## Spirit of Generosity: Author Elizabeth "Liz" Gilbert

uthor 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



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



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.

> To make a gift, please visit: bit.ly/NFH\_MD22 or scan the code



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1515 Fairmount Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19130

#### **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**

#### **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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- Graphic Designer: Emmanuel Sofolawe
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www.projecthome.org









"Unable are the loved to

"Remember Together. Change Together."

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Sews FROM HOME

## **Meeting People Where They Are**

n 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 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

suddenly asked him to stop. She spotted Michael "Michael, I've been looking for you, how've you been?" asked Kara. Michael was walking Center in North Philadelphia and get checked out. slowly while pushing a child's wheelchair with While Sam Santiago, our veteran outreach worker, his belongings in front of him. "I've been okay,"

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Art has been a part of Julia's entire life and it brings her so much joy to be

## 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.

(continued on page 4)



Donors, including Jon Bon Jovi (front left), politicians and supporters joined Sister Mary Scullion (front center) and Project HOME outreach staff member, Monique Taylor (front right) in breaking ground on our newest residence in Kensington

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 bond of beloved community. That is the core of true recovery – for all of us. 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.)

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PECH OPPORTURES INEDICAL IFFER AND A POLISHOS COPPORTURITES INEDICAL INFORMATION ADDRESS AND A POLISHOS COPPORTURITES INFORMATION AND A POLISHOS COPPORTURITES AND A POLISHOS COPPOR

Today's opioid epidemic is yet another vicious wave of addiction. The scenes of desperation and suffering we see in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia are heart-rending, and urgently call out for a response. Unlike the crack crisis of the 1990s, opioid addiction is an equal opportunity impact on poor communities. The advent of crack cocaine in the 1990s epidemic, impacting persons from all walks of life, no matter their color or

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 arip 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."

We are hopeful that, with your support, we can make a significant difference in the Kensington neighborhood. Working together, all of us can once again demonstrate the transformative power of recovery for both persons and communities. But the most important ingredient for success is, as it has been since our earliest days, that we affirm the dignity, the worth, the value, and the potential of each person. We cannot be limited to seeing addicts - we must see sisters, brothers, family, persons with whom we share the precious

-3,332

5,212

S. Mary Scullion

100%

100%

\$100k

OUTREACH

14,648

total outreach contacts

1

4,100

"Jeanne truly understands the needs of our most vulnerable residents and is consistent in her advocacy for both staff and residents," said Residential Director and colleague, Christina Fidanza. When you first meet Jeanne, you will be struck by her warmth, openness, and positivity. What you'll quickly learn is Jeanne's willingness to help, which is why Christina loves working with her. Jeanne has worked with Project HOME for about ten years in a few different roles. Her current

I Am Project HOME: Jeanne Ciocca

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

work involves overseeing four of our congregateliving residences: 1515 Fairmount Avenue, Kairos House, St. Columba, and Women of Change. The last two sites are safe havens, which are low-barrier, permanent living spaces and are sometimes a first

**Meeting People Where They Are** 



Jeanne brings her whole self to work and will be the first person to step up in a crisis. She's one of many dedicated employees at Project HOME.

step for someone who has experienced chronic street homelessness. What Jeanne loves most about working with Project HOME residents is sharing in new opportunities that someone might be seeing for the first time. "It's not always easy work," she says. "But it is very rewarding because you're watching something unfold."

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. Every day Jeanne rolls up her sleeves and gets to work no matter the challenges. Her compassion and deep connection to residents can be seen in the many ways she shows up for Project HOME time and time again.

Growing up in a military family, Jeanne loves to

(continued from page 1)

under a bridge," explains Kara, "but there's nothing cool about this type of medicine. Patients deserve privacy." This need was clear that day as Kara treated a man's wound while he sat on the sidewalk. Passersby gathered and stood over them offering advice. Kara quietly got on with her work, recognizing the need to be quick to preserve the man's dignity and privacy. For him, the pain was overwhelming, and he wanted relief more than anything.

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

With the new Long-Term Recovery Residence that Project HOME is building in Kensington, hopefully incidents like this one will be fewer and farther between (for more on this see Roots and Branches, page 2). The building will house outreach services, eight emergency beds, and a space to address urgent medical needs. It will also have 54 efficiency apartments so that when someone is ready for the next step of their recovery journey, they can move from the street or a temporary bed to a more permanent solution. As always, residents will be connected with Project HOME's education and employment services, but first, their medical needs will need to be taken care of. "Our Kensington community has experienced so much trauma," said Kara. "I see the right kind of medical treatment as a way to empower someone on their journey."

## Candle Subscriptions Create Jobs at Project HOME

Project HOME's Social Enterprise has just launched a new candle subscription as a way to replenish your favorite Project HOMEmade



candles, explore new scents, and create jobs for Project HOME residents. If you become a Candle of the Month subscriber you can continuously support the Project HOME community and mission, and always fill your home with a beautiful fragrance Subscribe at projecthomemade. org/collections/subscription-

### 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, were so complimentary 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

The Project HOME community celebrates the life, character, and legacy of founding trustee and former Board Chair, Margaret 'Peg' Healy who passed away on November 11, 2021.

Peg's impact on Project HOME over the years has been deep and lasting. Peg helped to shape Project HOME during our earliest days. She graced our small and fiercely committed Beloved Community with goodness, love, and integrity. She was on hand to celebrate our first units of permanent, supportive housing, and helped us reach additional milestones, too. Rowan Homes Diamond, the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs, and Kate's Place, were all completed during Peg's tenure as Board Chair (2002 - 2005).

"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**

(continued from page 1)



to fund her art projects and in together. She even got copies my great niece," said Julia. "I turn gave that money to the printed for each resident. community to empower others. After winning the Leeway When she received her Foundation grant three times, first grant from the Leeway she was recently invited to apply It would take more than a Foundation (a foundation a fourth time. "I didn't think I that supports women, trans was going to win it," said Julia. down. "It makes me feel good artists, and cultural producers But she did. This grant is extra when I make art," said Julia. working in communities at special. Since the pandemic hit, "My walking is not so good the intersection of art, culture, Julia hasn't been able to sell anymore, but I get around and and social change), she used it her art, which means she hasn't there's plenty of people worse to buy textiles for herself and been able to buy art supplies. off than me, so I'm pretty residents. They held a show and So, this grant will allow Julia grateful." sold every item. Then in 2007, to get whatever she needs to

But Julia didn't just join the art she received a literary grant to create. Her first thought? "I'm

program, she won several grants put a book of resident poems crocheting a baby blanket for

pandemic to keep Julia's spirits

hope she's having twins because

in 150 years, there's never been

Kara Cohen, Project HOME assistant medical director of street outreach, prepares her medical equipment to treat her patients where she finds them in Kensington.

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."

The beauty of this outreach team is that they will listen, they will show up, they will work to gain

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.

really cool thing, the idea of lancing an abscess

"A lot of people think that street medicine is this

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

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