

Spirit of Generosity: Author Elizabeth “Liz” Gilbert

Author of Eat, Pray, Love, Elizabeth “Liz” Gilbert has an intrinsic connection to Philadelphia. She’s lived here twice, including once in the early 90s in West Philly, and it was an eye-opening experience. “I had grown up in the country and at that point in my very young life I didn’t realize how cities worked,” said Gilbert. “Or how they stopped working.”

At that time, she wasn’t aware of the work of Project HOME, but she was aware of the great need in the city. “You can’t live in Philadelphia without seeing the need,” said Gilbert. It was her personal connection with a good friend of Project HOME, Dr. Deborah Luepnitz (a psychoanalyst who has run support groups for staff and residents at Project HOME for over two decades), that brought Liz to meet Sister Mary Scullion. “She’s a freak of compassion,” laughs Gilbert. “I say this from a place of love. I haven’t seen that she [Sister Mary] has any selfishness in her and I’ve only met four people like her in my life.”

“You can’t live in Philadelphia without seeing the need.” - Author Liz Gilbert on why she supports the work of Project HOME.

That’s partly why Liz connected with Project HOME, but mostly it’s because she says it works. What really moves her about the organization is that it operates from a place of exquisite human dignity. Over the years she held creativity workshops at Project HOME sites for staff and residents and was energized by our beloved community. She also supported scholarships for students through the College Access Program at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs. Education is important to her because she



PHOTO CREDIT: Harvey Finkle

Over the years Liz Gilbert has held workshops for Project HOME residents and staff, as well as contributing to scholarships for our young adults at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs.

feels that anyone who wants to be educated should be educated. “I remember what it feels like to be hungry to learn,” said Gilbert. At a young age Liz showed up for school an hour early and introduced herself to the teacher. “It’s incredibly gratifying to see those pictures of the graduating students every year.” We are so grateful to Liz for her true spirit of generosity and her commitment to the work of Project HOME for nearly two decades – it is this example that inspires us all to compassion.



HONOR MOTHERS WITH A GIFT OF LOVE

This Mother's Day – when you may have to celebrate Mom from a distance, you can create a memorable gift to honor the love that your mother has given to you by empowering mothers at Project HOME.

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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.

Homeless Outreach Hotline

215-232-1984

Administration

215-232-7272

Human Resources Hotline

215-232-7219, ext. 5200

For a full list of our residences go to:

projecthome.org/locations

For a full list of our services & programs go to:

projecthome.org/services

For a full list of our businesses go to:

projecthomemade.org

Meet the Editorial Team

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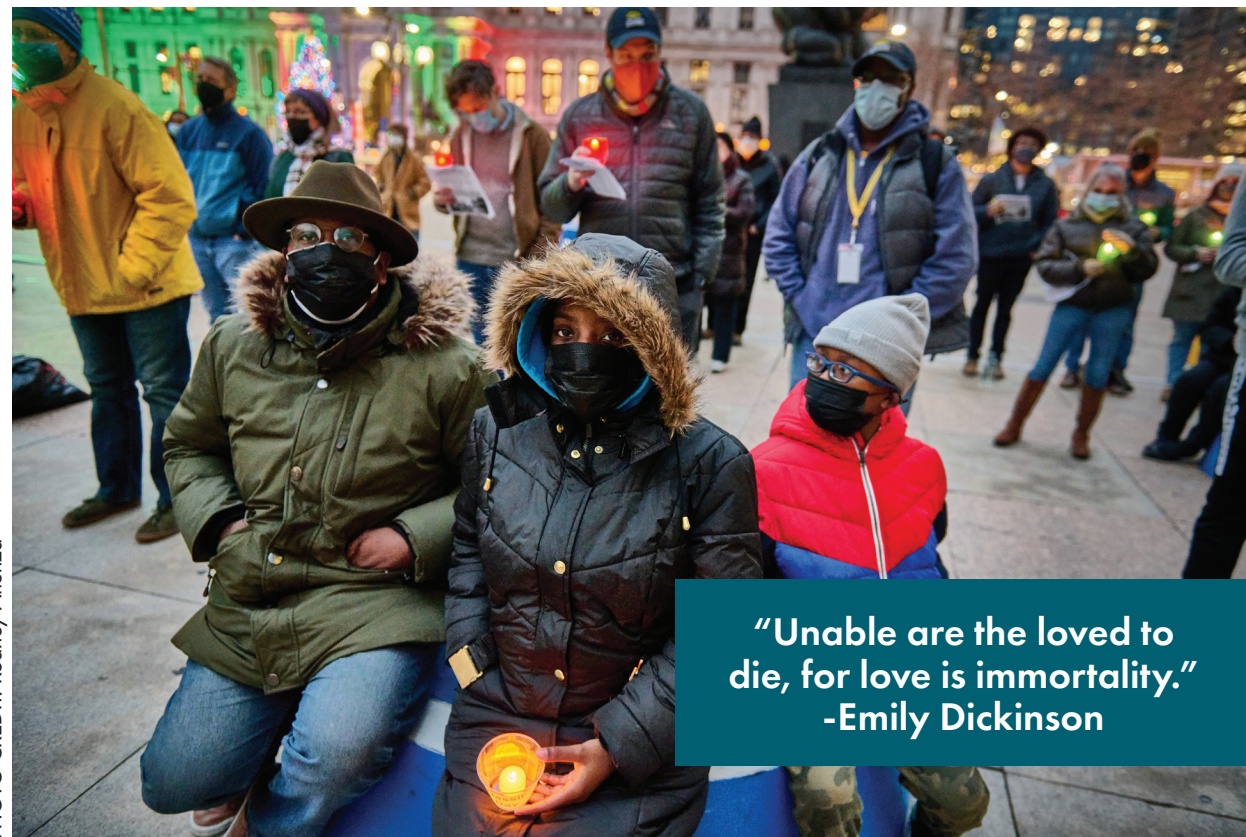


PHOTO CREDIT: Rodney Atienza

“Unable are the loved to die, for love is immortality.” -Emily Dickinson

The 25th year of Homeless Memorial Day was marked on December 21st at Thomas Plaine Plaza in Center City. The memorial remembers homeless and formerly homeless Philadelphians who died in 2021. This year’s theme was “Remember Together. Change Together.”

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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News FROM HOME

NONE OF US ARE HOME UNTIL ALL OF US ARE HOME®

Winter 2022

Meeting People Where They Are

On a frosty Thursday morning, Project HOME nurse practitioners Kara Cohen and Máire St. Ledger are preparing their medical bags for the streets of Kensington. Kara is Project HOME’s assistant medical director of the street medicine team and Máire is a new employee. They’re part of a rapidly growing nursing team, including Lydia Williams and Hillary Miller, that are providing holistic, person-centered, trauma informed care via a harm reduction lens

“They feel like no one listens and so they avoid getting medical treatment even when they really need to.”

to individuals experiencing homelessness in Kensington. Harm reduction means any behavior or strategy that helps reduce risk or harm to yourself or others. The need for this model is great. On any given night, according to the City of Philadelphia’s Office of Homeless Services, there are about 700 people without a roof over their head, but outreach staff would say that just scratches the surface. When a fundamental human need like where to sleep isn’t being met, the ability

for folks to look after any medical issues on top of that is almost impossible. This is why Kara and her team of nurses have their hands full. “It’s a mix of primary and urgent care,” said Kara. “We are engaging new patients and following-up with current ones.”

By engaging, she means going out with our Project HOME Kensington outreach team Sam Santiago and Monique Taylor daily. Sometimes that means searching for their patients, like on that Thursday morning when Kara was looking for Michael. It was important for him to come into our Stephen Klein Wellness Center in North Philadelphia and get checked out. While Sam Santiago, our veteran outreach worker, was driving down a side street in Kensington, Kara



Assistant medical director and nurse practitioner Kara Cohen tends to a man’s wounds on the street. Our street medicine team provides primary care every day in Kensington to anyone in need.

suddenly asked him to stop. She spotted Michael. “Michael, I’ve been looking for you, how’ve you been?” asked Kara. Michael was walking slowly while pushing a child’s wheelchair with his belongings in front of him. “I’ve been okay,”

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PHOTO CREDIT: Project HOME

Art has been a part of Julia’s entire life and it brings her so much joy to be able to create beautiful artwork.

Creating Community Through Art

From a young age, Project HOME resident Julia has been creating art. It wasn’t unusual for her to win ribbons for painting in elementary school. From her brother Eugene to her Great Aunt Jean, who was a watercolor artist, art flows in their veins.

Project HOME has a robust art program, and Julia became a part of it when she moved into the 1515 Fairmount Avenue residence in 2004.

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Roots and Branches: Reflections from Sister Mary

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Project HOME was beginning its work with individuals on the streets, one of the biggest challenges was the harsh reality of addiction. Substance use disorders have long affected persons throughout our society, but always with an especially destructive impact on poor communities. The advent of crack cocaine in the 1990s brought a new wave of devastation, wreaking havoc in economically vulnerable neighborhoods and accelerating the number of people falling into homelessness.

For the past three years, Project HOME has been doing innovative work in Kensington to address the needs of unsheltered people, developing new strategies and programs focused on the needs of those seeking to break the vice grip of opioid addiction – including specialized housing and supports (read more about this on page 1).

Every wave of addiction brings its own challenges – the most effective treatments, best strategies for outreach, necessary public education. But one thread is consistent: addiction never was and never will be a matter of moral failure. It is a medical crisis requiring treatment and recovery. And more often than not, addictions have a social context. In the case of the current crisis, pharmaceutical companies have been brought to trial for knowingly promoting opioid abuse.

“Working together, all of us can once again demonstrate the transformative power of recovery for both persons and communities.”

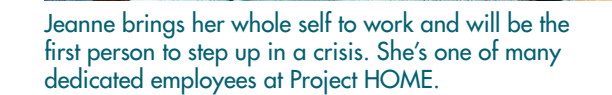
But in many ways, an even greater challenge were the prevailing societal attitudes. Long-standing myths of addiction as moral failure persisted in the face of growing medical knowledge. And the crack epidemic fueled the public's association of drugs with young black men, intensifying the toxic brew of racism and poverty. (Blatant judicial inequalities were rampant: convicted white users of powder cocaine received relatively minor sentences compared to long prison sentences for predominantly black users of crack.)

S. Mary Scullion

I Am Project HOME: Jeanne Ciocca

“Jeanne truly understands the needs of our most vulnerable residents.” - Christina Fidanza, Project HOME Residential Director

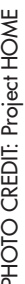
Meeting People Where They Are



Growing up in a military family, Jeanne loves to have things organized. When she first started working as a residential director, she inherited some sites from her colleague Carolyn Crouch-Robinson. Carolyn wouldn't have trusted just anyone with her buildings and residents. "I looked after Kairos House for ten years and it wasn't until Jeanne came along that I was ready to hand it over," said Carolyn.

(continued from page 1)

"So many of the people we meet in Kensington have been failed by the medical system."



Michael says. "My left leg is a lot better, but my right leg isn't feeling so good." Kara negotiated with Michael to come in and get checked out the following week. "So many of the people we meet in Kensington have been failed by the medical system," said Kara. "They feel like no one listens and so they avoid getting medical treatment even when they really need to."

someone's trust, and, to the best of their ability, they won't let them down. "When most people first meet me, they don't like me, but I'm really good at wearing someone down," Kara laughs. She's also really good at showing up by physically meeting people where they are on the streets of Kensington. Now this new, larger medical team can reach even more people every day.

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HOME Happenings

◆ Candle Subscriptions Create Jobs at Project HOME ◆ Little Slice of Life from the Hub of Hope

“Recently, a member of the Living Room in the Hub of Hope came in with a model of a DNA kit. She invited other members of the Living Room to put it together with her. Everyone worked beautifully as a team, to each other, and it was such a positive and uplifting experience. Moments of joy like this happen every day in the Living Room.” - Sister Eileen, Former Living Room Coordinator at the Hub of Hope in Suburban Station.



◆ Remembering: Margaret 'Peg' Healy, 1934 - 2021

"Peg had a distinguished career in academics and higher education," said Pat McPherson, the former president of Bryn Mawr College and a friend of Peg's for more than 60 years. "It was her work in philanthropy, though, that brought her the most joy. I know that Project HOME topped that list. She cared deeply for people who needed support and solutions for something as deeply-rooted as homelessness. She saw this reflected in the leadership of Sister Mary, Joan and everyone she knew and loved at Project HOME."

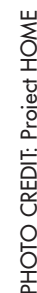
Project HOME honors Peg's leadership by continuing to build the Beloved Community with gratitude each and every day.

Creating Community Through Art

she received a literary grant to put a book of resident poems together. She even got copies printed for each resident.

After winning the Leeway Foundation grant three times, she was recently invited to apply a fourth time. “I didn’t think I was going to win it,” said Julia. But she did. This grant is extra special. Since the pandemic hit, Julia hasn’t been able to sell her art, which means she hasn’t been able to buy art supplies. So, this grant will allow Julia to get whatever she needs to

It would take more than a pandemic to keep Julia's spirits down. "It makes me feel good when I make art," said Julia. "My walking is not so good anymore, but I get around and there's plenty of people worse off than me, so I'm pretty grateful."



Julia's artwork is regularly used in Project HOME's social enterprise products like their recent mug collection.