

News FROM HOME

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

How Project HOME is Still Working After a Year of COVID

When COVID-19 first arrived at the doors of Project HOME last March, we had no clue in what way our lives or work would change, perhaps forever. Having lived with this highly infectious and devastating virus for a year, we certainly know a lot more about it now. We're still not quite sure yet about the path forward, but there are a few certainties we can rely on, like our staff, our residents, and your support.

"Staff have been meeting the needs of our friends and neighbors on our city's streets, and the need is great."

Residential community finding ways to connect

Even with COVID-19 restrictions, our residents have found ways to spend time together virtually in their buildings. Whether that meant playing bingo, painting pumpkins, or meeting once a week virtually for our organization-wide Inspirational

Tuesday meetings. It hasn't been easy (see page 2 Roots and Branches). Through it all, staff and residents have been leaning on each other to weather this storm together.

We also recognize that every single residence was hurt by this virus in one way or another. One community member lost to COVID-19 is one too many. Unfortunately, we lost many more than that (see our dedication on page 6). Now a year on, we're seeing a small light at the end of a very long tunnel. We've managed to start vaccinating our most vulnerable residents, helping to lessen the fear of this terrible disease.

"It hasn't been easy to keep everyone safe, and sadly, not everyone has made it through."



Photo by Jay Gorodetzer

A physically distanced welcoming session in our large community rooms is one of the ways we've learned to open our doors to new residents safely.

Hub and outreach continue to bring services and hope

Things may look a little different at the Hub of Hope, our drop-in service center in Suburban Station these days. For example, you'll have your temperature checked at a tent before you walk down a long corridor to the double doors into the Hub. You'll see staff wearing masks and face shields and yet, somehow, nothing has changed. Staff have managed to continue serving coffee, offering showers, laundry, case management, support, and much more, all with a smile behind the masks (see page 3 for more on staff at the Hub). They've also started giving out COVID-19 vaccinations and so far, have managed to vaccinate well over a hundred individuals. The dedication of our Hub staff is nothing short of amazing!

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www.projecthome.org



Photo by Project HOME

Marjorie (right) is being advised on how best to take care of herself after her first COVID-19 shot by Jefferson University medical student Breanna Valcarcel (left) at our Hub of Hope vaccination clinic.

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Roots and Branches: Reflections from Sister Mary

The COVID-19 pandemic still shapes our lives, but there are signs of hope and change in the air. The number of new cases is declining from its unthinkable high this winter, and the number of individuals vaccinated is increasing (thanks to the tremendous work of our healthcare staff and our partners at Jefferson Health). We are starting to envision a return to some kind of modified normal.

"In extraordinary times such as this pandemic, we are learning to envision new and creative ways to ensure the human connection that is vital to our wholeness as people and as a society."



Sister Mary Scullion
of Project HOME.

Though we know it's far from over, it's not too early to start gleaning lessons from this trying episode in our society and our world. As we think of the many ways COVID-19 has impacted our lives, one particular hardship during this past year is how it affected individuals in recovery. We have seen up close the severe mental strain of anxiety and isolation, which can be triggers for persons grappling with long-term addictions. We have struggled with obstacles

to maintaining nurturing relationships and supportive connections that are the lifeblood of the recovery journey. Residents and staff have been creative and innovative – including the use of technologies – to ensure that everyone continues to have access to services and programs but also to relationships and human connection in a time of necessary physical distance.

As we have navigated these challenges, we are more convinced of a core conviction that informs our work and mission: All of us are, in some way or another, in recovery – from addictions, childhood messages, societal racism, individualism, consumerism. Whatever our own recovery issues, we all need the support of family, friends, and others who share our struggles and yearnings. In extraordinary times such as this pandemic, we are learning to envision new and creative ways to ensure the human connection that is vital to our wholeness as people and as a society. We cannot lessen our commitment to the Beloved Community.

We look forward to a time (hopefully soon!) when we can freely embrace one another, and we can gather in celebration and mutual support. But perhaps this hard time offers us a gift: the chance, post-pandemic, to shed the hyper-individualism and the social divides that keep us from knowing how deeply we need each other. A chance to understand how profoundly true it is that **none of us are home until all of us are home** – and we will, together, hasten our steps on that beautiful journey.

S. Mary Scullion

Small Ways to Make a Big Difference: Run a Book Drive



(From left to right) Mila Acosta-Morales, Maddie Seipp, and Jordyn Fuges, students at Central Bucks High School West in Doylestown dropping off their books in front of Project HOME's resale store at 1523 Fairmount Avenue.

"We found Project HOME online, we really like what you stand for, and we're donating these books through the Project HOME Books initiative. We held a book drive at our school and were able to collect several hundred books from our community." - Mila Acosta-Morales

To learn how you can run your own book drive go to: projecthome.org/news/how-run-book-drive-project-home

Information That Matters to You

Receive news and issue updates that matter to you by subscribing to Project HOME's monthly eNewsletter and Advocacy alerts.

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or contact michaelgainer@projecthome.org

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twitter.com/projecthome

And don't miss the great stuff on the Project HOME Blog

projecthome.org/news

I Am Project HOME: Valerie Bell

Val has a place and a purpose in life. That place is the Hub of Hope where she works as a resource coordinator connecting guests with housing and services, and that purpose is to fight for others. “If someone gets on Val’s radar”, said Candice Player, Vice-President of Outreach, “she does everything she can to get that person to a safe space.”

In the 1980s, Val joined our co-founder, Sister Mary Scullion, to hand out sandwiches to anyone in need, and learned two important lessons. One was how to treat people as real human beings, and the second, to meet them where they are. “I just want to see [people] move forward,” said Val, “if all you can move is a mustard seed, I don’t care, at least if you’re moving something, you’re moving forward.”

Val has worked in outreach and at the original Hub of Hope. She also earned her bachelor’s degree in



Valerie Bell, resource coordinator at the Hub of Hope, carries out her work with tremendous humanity, she refuses to shuffle people around.

Photo by Eliza Mongeau

human services and rebuilt her life after a long period of incarceration. To say that Val is a fighter, is an understatement. Nothing stops her from working at Project HOME, not even an injury. When she hurt her knee, she kept showing up to work thanks to the help of the Hub’s security guard driving her in every day. That act makes it clear that Val isn’t afraid to ask for help either. She knows that the support of the team at the Hub is what allows everyone to do their work to help others. “I admire her and deeply appreciate what she has done at the Hub,” explains Candice.

Every guest who arrives at the door of the Hub of Hope has a different need and Val and the staff try to meet them all. But when asked if Val could give them one gift what it would be, the answer to her was so simple, give them back “their hope and self-esteem, some of them have lost hope.”

How Project HOME is Still Working After a Year of COVID

(continued from page 1)



Staff check in patients at the COVID-19 vaccine clinic at the Hub of Hope in Suburban Station. So far, they’ve administered over a hundred vaccines.

Meanwhile, the resiliency of our outreach staff, which has always been incredible and admirable, has strengthened. In the last year they haven’t just gone above and beyond, they’ve entirely outdone themselves. Staff have handed out thousands of masks, while meeting the needs of our friends and neighbors on our city’s streets, and the need is great. Housing is at an all-time low, employment opportunities are difficult, if not impossible, to find and support networks are already stretched thin.

Every connection made by our staff that results in someone saying yes to coming in, makes all the difference for their safety – helping to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and the dangerously low temperatures we’ve experienced this winter.

Medical staff continue to serve with kindness

In spring of last year, our medical staff were tasked with meeting the increased medical needs during

a pandemic. Fast forward to the summer and they had developed the processes and capacity to test staff, residents and neighbors in the 19121 and 19132 ZIP codes. To say they’ve been busy, is an understatement. Today, you’ll find them both testing and administering the COVID-19 vaccine to as many people as they can reach.

“We’ve met so many wonderful people who have stepped up in ways we couldn’t have even imagined.”

They have pivoted and adapted time and time again. It hasn’t been easy to keep everyone safe, and sadly, not everyone has made it through. The sense of loss they’ve experienced is great, as it is for everyone at Project HOME and yet, they put on their personal protective equipment and get up to fight another day.

Project HOME continues to triumph over COVID-19

It’s safe to say, just like you, we’ve changed a lot in a year. While COVID-19 has brought many, many challenges, it has also brought new opportunity. We’ve had time to reflect on what really matters, and to ensure that the most essential parts of our organization function well. We’ve met so many wonderful people who have stepped up in ways we couldn’t have even imagined (see Spirit of Generosity on page 5). Most importantly, we’ve been able to find community time and time again in this battle to end homelessness in our city thanks to the dedication of our staff, the commitment of our residents to persevere, and your unwavering support.

HOME Happenings

◆ Social Enterprise Brings Warmth and Flavor to Your Life



Our incredible Social Enterprise team continues to innovate around the types of gifts they create to share with you. Their latest adventure includes a buy one give one Project HOME beanie and a new candle scent called Love Unites Us. Both new products demonstrate a love of community, the importance of giving back, and bringing people together. For each hat you buy, one will be given to our outreach team to be distributed as they offer support and assistance to people who are unhoused in Philadelphia. And the new candle is sweet, smooth, and spiced and celebrates the spirit of Beloved Community. To check out all the latest happenings with our Social Enterprise team, go to bit.ly/SE_subscribe_pn

◆ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Update



More than two years into our community work to become an anti-racist organization, we have much to share with you. We have officially begun a search for a new Vice-President to lead our diversity, equity, and inclusion work and our DEI Steering Committee. In the interim, Jamaine Smith, our Senior Manager of Mission and Community Life continues to lead the implementation of our DEI Action Plan and advise and support our Senior Management Team in achieving our DEI goals. An inter-departmental staff committee has formed to support de-escalation training, explore new pathways in involuntary commitment, and pursue other ways that we can avoid police-involved conflict. We have added “lunch and learns” and other opportunities to discuss the successes and challenges around this work. Please take action in solidarity with our Asian American Pacific Islander

community bit.ly/aapistate and follow all of our advocacy actions at projecthome.org/action, or for regular updates on our DEI work you can sign up for our email newsletter by going to: bit.ly/emailsub_pnews

◆ Grocery LifeLine Extended

We are pleased to share that Grocery LifeLine is now a year-round program. Project HOME launched Grocery LifeLine as an immediate and direct response to the needs of vulnerable community members during COVID-19. While we're all waiting for vaccines to roll-out and improve the health of our entire community, we know issues of food access will remain. Because of lost wages and other difficulties, we've seen a 400% increase in requests at our Helen Brown Community Center food pantry, and we know similar needs exist across our 19 residences.

When you sign up to become a Grocery LifeLine, you will help keep our most vulnerable residents safe and healthy. It only takes four simple steps:

- Visit bit.ly/PH_supportgll21_pn and select a resident's profile. You will receive a confirmation email with all the details.
- Purchase (or order for delivery) items from the resident's personalized grocery list.
- If purchasing and delivering, please clearly label all bags with the resident's contact information provided in their profile.
- Deliver (or direct delivery of) the groceries to the Project HOME resident within 5-7 days of your sign up. When arriving, please ring the front bell to enter the lobby. You, or the delivery person, can then leave the groceries with a staff member who will deliver the groceries to the resident's apartment. Please note we ask that anyone arriving on site wear a face mask.

For more information contact: email: samanthablatt@projecthome.org or visit: http://bit.ly/PH_supportgll21_pn

We are grateful that we have been able to count on you to continue to help to provide nutritious food for adults and children in need.

A Project HOME
Advocacy Initiative



**TAKE
ACTION**

Register to vote, apply for and mail in your ballot, and contact your elected officials.

Visit projecthome.org/action to Make Your Voice Heard!

HONOR
MOTHERS
with a
GIFT OF
LOVE

To learn more about how to honor a mother visit:

http://bit.ly/PH_MD2021_pn



HOME
HOUSING COMMUNITY JUSTICE EDUCATION

Spirit of Generosity: The Spirit of Community

The ways in which our community innovates to raise awareness and resources for Project HOME never ceases to amaze us. We wanted to share a few examples to recognize these incredible people that we're lucky to have in our Beloved Community.

Photo Courtesy of Philabundance



Loree D. Jones (left), Chief Executive Officer of Philabundance and Sister Mary Scullion (right), Co-Founder and Executive Director at Project HOME picking up one of Ben Berman's delicious pizzas.

Kneads for the Cause

Wharton MBA student Ben Berman had some pizza dough, a love of cooking, a big heart, and a business mindset. It turns out that's all he needed to get Good Pizza PHL off the ground. Every week he makes twenty pizzas in his Center City apartment for folks who enter a lottery to win one of Ben's creations. He doesn't accept payment - he'd prefer if you donated to support Project HOME, Philabundance, Share Food Program, or all three.

So far Ben has raised over \$62,000 through making and giving away pizzas for Philly nonprofits. Others were also inspired by Ben's uplifting mission, including Ellen DeGeneres and Shutterfly who teamed up to add a further \$10,000, the Life is Good Company who chipped in a \$1,000, and \$5,000 from the 76ers' Tobias Harris and Matisse Thybulle. At Project HOME, we believe in the Power of We. Ben's idea resonated with so many and when they all came together, it elevated Ben's impact on our community. He found a way to help the city he loves and put a smile on people's faces during a really difficult time.

The Power of Words

Reverend Charles L. Howard, University Chaplain and Vice President for Social Equity and Community at the University of Pennsylvania, has a long history of giving to people and communities. Through his words, his time, and his writing, he shares his thoughtfulness and offers the recipient a greater sense of peace, something we all need a little bit more of these days. His relationship with Project HOME began early in his career

Photo Courtesy of Reverend Howard



Reverend Charles L. Howard, University Chaplain and Vice President for Social Equity and Community at the University of Pennsylvania is donating the proceeds of his book to Project HOME.

when he worked with our street outreach team. He brought some of that experience to his most recent book *The Bottom: A Theopoetic of the Streets*. Reverend Howard is not only giving the proceeds of this book back to Project HOME, but he is also amplifying the powerful stories of our brothers and sisters experiencing homelessness. We share our gratitude to Rev. Howard and an excerpt from the book:

"Wait.

An overlooked unmentioned part of life on the streets.

Wait in line at the soup kitchen

Wait in line to check in at the shelter

Wait for the rain to stop

Wait for the SSI check to come

Wait for my caseworker to wrap up her phone call

Wait to die

Wait to live."



Photo by Jacob and Alexandra Cohen

Jacob and Alexandra Cohen, owners of Kismet Bagels, have been giving to Project HOME since they began their new business venture: making bagels to pass the time during lockdown.

Spreading More than Good Schmear

Kismet Bagels was born, like so many things, out of the pandemic. In early April 2020, Jacob and Alexandra Cohen started making bagels as a way to pass the time, but it quickly turned into a way to give back to the community. They baked bagels for neighbors and collected money to donate to Project HOME. They donated the entire proceeds of their first pop-up to our Grocery Lifeline program (see page 4 for more on Grocery LifeLine) which was over \$1,200. Partnering with Project HOME again for the holidays, they raised over \$1,300 and collected boxes and boxes of canned goods for Project HOME's Helen Brown Community Center food pantry.

The partnership they've built with us has been such a significant part of Kismet Bagels' journey because that's the true reason why Alex and Jacob started their business, to help the community. The Cohens have committed to continually donating a portion of their sales to help local organizations and deliver over 3,000 delicious bagels to their community every weekend. We are so grateful to them for being partners with us in this journey to end and prevent homelessness.

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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For the digital and expanded version of this newsletter go to:

projecthome.org/newsletter

www.projecthome.org



Union
Bug



Graphic by Emmanuel Sofolawe

We recognize those we've lost since the beginning of the pandemic and how much we miss and love them.

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.