst students at HomeFront's Family Campus. Steve makes math come alive for students as he teaches the practical application of math skills within the world around us.

As a high scoring bowler, Steve knows first-hand the exhilaration that comes from bowling a perfect game. However, that feeling doesn't compare to the joy and satisfaction that comes from seeing one his students earn a high score on a math test.

## AmeriCorps NCCC Team

We are so glad to be hosting another wonderful National Civilian Community Corps team this Spring!



Pictured are three of the eight amazing volunteers helping with various projects at our main office, Family Campus and permanent housing units. Their coordinated efforts are the gift that keeps on giving throughout the year.

# HomeFront Happenings

*Please come visit us! Email [homefront@homefrontnj.org](mailto:homefront@homefrontnj.org) to schedule a tour.*

## Our Community Rocks!

Ain't it amazing?! We reached out to the community on social media to ask for slow cooker donations for families in our housing programs, and the community came together and made it happen!

We received **over 200 crockpots** and each family was able to take one home. Our housing team held a tutorial on how a slow cooker can help a busy family make a well-balanced, affordable and easy meal.

## Celebrating Women of Song



What a wonderful evening full of song, celebrating women and delicious food – all to benefit HomeFront families! **Celebrating Women of Song** was an amazing success, thanks to our dear friends Judy Brodsky, Michael Curtis and Liz Fillo. Judy and Michael hosted over 80 guests in their home and she cooked a delectable homemade meal for everyone while Liz sang famous songs by women accompanied by talented pianist, Peter Wright.

## Pop-Up FreeStore Open for Business

Major renovations are now underway at our FreeStore on Division Street in Trenton, thanks to the amazing response we had in asking for your help with this urgently needed project. A new heating and cooling system, floors, fresh paint and a new layout for shoppers are all in the works.

HomeFront is committed to making sure our services continue during times of change so we have opened a pop-up FreeStore at our main office on Princeton Avenue.

This way our families don't miss out on much needed clothing and household items while we work to make the permanent location more client-friendly allowing us to better serve our families.

We are looking forward to an exciting grand opening once the renovations are complete later this year – and will keep you updated and share pictures of the progress in the months to come.

## Send a Special Woman in Your Life a Message of Love — And Send a Homeless Mother a Message of Hope

We will send a beautiful card by one of our ArtSpace artists with a special greeting from you to your mother or any other special person you choose to honor when you make a donation to HomeFront's Mother's Fund.

This special fund supports mothers who are struggling to make ends meet for their children and allows us to cover the costs for such things as a new backpack, athletic equipment, new sneakers or a school trip.

**To be part of this wonderful tradition, visit us online at [HomeFrontNJ.org](http://HomeFrontNJ.org) or call 609-989-9417 x107. (Please donate by May 8, so we can send the card in time for Mother's Day.)**



One of our moms, Clarissa wanted to take her three children to a Disney movie, but simply could not afford four tickets. Our Mother's Fund bought their tickets.

Johanna's 8-year-old son loved soccer, but she could not afford his soccer cleats. Our Mother's Fund bought the shoes and she saw him score a winning goal last Mother's Day weekend.

Linda's 10-year-old daughter was an avid reader. One favorite, Peter Pan, came to the local stage theatre, and thanks to the Mothers Fund, they had great seats for a matinee.



# Create the Best Summer Ever for Homeless Kids

**Sponsor a homeless child today:** For some kids, summer means traveling with family — a couple of weeks at the beach or a month at sleep away camp. For homeless and at-risk kids, summer can mean hunger and unsupervised idleness. But, with the caring of the community behind them, HomeFront makes sure those children have a safe, enriching place to try new activities, learn and make new friends. Each year, our summer camp serves approximately 120 local kids ages 5 to 14. Tragically, there are extremely limited government funds to support our critically needed children's programming and summer camps.

Summer days for HomeFront's children are filled with rich experiences and memories to last a lifetime – all priceless to a child. But to generous donors, the price is \$150 a week – or \$1200 for the full eight weeks.



## Want to help?

Please visit [HomeFrontNJ.org](http://HomeFrontNJ.org), call (609) 989-9417 x107, or send a check (made out to HomeFront) to: 1880 Princeton Ave., Lawrenceville, NJ 08648.

*Thank You!*

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)



*I alone can not change  
the world, but I can  
cast a stone across  
the waters and create  
many ripples.  
— Mother Teresa*

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