

# News FROM HOME



NONE OF US ARE HOME UNTIL ALL OF US ARE HOME

## Beautiful Harmonies



Photo by Jay Gorodtzer

The Project HOME Choir sings at the June 20th "Taste of HOME" celebration (see page 4).

On a recent Saturday at our 1515 Fairmount Avenue residence, we were holding one of our occasional potlatch parties, an informal community arts festival with music, poetry, art, and food. About sixty persons were there, a motley blend of residents, staff, volunteers, and friends. Over the course of the afternoon, folks came up to the open mike for impromptu performances, while others drew and painted at the arts table.

We had some new visitors that Saturday, a crew of girls from a suburban Catholic grade school. At one point, one of our residents, George, came to the mike to sing. An elderly gentleman who has lived for years in one of our residences for persons with mental health issues, George is high-spirited and loves to sing in his raspy, bluesy voice. He invited the girls to come up with him, and together they began belting out The Temptations' "My Girl," George on lead vocal and the girls an enthusiastic choir.

It was a remarkable moment. Profound social divides were bridged as George and the girls sang together. The labels melted away, the differences melded into an unlikely but beautiful bond.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary throughout 2014, we are highlighting certain themes that have been core to Project HOME's history and mission – Dignity, Community, and Transformation. For twenty-five years, we have experienced the magnificent and healing

*(continued on page 2)*

## A Hunger For Success



Photo by Michael Gainer

Jerome Maynard is part of the new Young Adult Program at Project HOME.

Jerome Maynard has known some tough times in his still youthful 22 years, and one thing he is certain about: He doesn't want to go through them again. And he has definite plans for his life.

A graduate of Covenant House's Rites of Passage transitional program for homeless youth, Jerome arrived at Project HOME's newest residence, JBJ Soul Homes, in April. He is one of ten young persons who are part of a new pilot program. "I am really thankful," Jerome says of his new home. "I didn't see this opportunity coming, but now that it's here, I

want to take advantage of it. I plan on maximizing my full potential while I'm here."

Jerome's excitement at being part of Project HOME is palpable – and we are excited that he is part of our community. The JBJ Soul Homes Young Adult Program is one critical component of the Middleton Partnership, a multi-year initiative to end chronic street homelessness, and is funded by Arthur M. Kaplan and R. Duane Perry, the Haines Family Foundation, and The Vert Charitable Trust. Jon Bon Jovi and Leigh and John Middleton are keenly focused on preventing future homelessness for youth and see this pilot as a strategic priority to prevent future homelessness.

We have always welcomed young people who were experiencing homelessness into our residences. In any given year, roughly 30 young people between 18 and 25 live in our different sites. But the impetus for this new program emerged somewhere in the early stages of planning for the Middleton Partnership. We were talking with Prof. Dennis Culhane from the University of Pennsylvania, a national expert on homelessness and a long-time collaborator with Project HOME, who posed the question, "What if we knew 30 years ago what we know now about how people fall into

*(continued on page 3)*

### IN THIS ISSUE

Beautiful Harmonies	1
A Hunger For Success	1
Roots and Branches	2
Heart	3
HOME Happenings	4
I am Project HOME	5
Spirit of Generosity	5
Mission/Residences/Services and Programs	6

## Roots and Branches: Reflections from Sister Mary

As we have been celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we at Project HOME are keenly aware that the wide network of people and organizations who contribute skills, resources, energy, and vision, coupled with God's grace, are the reason behind any and all accomplishments.

Community is one of the themes of this anniversary celebration. Community is not just an ideal, it is a very practical reality. There is virtually nothing we have accomplished over the past quarter century that hasn't been done through partnerships and collaborations. When we first started, resources were scarce, and we were pretty thin in concrete skills. But over the years we have been blessed by an amazing array of staff and residents, of friends, trustees, and supporters. They have come from all walks of life, all parts of our society, and they have brought diverse talents and expertise. From architects and urban planners to GED tutors, from healthcare professionals to volunteers helping with data entry, from private companies doing fundraisers to religious congregations opening their doors for shelter or giving a platform for residents to share their stories – all of these contribute to the ultimate goal of ending homelessness.

These are all expressions of the rich and wondrous community that is Project HOME: Trustees oversee our financial planning. Business consultants help market our social enterprise products. Students join us in phone banking on an advocacy campaign. Residents gain training in peer support counseling and help strengthen our case management services.

Perhaps one of the most powerful lessons of this past quarter century is that every one of us is part of the solution to homelessness. Every one of us has a gift to share – but when we come together, those gifts multiply. Together, when we gather around a common mission and strategically pool our energy and talents, we accomplish more than we could have possibly imagined.

At its core, it is a community grounded in love, in justice, in human dignity. We thank all of you who are part of this community. We are grateful for all that we have been able to accomplish together. We will continue to widen the circle, to move forward toward our goal of ending homelessness. And we know that along the way, each one of us is deeply enriched by being part of this community.

*A. Mary Scullion*



Photo by Rodney Aienza

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

## Beautiful Harmonies (continued from page 1)

Transformation. For twenty-five years, we have experienced the magnificent and healing gift of community.

We live in a fiercely individualistic culture. Individualism is a deeply rooted social paradigm, so deep that we are not always aware how powerfully it shapes us and informs our behavior and interactions. On the positive side, individualism as a cultural value is linked to our historical commitment to personal liberties and civil rights – no person should be denied the chance to flourish or to pursue his or her own dreams.

---

*“Project HOME was born  
in relationships.”*

---

But the dark side of extreme individualism is how it frays the bonds of relationship and community, and how it often strands a person to make it on his or her own. Hyper-individualism can create distance

between us. It can give rise to social attitudes and public policies that divide us and minimize social supports. We are taught to pick ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We get the subtle message that I am not my brother's or sister's keeper. We don't want “our” tax dollars supporting “those” people.

Project HOME was born in relationships. Our earliest efforts of street outreach and our first shelters and residences grew out of relationships, friendships, deep bonds of connection that formed between and among persons who were normally occupying very different sides of profound social divisions.

We learned some powerful lessons in those early years. We touched a deep truth that we all share a common humanity, despite our differences. Whatever gifts or struggles each individual person has, we come to the fullness of our humanity when we share our lives and our experiences. As the African proverb puts

it, “One is only human because of others, with others, and for others.”

Residents will frequently share that, in addition to the housing and services, it is the community spirit at Project HOME that empowers them in their recovery and rebuilding of their lives. Staff and volunteers likewise frequently express the importance of the sense of relationships and community that infuses our daily life at Project HOME.

In our mission statement, we write, “We believe that the ultimate answer to the degradation of homelessness and poverty is in the building of relationships and community.” But we believe all persons in our society are ultimately enriched when we free ourselves from the bonds of hyper-individualism and recognize the common humanity we all share. We also believe, at a political level, meaningful and effective public policies will only be possible when we foster a social ethos rooted in the notion of the common good.

One of our most powerful influences over the years has been Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., our great national prophet of the common good. King frequently spoke of “the Beloved Community,” his beautiful image of a just society that has transcended racial wounds and economic divisions. A few years ago, when our Resident Advisory Council was officially formed, the residents chose as their motto the words of Dr. King: “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

The beautiful harmonies of George and the grade-school girls are an invitation to all of us to experience that common destiny, the Beloved Community.

# A Hunger For Success (continued from page 1)

chronic homelessness, and what if we could have intervened then?” We realized that the youth of today who are facing unstable housing and difficult circumstances in their lives could easily become the next generation of those who experience chronic homelessness.

*“What if we knew 30 years ago what we know now and could intervene?”*

We were also struck by a trend we saw in our Hub of Hope program, a winter drop-in center for persons experiencing chronic street homelessness. This past year, the percentage of young persons coming for services in the Hub doubled from the previous year. This indicated an alarming rise in the number of young persons on the streets. (For a more detailed report on this year’s Hub of Hope, see [www.projecthome.org](http://www.projecthome.org).)

We then decided that a focus on young people would be part of the Partnership plan. Working with a large group of youth service providers and advocates in Philadelphia, and responding to the new Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, which included its own focus on young adults, we designed a small pilot program. Ten of the 55 units would be dedicated to the JBJ Soul Homes Young Adult Program. The program uses PHA rent subsidies plus private services funding.

The case management is provided through a partnership with Covenant House, a long-time and highly reputable program for homeless youth.

The program is geared for young people ages 18 to 24. It provides them with stable housing and a range of services and support to empower them to achieve self-sufficiency – it is expected that within a few years they will be working, going to school, managing their finances, and paying market-rate rent (at Project HOME or somewhere else).

The first young persons in the program have moved in and are making a home and life at JBJ Soul Homes. Some, like Jerome, are transitioning directly out of Covenant House’s Rights of Passage program. Others are coming out of the foster care system or were in shelters. Most have had unstable family situations and serious struggles in their lives. All of them are currently working part-time and currently in school or preparing to take classes.

Jerome works 37 hours a week at a gym and will enroll this summer at Community College. His aim is an associates’ degree in communication – the first step in a long-term goal of being a sports analyst. “That’s a passion of mine,” he says. He’s excited to be getting back into the classroom. “Going back to school is long overdue. I’m excited to finally be getting on the path to where I want to be.”

Zeb Davis is the lead case manager for the Young Adult Program, working jointly through Project HOME and Covenant House. Zeb is impressed with this particular group of young people. “They are all hungry. They want more in life, they want to be successful. They don’t just talk about finishing college, they talk about getting their master’s degree and their doctorate. It’s a joy to be around a group of individuals who want more out of life.”

You can feel that hunger when you talk to Jerome Maynard. He is clear that he will use his time at JBJ Soul Homes to work toward his personal goals. But he also insists that it’s not just about him. While he is at Project HOME, he says, “I can contribute, I can make my voice heard about ending homelessness. I want to do any little thing that I can to make a difference and to help change somebody’s life.”

He even expresses a sense of responsibility: “We’re the first kids to come here, and if we succeed, it shows other people what this program is about, and it assures them that it can really make a difference.”

With young people like Jerome, we are confident that the future will be different – for him, and for many others.

*To get to know another of our wonderful young people at JBJ Soul Homes, listen to Cheryl Ann Davis’ moving and heartfelt talk at the April 22 Grand Opening at <http://projecthome.org/posts/2014/04/youth-movement-jbj-soul-homes>.*



Photo by Joy Gorodetzer

## Heart

By Richard Bogue

My heart, a sacred book, speaks of the many, many loving friends and acquaintances I’ve known; each has inscribed something on the pages of my heart.

Sometimes a friend has chided me, warned me, pleaded with me, and then finally turned and walked away.

Sometimes in the dead of night I read what others have written and, afraid, I resolve to change my ways. I recall the sweet, sweet women I hurt when I was young, women I’ve hurt but not forgotten.

Then sometimes in the dead of night I consult my heart and feel sorry for myself, I pity myself. At those times the loving words of others come back to me. With dawn, with sunrise, the love in my heart triumphs.

The book of my heart is unfinished. A work in progress. What I might yet write I cannot say. But one thing is certain: this book, my heart, is sacred: all the pain I’ve caused others and all the good I’ve done, it’s all written here, in my heart.

*Richard Bogue has lived at our 1515 Fairmount Avenue residence for over fourteen years. He also serves on our Board of Trustees.*

## Stay Connected!

Keep in touch with HOME Happenings because you are a valuable member of the Project HOME community.

Do you want to receive our Enewsletter and advocacy alerts? Contact [michaelgainer@projecthome.org](mailto:michaelgainer@projecthome.org)

Also, follow us on social media:



[www.facebook.com/projecthome](http://www.facebook.com/projecthome)



[www.twitter.com/projecthome](http://www.twitter.com/projecthome)



[www.youtube.com/projecthomephilly](http://www.youtube.com/projecthomephilly)

And don’t miss the great stuff on the Project HOME Blog –

[www.projecthome.org/blog](http://www.projecthome.org/blog)

# HOME Happenings

◆ **As we celebrate the spirit** of community during this 25th anniversary year, a tremendously beautiful expression of that spirit is in the artwork that adorns both the outside and inside of our new JBJ Soul Homes residence at 1415 Fairmount Avenue. We have been blessed to collaborate with world-renowned artist and muralist Meg Saligman, who created three separate installations: A shining light that is part of a three-story mural on the front of the building, as well as astonishing murals in the lobby and in the second-floor community room. Meg worked with residents, staff, and supporters over the course of a year to develop the themes and images for the art. To see her work at JBJ Soul Homes, go to our website, [www.projecthome.org](http://www.projecthome.org).



Some of Meg Saligman's brilliant artwork at JBJ Soul Homes.

◆ **Project HOME is teaming up** with the City of Philadelphia and a consortium of nonprofit partners to offer the BenePhilly Benefits Access Center, which provides a single point of access for application assistance for multiple federal and state benefits programs. Two dedicated staff persons are working with our residents, program participants, low-income neighbors, and others to assess eligibility and get connected to such programs as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicare Low Income Subsidy, Property Tax & Rent Rebate, LIHEAP Heating Assistance, and PACE/PACENET (PA Prescription Assistance Program). If you know anyone who needs help in accessing benefits, call 215-320-6193 to make an appointment with one of our Benefit Specialists.

◆ **Bernard Conner and Terrell Williams** are two immensely talented young musicians in Project HOME's Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs' Teen Program. Two years ago they formed Inner Power Records, and have written, produced, and released several recordings of their socially conscious rap music. Each of them is in the process of releasing a solo project,

which should be available by the end of June. Bernard (who goes by the musical moniker of N.A.R.D.) produced the EP "New Contagion." Terrell (or RELL.I.VENT) is releasing "Recipe for Destiny." Both recordings were made at the HLCCTL music studio, and both address issues in the community that many young rap artists are afraid to discuss. Their work will be available for download or streaming online at <http://innerpower.bandcamp.com/>.



Inner Power performs at a recent Project HOME event.

◆ **The Vote for Homes! Coalition**, spearheaded by Project HOME, once again mobilized low-income and homeless Philadelphians to get to the polls on May 20, Primary Election Day. Now, heading into the important general election this fall, we will be active in empowering our community and others who have often been politically marginalized, through voter registration, education, and mobilization. We will also be reaching out to candidates and the voting public about critical issues of affordable housing, living-wage jobs, and services. To get involved in our election efforts, contact Jennine Miller, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy, at 215-232-7272, ext. 3042, or [jenninemiller@projecthome.org](mailto:jenninemiller@projecthome.org).



Several hundred residents, alumni, volunteers, and current or former staff flooded two blocks of Fairmount Avenue on June 20 for "A Taste of HOME," our festive 25th Anniversary community celebration. Adults and youth enjoyed great food, music and dancing, art projects – and the gratification of all being part of an amazing quarter century of this mission of ending homelessness.

Photo by Jay Gorodeltzer

Photo by Jay Gorodeltzer

# I am Project HOME

MARK WILLIAMSON

Photo by Michael Gainer



The first thing you notice about Mark Williamson is his warm and welcoming smile. You might also notice the crisp blue uniform emblazoned with the Project HOME name and logo. And between the two, you would begin to understand why he is such a valuable member of our community.

Mark is a long-time staffer in our Facilities Management department, and plays an important role in helping us maintain safe, secure, dignified, and high-quality residences. Along with his impeccable professionalism and strong work ethic, he also exudes the spirit of our mission and values in countless ways.

A decade ago, Mark was working with a private cleaning company which was contracted for janitorial services at some of our residences. He was impressed with what he saw of Project HOME, but he hardly expected what happened: One of Project HOME's senior management staff approached

him, explaining that we were going to transition to internal janitorial and maintenance staff, and asked if he would be interested in joining our team. He smiles, recounting the story, and says simply, "It's been a good almost ten years!"

For the next nine and a half years, he worked at a variety of Project HOME residences, the bulk of that time as janitor at our Women of Change safe haven. "Working there gave me a whole new outlook on homelessness," Mark says. "You can't help but care for the residents there." He felt he was not only a janitor, but also "somebody who had an ear to listen" to the women. Program Manager Robin Bonfield agrees: "It takes a very special man to work at Women of Change. Mark was such a gentle and caring presence. It was inspiring and beautiful to see how respectful he was of everyone."

Recently, the North Philly native was offered a promotion to maintenance technician in charge of our JBJ Soul Homes facility, a sparkling new building that is home to 55 persons. He admits the task was intimidating at first, "but I like to take on the challenges each day offers." And the spirit of his work there continues: "Mark is a dedicated, reliable employee, who diligently takes pride in his work," says Shelanda Downing, Property Manager of JBJ Soul Homes. JBJ Program Manager Christina Fidanza affirms that Mark "is very personable, and gets along with everyone in the building. He is always pleasant and willing to help us out in any way he can."

Mark firmly sees himself as part of the Project HOME mission and deeply believes in our core conviction that "none of us are home until all of us are home." "I think God put me in a good place," he says. "I'm very happy here. I'm home."

And thanks to Mark, many others feel a sense of home – not only in well cared-for residences, but also in his daily affirmation of the dignity of others and the spirit of genuine community and love.

## Spirit of Generosity

Fred Denenberg, a lifelong Philadelphian, was sitting on his front stoop on Lombard and Camac Streets when a woman he had never met before stopped to say hello. "I had never met a nun before, but I didn't imagine they looked like the woman I was talking to," Fred recalled. Sister Mary Scullion introduced herself as someone who was helping women battling homelessness and mental health challenges at Women of Hope, located a block or two from Fred's house. She was encountering resistance to the growing work they were doing from residents in Fred's neighborhood and wondered if he was interested in hearing more about it. He was – and he joined with Sister Mary to advocate on behalf of women experiencing homelessness.

This was over 28 years ago, and Fred, along with his wife, Susan, have been friends and champions of this work ever since – partnering with Sister Mary and Joan McConnon as their efforts evolved and grew into Project HOME.

The Denenbergs are examples of the kind of steadfast, hands-on supporters that have made the Project HOME community thrive. Every other week without fail Susan and a group of her friends prepare and serve meals for residents of Women of Change. "There are three of us," Susan explains, "who provide the meal at Women of Change. We have been friends for years and have built relationships with the women. It has become an important part of our friendship."



SUSAN AND FRED DENENBERG

Susan and Fred also bring bags of groceries to the food pantry at the St. Elizabeth's Community Center and provide a full holiday meal for the men at St. Columba every winter. They have been involved in the Hub of Hope, Project HOME's engagement center in Suburban Station during Philadelphia's coldest months, as well as countless other projects over the years.

"We like to fill in the little blanks," remarked Fred, "and have done so over the years. We stay involved with Project HOME because it is legitimate good that's being done – you can see it. If someone would have said this is what could happen, you would not have believed it. We can see that there are results from our efforts. People are working their way off the streets and into their own homes."

Both Fred and Susan fondly remember the early days of Project HOME and the genesis of the permanent, supportive housing and healing community that has helped over 8,000 men, women, and children break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. "It is amazing to see what it has become," said Fred. "It's more than just housing – the job training, health care, and education – it changes peoples' lives permanently."

When asked what hopes they have for Project HOME for the next 25 years, Susan replied, "We wish for increased goodness – that the problem of homelessness would be solved."

"Yes," said Fred, "and that the spirit that existed at the very beginning would live on and inspire others."

### 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
- Health Care Services
- Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs
- Outreach Coordination 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](http://www.projecthome.org)

## NONE OF US ARE HOME UNTIL ALL OF US ARE HOME



Photo by Kevin Pierce

Project HOME's fabulous North Philly Foot Stompers perform at the June 20th "Taste of HOME" celebration (see page 4). The Foot Stompers also won first prize in a national competition earlier in the month.

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.



Union Bug