

I am Project HOME

LEONARD BUCKNER

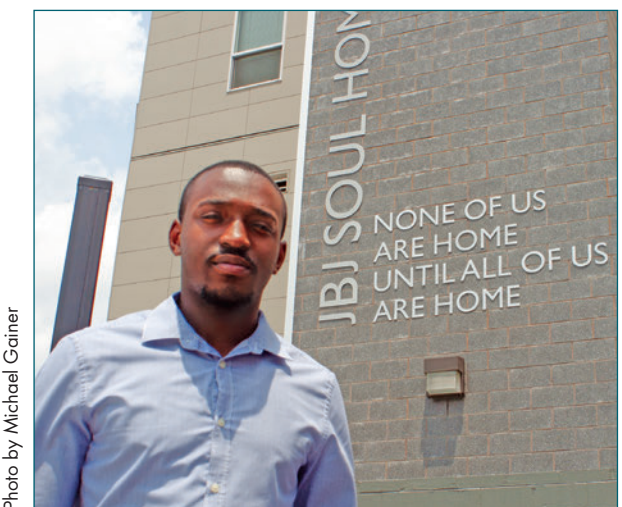


Photo by Michael Gainer

Leonard Buckner was six years old when his family came to Rowan Homes. His mother, Tanya, and her three children—Tanisha, Leonard, and Latanya—were among the first families to move into Project HOME's residence for families in the St. Elizabeth's neighborhood of Philadelphia. "She was excited to have a place to call our home," Leonard remembers, "and the apartments were beautiful—bigger than some houses."

A few years later, the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs (HLCCTL) opened its doors right across the street. At age 13, Leonard began dropping in after school to take his first class in technology and video.

In high school, Leonard joined Project HOME's College Access Program (CAP). The program requires participants to take classes in digital literacy as well as preparing them for the college environment, including college selection, what to expect in college, and managing a syllabus.

Leonard's hard work landed him at Bloomsburg University. When he struggled in that first semester, he called Tomika Brown, director of CAP. "She showed me tough love—where I messed up, and what I needed to do to turn things around. With so many people in my corner, I had to pick up the pace. I couldn't let them down."

Leonard studied accounting and marketing. During summers, he took advantage of Project HOME's internship program, getting on-the-job experience by working 35 hours per week in our accounting office at JBJ Soul Homes. "The accounting staff is awesome. They not only helped me with my tasks, but talked me through things I needed to know and credentials I needed." This summer, he is there once again, and next year, he will graduate with a degree in business.

Leonard's experience with Project HOME was about more than learning practical skills. "I want to work with an organization that values the community, families, and kids, and helps people who are less fortunate. My family has been blessed to be part of Project HOME, which has helped us achieve things we could not have."

Now Tanya, Leonard's mother, can celebrate 15 years in recovery and three children who are college graduates or on track to be. "Project HOME's presence in our community is changing everything," Leonard observes. "More people are buying into the idea that education is a must—adults as well as kids. Education is now a part of our thinking."

In many ways, Leonard is the face of Project HOME's next generation. He and his peers are testimony that the right support at critical times can help transform not only individual lives, but a whole community.



Our Mission
The mission of the Project HOME community is to empower adults, children, and families to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty, to alleviate the underlying causes of poverty, and to enable all of us to attain our fullest potential as individuals and as members of the broader society.

- Our Residences**
- 1515 and 1523 Fairmount Avenue
 - Hope Haven I/II, 2827-28 Diamond Street
 - Connelly House, 1212 Ludlow Street
 - Kairos House, 1440 N. Broad Street
 - Kate's Place, 1929 Sansom Street
 - James Widener Ray Homes, 2101 W. Venango
 - JBJ Soul Homes, 1415 Fairmount Avenue
 - Rowan I, 2729-A W. Diamond Street
 - Rowan II, 1901 N. Judson Street
 - St. Columba, 4133 Chestnut Street
 - St. Elizabeth's Recovery, 1850 N. Croskey St.
 - Women of Change, 2042 Arch Street

- Support Services & Programs**
- Adult Education, Employment & Arts
 - Neighborhood Services
 - Advocacy and Public Policy
 - Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs
 - Outreach Coordination Center
 - Stephen Klein Wellness Center
 - Volunteer Program

- Businesses**
- HOME Spun Resale Boutique, 215-232-6322
 - HOME Made Products, 215-232-7272, ext. 3075
 - HOME Page Café, 215-320-6191

Administration
215-232-7272

Homeless Outreach Hotline
215-232-1984

Human Resources Hotline
215-232-7219 ext. 5200

www.projecthome.org



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Living on the Edge



Photo by Michael Gainer
Takeia Clark and Jamal Thomas, young adult residents at JBJ Soul Homes, know how support can make a difference for young adults.

Kaizer Roberts was floored when he walked into the San Diego conference focused on youth homelessness. "I was shocked at the number of people working for young people. I grew up in a place where nobody cared about you. Nobody wanted to see you succeed. To see so many people ready to help young people like me get to the next level was mind-blowing."

Nationwide, young adults (ages 18-25) comprise one of the fastest growing groups of persons who are homeless. Kaizer, age 23 and a participant in our young adult pilot program for the past year, understands the terrain from the inside out.

Many of these young adults are transitioning from foster care, juvenile justice, or residential treatment facilities. Others have fled abusive homes, including a disproportionate number who are LGBTQ.

These young people do not match typical "homeless" profiles. The vast majority do not self-identify as "homeless." Many never enter the shelter system or live on the streets, relying instead on "couch surfing"—moving from relative to friend with no permanent housing. "They may wear the freshest clothes out there, or have a hot girl on their arm," says Kaizer. "They don't consider themselves homeless because they sleep on someone's couch. But the reality is, they are."

These young people may connect and travel together, sleep occasionally in abandoned buildings or on the street, and work marginal jobs, if they have work at all. In Philadelphia, where a 26 percent poverty rate makes it the poorest large city in the country, the symptoms of poverty hit these young people first. They are the product of poorly-performing and under-funded schools. They usually work low-wage, often part-time jobs with no benefits. If they were

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Spirit of Generosity

HARVEY FINKLE

Anyone who walks the hallways of a Project HOME residence, reads *News from HOME*, or browses our website is captured by the amazing photography of Harvey Finkle. Harvey has been an integral member of the Project HOME community since our founding—and, in a sense, for many years before that. He has committed decades to documenting the struggles of persons on the margins—in Philadelphia, nationally, and internationally.

Harvey came to his life's vocation in a roundabout way. After earning a graduate degree in social work at the University of Pennsylvania, he was first assigned to work with families accused of neglecting their children and then with an experimental preschool project. Both exposed him to people living in poverty. His upbringing by Roosevelt Democrats made him quickly sympathetic to those with whom he worked. A passion for documenting the dignity and power of persons who often go unnoticed drove his work.

Not until many years later did he discover that photography was his medium. An exhibit of Harry Callahan's photos at the Museum of Modern Art whet his interest, but he didn't even buy a camera until five years later, in 1967. "And I don't think I took a good picture for three years after that," he quips.

Harvey's growing interest in photography mixed well with his wish to illuminate the experiences of those at the margins who often go unseen. This included people who lived in poverty, were recent immigrants, lived with disabilities, or experienced homelessness.

He first met Sister Mary Scullion in the mid-1980s and asked her if he could photograph the residents of Women of Hope, a transitional residence Sister



Harvey Finkle has been showing our best side for more than 25 years. Here he and Sister Mary Scullion take an old-time selfie at the Women of Hope residence, before the founding of Project HOME.

Mary had founded. "One of the women Harvey photographed said that Harvey had 'a third eye,'" Sister Mary remembers. "I thought this was such a great way to describe Harvey's work. He can capture what most of us cannot even see."

Harvey's stunning work continues to shed light on the lives of those who are marginalized, and to engender empathy and action from those who view it. His time and talent have been priceless gifts to us over decades. Project HOME is truly fortunate to count him as a friend and a vital part of our mission.

Enjoy some of Harvey's amazing work at www.projecthome.org/harvey-finkle.

NONE OF US ARE HOME UNTIL ALL OF US ARE HOME

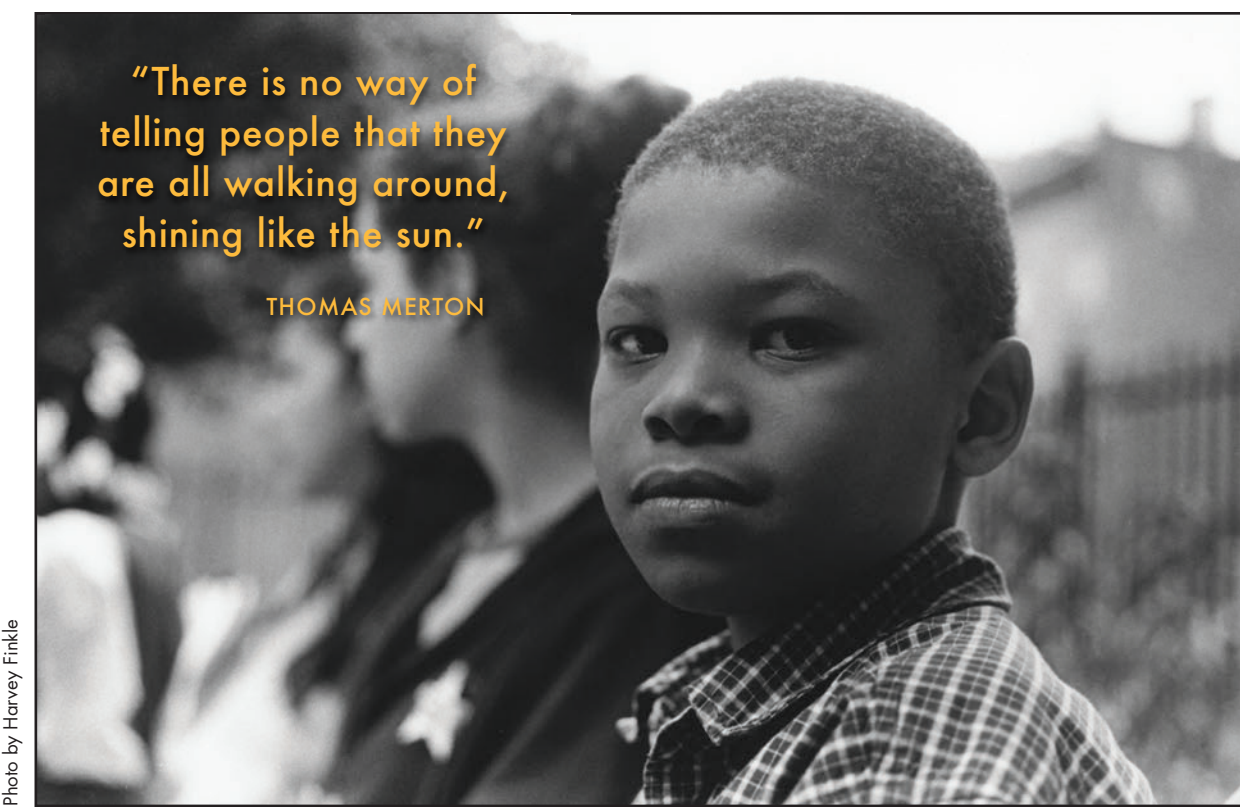


Photo by Harvey Finkle
For more than twenty-five years, Harvey Finkle has captured in amazing images the spirit of joy, resiliency, and community which is Project HOME (see page 5). We are sharing a gallery of some of the best of these photos and images on our website. Visit it at www.projecthome.org/harvey-finkle.

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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Investing in the Next Generation



Photo by Sarah Mueller
Project HOME realizes that preventing homelessness demands supporting the next generation.

When Project HOME began working to end homelessness, we immediately confronted a deeper question: How do we prevent it? What types of supports would create a community where homelessness is no longer a possibility?

We joined hands with existing community leaders in a specific place to explore what this might look like. Although we have residences in many Philadelphia

neighborhoods, we focused on an area of North Philadelphia where we had two residences. The Diamond Street and St. Elizabeth's neighborhood is one of Philadelphia's poorest. A 1990s study traced more admissions into the shelter system from this neighborhood than from any other Philadelphia zip code.

Project HOME connected with the leaders in the community, and we decided that preventing homelessness demanded an investment in the next generation. Over the space of 15 years, we did just that.

We rehabbed over 40 affordable houses in the neighborhood. We developed the St. Elizabeth's Community Center, adding a free medical clinic (forerunner of the amazing new Stephen Klein Wellness Center), created 39 units of housing for homeless families and the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs (HLCCTL). That facility, through some strong partnerships, hosts the Community Partnership School, a pre-K-5 independent school; vibrant after-school education and art programs; and classes in technology for all ages. It provides entrepreneurial training for teens and job training

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Roots and Branches: Reflections from Sister Mary

When Project HOME began in 1989, poverty, untreated mental health, and addictions were the powerful forces driving people onto our streets, and our focus was on these vulnerable adults. Increasingly now, we see young people who are alone and in transient living situations—couch-surfing and even living on our streets. Project HOME must now approach this work with an eye towards our youth, providing them with meaningful opportunities to build a future for themselves and for our society.

We have emphasized safe and affordable housing as a critical need. Housing is essential, but youth need more than housing. They need education, employment, and community. Some of these young adults experienced early trauma, and that too must be addressed through a process of healing and recovery.

Nationally, the numbers of young people who are homeless are increasing. Statistics show that almost 40 percent of all homeless youth are LGBTQ. Last winter, almost 1,200 people came through the Hub of Hope, our downtown drop-in engagement center. Ten percent of our guests were under age 25. This new reality demands planning and action now.

I believe that our greatest possibility for change lies in nurturing the energy, vision, and optimism of our young adults. They are an unquenchable and persistent hope.

They are hungry for opportunity. They seek the educational and employment programs at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs. They are determined, strong, and very willing to give back to their communities. They dare to believe that their lives will be different, and they work to make this a reality.

There are many ways we can nurture the seeds of hope in the lives of our youth. May each of us reach out and extend a hand to them!

Our interventions affect individual lives, certainly. But what we witness each day is that a home, coupled with education and employment opportunities, can change the life and future of a community. One young life, changed, is a powerful promise for the future for all.

A Mary Scullion



Sister Mary Scullion, Co-founder and Executive Director of Project HOME

Living on the Edge (continued from page 1)

to apply for affordable public housing, they would face a ten-year wait.

They are the living faces of a new economic reality in this country, marked by an increasing wealth disparity which allows workers to work full-time yet still not be paid enough to afford stable housing. Often they do not have a high-school diploma or skills, and are not able to support themselves.

Yet not all the barriers they face are structural. "I often want to tell young people: 'Swallow your pride. Work with your parents,'" reflects Kaizer. "Many young people go homeless because they think they are grown, and they want to be independent but are not in a place to do that. They reject

"Interventions that educate, employ, and empower young adults will keep them from cycling into the homeless system."

structure and rules—including programs that have these. Unless parents are destructive and abusive, work with them. I wish I'd had that mindset."

We believe that with interventions to stabilize, educate, employ, and empower these young adults, we can prevent them from cycling into the homeless system. More than a year ago, we launched a pilot project supporting eight young people at JBJ Soul Homes. This Young Adult Program, a strategic component of the Middleton Partnership, has been developed with lead funding by Leigh and John Middleton, the JBJ Soul Foundation, and the Neubauer Catalyst for Young Adults.

Participants in the program are between 18 and 24, employed full-time, or employed part-time and in school. Their rent is capped at 30 percent of their income. Young adults set personal goals and meet with case managers often. They get support in budgeting, life skills, and health maintenance.

Even with housing and support, life is not easy for young adults. Kaizer spent three years commuting four hours a day to retail jobs at suburban stores before getting a position in the city. He works nights so he has the chance to add in some school.

One year later, however, all the young people who joined this pilot project are still part of the program. One has graduated from school and is living independently. Others are working on their goals, hoping to achieve full independence in the upcoming year.

Project HOME currently houses 26 young adults, (including the eight in our young adult program). Over the next five years, with the leadership of Mel Heifitz, Duane Perry, and Arthur Kaplan, we plan to increase housing and support services, including programming focused on the specific concerns of LGBTQ youth.

In his spare time, Kaizer is dreaming of a new project. "I want to create a circle of care for people who are homeless. I want to take them to lunch, listen to their story, ask them what would help them. I want to pay it forward."

With grateful thanks to all of the funders of the Young Adult Program: Leigh and John Middleton; JBJ Soul Foundation; the Neubauer Catalyst for Young Adults; Duane Perry and Arthur Kaplan; John Alchin; Haines Foundation; Mel Heifitz; and the Vert Charitable Trust. Our young adults share their ideas for preventing youth homelessness on our blog: www.projecthome.org/blog. For more about the housing crisis many young adults face: bit.ly/LenvTo.

Investing in the Next Generation

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programs for community members and Project HOME residents.

We launched a program to support students who wanted to attend college. Our College Access Program (CAP), funded by the Honickman Foundation, encourages young people to believe that college is possible. We created a summer job internship program for high school and college students to give them experience in professional settings. Just a few months ago, our Stephen Klein Wellness Center opened, with affordable medical care and a beautiful fitness center.

With these kinds of assets, which are often already built into more affluent neighborhoods, our young people are soaring. Just as an example, 130 students have participated in CAP. By this fall, 82 students will have entered college, and at the end of this summer, 26 students will have graduated from

invest time and energy in their success."

Our young people lead more complex lives than many of their peers. With support, we see the artists, leaders, musicians, poets, and entrepreneurs inside them emerge. "If I weren't here, I don't think any of my dreams would have come true," reflects

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ASIA BLACKSHEAR

Asia Blackshear, a member of our music program. Bryant Blunt, also in the program, adds: "I have learned that there is a place for everything and there is a home for everything. To come here every day is like the stress coming off my back from my heavy load. It is like a second home."

His words hang in the air, symbolic and almost prophetic, speaking aloud that dream from two decades ago. It is a dream of homecoming: bringing a whole neighborhood home.

Lead funding for our teen programming comes from the Honickman Foundation, joined with Origlio Beverage, Canada Dry, Comcast, the Richard and Audrey Brinkman Foundation, Sheila and John Connors, The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Hamilton Family Foundation, Deborah Fretz, and Tracy and Sharin Specter. To hear the powerful music and voices of some of our young people, check out this five-minute video filmed by Inner Power Records: bit.ly/IPR Studio.



The array of computer and technology classes at the HLCCTL allow our young people to get valuable skills for their future.

some form of post-secondary education. Some graduates have come full circle, joining Project HOME as valuable staff members.

As Tomika Brown, head of CAP, observes: "Many students want to go to college, but with no history of higher education in their family, they don't know how. They don't know what to do, what offices to contact, or how to pay the bill. I'm grateful to be in a position to shed light on this process."

Paul Dunnaville, a job coach and teacher in the music program, describes the power of these young people. "Nothing is more profound than watching the growth and evolution of a human being. Student artists progress from a state of rawness to perfection. It's a slow process. One part of their development can be attributed to the ritual of practice. The rest comes from their innate ability to be great leaders and achievers, combined with being part of a 'village' of people who constantly

Off the Couch

by Jessica Harfield



Jessica Harfield shared this reflection at our College Access Program (CAP) graduation last year. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a Masters in Social Work in May 2015.

As I look out at you, our CAP participants, I feel as though I have just left those seats. I remember how unsure, intimidated, and apprehensive about the future I was.

When I was a student, I had no one in my family or community to look to for advice on how to prepare for college, and I carried little hope for financial aid. Thankfully, I found out about the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs and met its amazing staff. I knew I was in a place that cared about me and was willing to go as far with me as I was willing to go myself.

Benjamin Disraeli says, "There is no education like adversity." My journey has been tough, but it has also been worth it. Going through high school and college without parental support was a challenge. Sometimes I worked 30 hours a week, and I had to adapt to new environments which did not always feel welcoming. Yet I learned how strong I was. Adversity has provided windows of opportunity, and those have determined my values and goals. I learned to use my many obstacles as stepping stones to the life I wanted.

Sister Mary Scullion still recalls my telling her that the reason I had applied to 32 colleges was because I didn't want to be on my sister's couch for the rest of my life. I am not quite off the couch yet, but I have come a long way; and I am proud of the person that I am becoming.

When I graduated from the University of Pennsylvania this past May, I was filled with the same apprehension and nervousness as my previous commencement ceremonies. Yet my yearning for success is greater than my fear of failure. I know now that I will make it.

HOME Happenings



The Saturday morning Rittenhouse Square Farmers Market is just one place our young entrepreneurs hone their skills.

Every Saturday, a group of entrepreneurial teens sets up shop at the Rittenhouse Square Farmers Market. The teens, participants in the Harold A. Honickman Young Entrepreneur Program, sell snacks and beverages as well as HOME Made goods produced through Project HOME's Social Enterprise program. Based on market research, two teens created an eco-friendly tumbler and reusable shopping bag, both featuring local Philly flavor. Stop by Rittenhouse Square on Saturday mornings to support our teenage students in their endeavors. You can also purchase our students' wares by contacting Brendan Sculley at 215-235-2900 ext. 6316 or bsculley@projecthome.org.

Project HOME staff and residents are continuing to work with the World Meeting of Families Hunger and Homelessness Committee to prepare for the visit of Pope Francis in September. The Committee hopes to use the Pope's presence in Philadelphia to advance the cause of addressing poverty, ending homelessness and hunger, and building a truly just society. Check out the website www.mercyandjustice.org to find out how you can be involved in this historic opportunity.

Homeless children at the World Meeting of Families.

This summer, our HOME Page Café is stepping out! We are opening a summer catering station in the Mannayunk/East Falls area from June 22 through August 8, where students doing summer internships will staff a satellite location at the Legacy Youth Tennis and Education Center. They will serve a selection of fresh, healthy sandwiches, salads, water, and juice to camp participants as well as others. In a continuing loop of empowerment, the food will be prepared by Soup's On!, a job-training program run by the Salvation Army.

Almost 400 young professionals packed the Mütter Museum in Center City on May 28 to further the cause of ending homelessness in Philadelphia. The gathering was Project HOME's 2015 Young Leaders Event, celebrating and supporting our employment initiatives that empower formerly homeless residents to attain financial stability and dignity. Our grateful thanks to the lead sponsors below, all of our supporters, and especially to our Young Leaders Committee under the incredible leadership of Rebecca Morley and Ursula Henwood Keating. Everyone is an important part of our community of hope—proof that by working together, we can truly end and prevent homelessness.



Guests at our Young Leaders Event (above) take in Mikel Lewis's powerful rap for social change (above right).

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Gwynedd Mercy University • Kitchen & Associates



In case you missed it, you can now check out the most fashionable additions to the HOME Spun Boutique via Instagram (@homespunboutique). Every day, beautiful bargains that empower the employment of formerly homeless individuals will come your way. And when you clean out your closets this season, remember to save your choice items for donation to us. Contact us at 215-232-6322.