

A Publication of **HOME**

Winter 2025

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15TH CELEBRATION OF BRING PHILLY **HOME**

HOSTED BY THE RISING LEADERS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2025

FITLER CLUB

6:00 - 9:00 PM



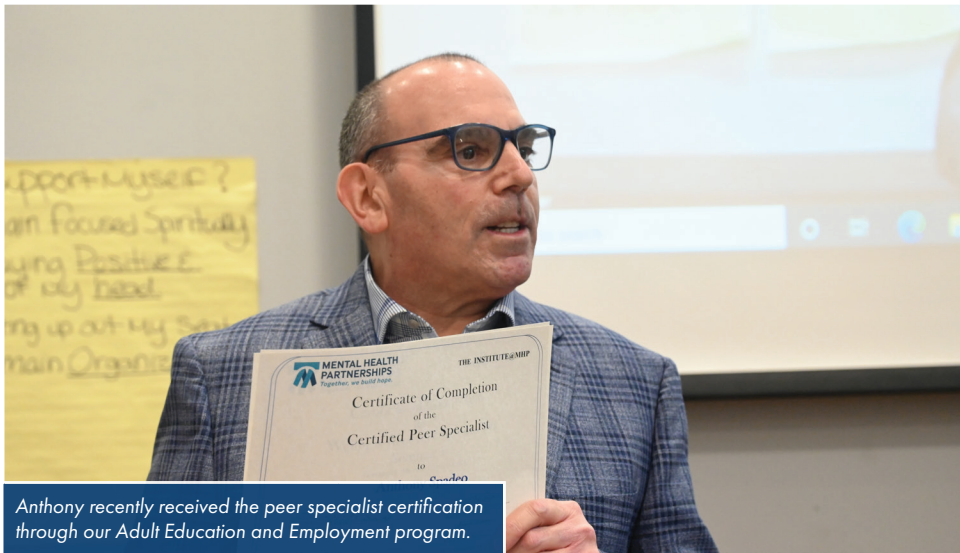
SAVE THE DATE

**SPARK
AWARD**
IT ONLY TAKES A SPARK


Honoring
**LEIGH
MIDDLETON**

With the
SPARK (Service, Partnership, and Radical Kindness) Award

Adult Education and Employment Courses



Anthony recently received the peer specialist certification through our Adult Education and Employment program.

The Honickman Learning Center Comcast Technology Labs (HLCCTL) has been offering a wide range of education and employment programs to the North Philadelphia community since 2004. In addition to the K-12 afterschool and college access programs offered to children, a variety of 20 courses is available to adults. The Adult Education and Employment Program encompasses everything from basic computer skills to certifications that can aid a person's journey in education and lasting careers. Success looks different for everyone, which is why we have a team of instructors who are dedicated to meeting each individual's needs.

"The program falls into three categories, workforce, creative arts, and digital literacy," says Greg Grutman, director of the program. Classes are free to anyone over the age of 18 years old with certain resources available exclusively to Project HOME residents. "We prioritize, for the purposes of enrollment, 19121 residents, 19132 residents, and Project HOME residents, but it's open to all people in Philadelphia including Project HOME staff," says Greg.

The workforce track has a variety of courses to help support an adult learner's path to a career. Greg adds, "We have multiple trainings and certifications including forklift, Certified Peer Specialist, customer service, ServSafe manager, ServeSafe food handler, and we're launching a CRS or certified recovery specialist training soon, which I've started recruiting for." Most of these courses offer certifications to give each participant credentials when pursuing a profession.

Throughout the year, HLCCTL also hosts public career skills workshops that are open to the entire community. Their staff welcomes feedback and adopts new methods to improve the curriculum for their adult learners. Every three years they administer a community survey to gauge what's most efficient, what needs work, and suggestions to improve their services. Similar surveys are given to participants quarterly. Greg explains, "For instance, our Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) class, we do three weeks of customer service, computer basics, workforce skills, and guest speaker material. That's in response to our experience with participants in the past.

2024
Accomplishments

632

Participants

211

Certifications

62

Reports of new employment

\$2.2M

In collective earnings



Scan the QR code to learn more about the classes offered.

Adult Education Courses

- Canva
- Career Skills
- Certified Peer Specialist
- Certified Recovery Specialist

- Computer Basics
- Customer Service: HDI-CSR Certification
- DJing
- Forklift Certification

- Goal Setting and Vision Boarding
- Microsoft Office and Google Docs
- Music Industry
- Music Production

- Photography
- Podcasting
- Public Speaking
- ServSafe Food Handler Certification

- ServSafe Manager Certification
- Website Building
- Art Program
- Career Skills

Learning Beyond Limits: Adults Share Stories of Growth and Success

"Wherever we are in our lives, not only are we taking these classes to help us individually, but individually our presence is helping each other," shares Poetica, one of The Honickman Learning Center Comcast Technology Lab's (HLCCTL) adult learners.

The Adult Education and Employment Program is more than meets the eye. Not only does it provide transformative courses to propel each learner professionally; it offers innovation and inspires adults to thrive in the digital world. Simple computer skills may seem second nature, but for others, it has expanded their reach toward opportunities they didn't know were possible.

"It made it really possible for me to get better and do greater things and get past some of the things I was dealing with." Born and raised in Philadelphia, Poetica has always been drawn to the arts. She's attended multiple schools for their art programs and is constantly chasing new ways to express her creativity. "Anywhere there's art, that's where you'll find me."

She frequently visits her mom, who lives in the same neighborhood as HLCCTL but didn't know it existed until recently. After making her way through

the front doors, Poetica grabbed some flyers about upcoming courses and decided to enroll. "The music production class was one of the first classes I took. Immersing myself in these classes was everything for me. Going in there and spending as much time with headphones on listening to beats that I made."

Fast forward nearly two years, and Poetica has taken eight courses at our facility. Now she's using her new skills in unique ways, including lending her voice to thousands of listeners in the Philadelphia area. "I started working with this radio station called 'Uptown.' I was already volunteering and supporting some of their shows, but then I kind of became a super producer. Now I do a show every day there. Working with HLCCTL and Joe Venuti [Digital Music Instructor], just being able to come there and put all of my concepts and ideas, it made me more self-sufficient." Poetica considers herself a lifelong learner and has no plans of ever stopping.

Andrea is another adult learner who only recently discovered the plethora of adult courses available at HLCCTL. "I was very, very pleased with the friendliness of the staff, as well as the resources that are

offered here. I could not believe the degree of resources that were offered here, and they're free." From basic computer skills to DJ-ing and forklift certifications, there's a little something for everyone. "There are things that can help you personally and/or professionally," adds Andrea.

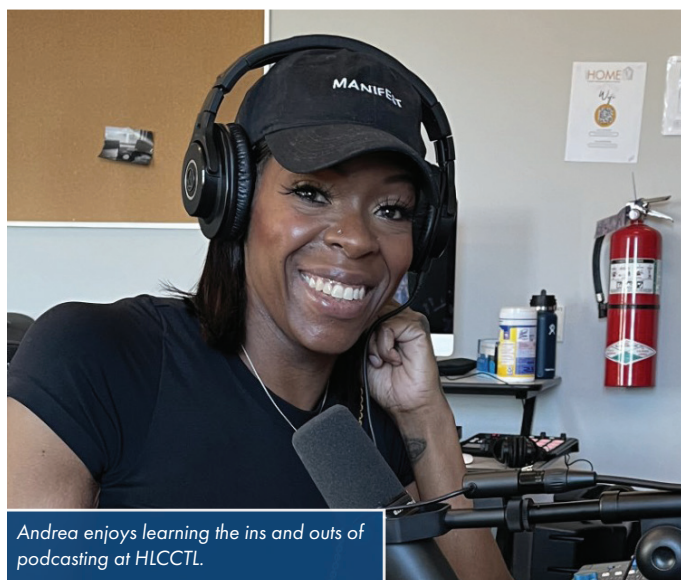
At first, Andrea, who lives in West Philadelphia, was a



Poetica loves the opportunity to learn new skills at HLCCTL.

little hesitant about enrolling. She had an interest in podcasting but struggled to understand where to start. After a colleague shared a flyer with more information about the podcasting course, she took a leap of faith and applied. "I literally registered for the classes and put it in my calendar. I told myself I'm going to make the sacrifice for the entire month of September to focus on this."

Andrea's glad she made the commitment because it gave her the guidance and confidence to create her own podcast. "It was absolutely amazing—the entire experience." She finished the course strong with her first episode recorded and a plan for executing more content on her own. "To leave and have my first session recorded and professionally done, it brought me to tears."



Andrea enjoys learning the ins and outs of podcasting at HLCCTL.



Scan the QR code to read the entire article.

ROOTS & BRANCHES

Reflections from Donna Bullock



I love learning. I am indebted to learning. My education has expanded my horizons, given me purpose, and helped me break the cycle of poverty. Now every new challenge humbles me and teaches me that there is still so much I don't know. Whether it is reading a policy paper to gain a deeper understanding of my work or joining friends to grasp the steps of a new line dance, learning is a never-ending adventure for me.

At age 87, Michelangelo offered these parting words: "I am still learning." His words are a reminder that no matter how accomplished, educated, or experienced we become, lifelong learning is an empowering tool for exploring and acquiring new skills, meeting and connecting with people, and immersing oneself in the beauty of new places and experiences. I couldn't agree more.

During quarantine, I adapted to remote work, used new platforms to create and edit videos, enjoyed bird-watching with my kids, and mastered family recipes.

Unable to commune in the ivy halls of universities, museums, galleries, libraries, theaters, and other formal institutions of learning, many of us sought out other mediums to fill our innate thirst for knowledge. We dusted off the books in our home libraries, subscribed to online magazines, watched webinars, and explored nature. We welcomed new hobbies to occupy our time. We embraced technologies to upskill or reskill for the modern workplace.

Many adult learners, though, didn't have the same access to the internet or computers, or the time to consume hours of online tutorials because they had to care for loved ones or were on-call as essential workers. For some, these barriers to learning existed before and continue long after the pandemic.

Everyone should have access to learning pathways, regardless of their resources or schedule. In a rapidly changing environment, digital literacy and a working knowledge of new

technologies are critical to remain relevant in the workforce, enhance personal growth, and adapt to an ever-evolving world.

A few months ago, I met a woman working as a certified peer specialist for a partner organization. She earned her certified peer specialist certificate at the Honickman Learning Center Comcast Technology Labs (HLCCTL). This skill led her to gainful employment. But she learned something else at HLCCTL—podcasting. She now has her own podcast. This brings her joy.

In this newsletter, you will read about Project HOME's adult education and employment program and how they empower our participants to break the cycles of poverty and homelessness.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the classes offered.

Bring Philly HOME on the Range

In a small cabin surrounded by wildflowers, the Grand Teton range, and the occasional neighboring horse, Stephen Link found himself experiencing what felt like “a magical moment.”

So, what does a cabin with no Wi-Fi and no neighbors—except for the horse, of course—in Idaho have to do with Project HOME?

In 2022, Stephen was a guest of Cornerstone Advisors Asset Management LLC at the 14th Celebration of Bring Philly HOME (BPH), Project HOME’s signature fundraising event hosted by the Rising Leaders Committee. New to the team at Cornerstone, Stephen was also new to the mission of Project HOME.

“I was blown away. What a bold, audacious approach to a growing issue across the country and especially in Philadelphia. I was so impressed by what Sister Mary and Joan had accomplished, and what the organization is still achieving.”

Bring Philly HOME brings together hundreds of enthusiastic young professionals, city leaders, community members, and committed advocates for

an evening filled with big ideas and inspiring stories, with one goal in mind: raising the critical resources needed to end and prevent chronic street homelessness in Philadelphia.

An important part of the evening is the silent auction, which is how Stephen ended up on a week-long stay in the cabin donated by Dave, Deb, and Iris Blatt.

“I couldn’t help, while in this beautiful environment, to feel blessed to have the resources that can help transform someone’s life,” reflects Stephen. “The impact that Project HOME has on an individual’s life is beyond comprehension until someone who has benefitted from the mission has the courage to stand up and share how their life trajectory has been transformed.”

On Wednesday, June 4, 2025, you can join individuals like Stephen, the Rising Leaders Committee, and the rest of the Project HOME community for the 15th Celebration of Bring Philly HOME, at the Fitler Club in Philadelphia.

When you attend Bring Philly HOME, you have the chance to bring Project



Auction winner Stephen Link (left) enjoys the Idaho sun with his partner Carl Dellatore (right).

HOME one step closer on our journey to end and prevent chronic street homelessness and, just maybe, leave the night with a journey of your own.

Just ask Stephen.

If you would like to learn more about donating to the Bring Philly HOME auction, or have general event questions, please contact Joy McKenzie, Project HOME’s Special Events Coordinator, at events@projecthome.org.



The Grand Teton range in Idaho.



Attendees enjoying the event at Bring Philly HOME in 2022.



Speakers welcome the audience at annual Bring Philly HOME event in 2022.



Meet Christina Fidanza, the newly appointed Senior Vice President of Supportive Housing Operations at Project HOME. She oversees the functions of 21 residential sites that serve over 1,000 residents, many of whom have histories of chronic street homelessness, mental illness, substance use disorder, and trauma.

Christina has been working at Project HOME for over 15 years, starting as a case manager and then becoming a program manager, a director, and finally an SVP. She loves her job because she gets to witness the transformation of people's lives every day. "I see people who come in with nothing, who have been on the streets for years, who have lost everything, and then they get a home, they get support, they get a community, and they start to rebuild their lives. They start to have hope, they start to have goals, they start to have dreams. And that's amazing to see."

Christina began at Project HOME as a Director of Residential Services. She was responsible for overseeing the sites that offered recovery-oriented housing and services to residents who were struggling with substance use and co-occurring disorders. Although it was challenging,

Christina found it rewarding because she handled complex issues such as relapse, overdose, medication-assisted treatment, harm reduction, and trauma-informed care. She learned a lot from the staff and the residents who were working hard to overcome their addiction and achieve their recovery goals. "I saw a lot of courage, a lot of resilience, a lot of hope. I saw people who were fighting for their lives, who were fighting for their families, who were fighting for their futures. I saw people who were supporting each other, who were holding each other accountable, who were celebrating each other's successes. I saw people who were changing their lives for the better."

A key responsibility in her role is to ensure that the staff at each site are well-trained, well-supported, and well-coordinated. Christina believes the staff are the backbone of the organization, and that they work hard to provide quality services and care for the residents. "We have a very diverse staff, with different backgrounds, different skills, different personalities, and they all bring something unique to the table. They are very passionate, very committed, very compassionate. They are the ones who

make the magic happen."

One of the innovations that Christina is proud of is the addition of two certified peer specialists to the staffing plan at Francis House of Peace, one of our newer residential sites at Project HOME. Certified peer specialists (CPS) are people who have lived experience of mental illness and/or substance use, and who have received training and certification to provide peer support to others who are in recovery. Christina explains how CPS staff have a very specific role that's unlike other support staff, and they can offer a unique perspective with residents. "They can relate to the residents in a way that others can't. They can share their own stories, their own struggles, their own successes. They can inspire the residents, they can motivate them, they can empower them."



Scan the QR code to read the entire article.

ANNUAL REPORT

FISCAL YEAR 2024
OVERVIEW



UNTIL
ALL
ARE
HOME



1,038

total units of
affordable,
supportive housing



We exceeded the creation of 1,000 units of affordable housing across Philadelphia with the opening of **Inn of Amazing Mercy** in Kensington, enhancing our **Epstein Street Medicine Program** by serving as a hub for their work.

341

new residents
welcomed
HOME

98%

of residents living in
permanent housing
remained stably housed
for one year or longer



“Sometimes I pinch myself when I wake up, because this feels too good to be true.”

Neph



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ABOUT OUR
FY24 IMPACT

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SPiRiT OF GENEROSITY

Bonnie Eisner's Hands-On Approach to Giving Back

"You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you."

This affirmation of altruism has been credited to everyone ranging from the 17th-century writer John Bunyan to the folklore hero Paul Bunyan and was later modified and adopted by legendary NCAA basketball coach John Wooden.

For longtime Project HOME volunteer and MPOWER partner Bonnie Eisner, however, the quote came to her by way of the late business leader and philanthropist, Lewis Katz.

"I was in a reading group led by my Rabbi," shares Eisner. "Through that group, Lewis introduced me to not only this quote, but a book on stoicism. This quote resonated with me because I grew up in a family that volunteered in a hands-on way as our means of giving back."

Eisner's mother, Roslyn, helped to start PARC Aide's women's group, an organization dedicated to raising funds and awareness for supportive services for children with disabilities. Bonnie would organize PARC fundraisers at the local roller rink, while her sister, Mona, started a teenage group for children with disabilities at the Jardel Recreation Center. Her father, Bobby, volunteered at a stable that provided horseback riding lessons for children with disabilities.

"I've always felt one receives far more satisfaction from volunteering than those receiving your efforts," shares Bonnie.

While Eisner had Katz to thank for the inspiring quote, her connection to Project HOME traces its way back to a running group and Charles Fishman and Project HOME's first-ever 5K, the HOME Run, in 2001.

"When I got to know Project HOME and Sister Mary, it was originally through

running," reflects Eisner. "What was clear from the start was that Sister Mary and Joan had created a sense of community where everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and kindness. It did not take me long to realize I wanted to do more."

Following the HOME Run and a few other long-distance runs with Sister Mary, Bonnie's outlet to "do more" with Project HOME came through the residential art program.

"Whether I was in the art room or running mosaic workshops at residences

"Yes, this was a great opportunity for Drexel and Project HOME to partner," says Bonnie. "But more than that, it was a chance for Project HOME's incredibly talented artists to showcase their talents to a larger audience."

Bonnie and Jay have been involved with "Artists for All Seasons" from the beginning, and since 2015 they have funded each event, leading to 20 Project HOME resident artists and community partners showing their artwork. Beyond the thrill of showing and selling artwork at "Artists for All Seasons," the showcase

at Drexel has also led to Project HOME artists receiving invitations to additional showcases at leading fine art events like the Rittenhouse Square Fine Art Show and opportunities to take classes at Studio Incamminati.

"The real gift is seeing each artist's self-confidence bloom when they see their artwork professionally shown," reflects Bonnie.

Bonnie's gift to the Project HOME community, however, is best summed up by her former running partner.

"Bonnie's brilliance," shares Project HOME co-founder Sister Mary Scullion, "is found in her

innate ability to forge authentic and lasting relationships across the Project HOME community. I have seen it in our residences, at the amazing Artists for All Seasons events, and living in the spirit of our work. Bonnie models what we mean when we talk about Project HOME's 'Beloved Community.'"



Bonnie and Jay Eisner at Artists For All Seasons event, fall 2023.

like Connelly House, it was always special for me to meet people as people and not their circumstances that may have led them to Project HOME," shares Bonnie.

It was from these recurring, hands-on volunteer opportunities that Bonnie came up with the idea for the "Artists for All Seasons" event. Thanks to a strong relationship forged with then-Drexel University president John A. Fry, Bonnie was able to secure an exclusive Project HOME resident art showcase at the URBN Center of Drexel University's Antoinette College of Media Arts and Design.



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to find ways
to help.