

The Streetlight

Shining a light on homelessness in and around Trenton, New Jersey

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HomeFront's ArtJam Pop-up Gallery 'Pops Off'

By Rebecca Heath

From Oct. 15 through Oct. 30, HomeFront, a program that provides resources to families experiencing or at risk of homelessness, hosted ArtJam at Palmer Square, Princeton.

The event, a pop-up art gallery featuring more than 75 national and local artists, raised money to support HomeFront's clients, according to ArtJamNJ.org. ArtJam director Ruthann Traylor described the impact of the community coming together to organize the event.

"This event is a labor of love by many supporters; our volunteers, artists who contribute their works, and local businesses. We deeply appreciate that the community comes together to produce and support this artistic, fundraising event," Taylor said in a press release. "We have learned to navigate uncertain times, and we have proven over and over the arts can lift spirits, empower our artists and enhance their self-esteem."

The proceeds from ArtJam directly benefit ArtSpace, a therapeutic art program for clients experiencing homelessness.

According to Traylor, ArtSpace aims to provide a "safe haven" for HomeFront's clients to heal from trauma while connecting with others from diverse backgrounds through art.



"We love to take the artwork out into the community to cafes and businesses and celebrate the artist as an artist, not as a 'homeless person,'" Traylor said. "We have people of all walks of life and it's all about the art and nothing else; art is a great tool to break down barriers."

ArtJam artist Cerrasya King discovered her passion for painting and began her artistic journey in HomeFront ArtSpace.

"I was in the work search program and on certain days they would let us get out of work and come up to ArtSpace. So I started knitting and [Traylor] was like 'do you want to paint?' and I was like 'no' because I saw all the art on the walls and I thought they were professional," King said. "But slowly she kept talking me into creating art... I started slowly getting into art and she started putting our art in shows."

For King, the inspiration behind her work often stems from her own feelings and experiences.

"If I'm going through something, I might have a painting that's a little sad. I didn't realize I could bring that stuff to the canvas," King said. "[Art] is a way of unleashing a lot of stuff that you're feeling."

Alongside classic paintings and sculptures, participants of HomeFront's SewingSpace sold hand sewn creations at ArtJam. Traylor said SewingSpace serves as an opportunity for clients to gain entrepreneurial skills through marketing their products and selling their work at a variety of tabling events and street fairs.

Amid the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, Traylor said she faced challenges operating ArtSpace while prioritizing the

safety of the artists.

"We ran at a fraction. There were six of us in a big space working with masks on," she said. "We did some virtual online classes for the folks who had children. It was hard... we had to pivot a little bit like everyone else and figure it out."

In order to protect the clients of SewingSpace, particularly those with children, participants were hand-delivered sewing kits to their doorsteps.

With the addition of a Saturday sewing class open to the community, Traylor hopes to accomplish her goal of bringing more of the community together this year at ArtSpace.

"We'd like to reach more people in the community that may not have the tools and supplies to create and invite them to create," Traylor said. "That's bringing different walks of life together...everybody feeds off one another."

According to Traylor, ArtJam's success year after year is driven by the support of the community and passion for celebrating the arts.

"There's a lot of empty stores. There's a community that wants to chip in," she said. "It doesn't cost us much and we bring this joy to the community... it's like a big celebration."

HomeFront Family Campus Launches Doula Program

By Rebecca Heath

When a woman gives birth alongside the support of a doula, she is more likely to experience a less painful and more positive childbirth, studies show.

Aiming to support mothers who are experiencing homelessness during their pregnancy, delivery and postpartum journeys, HomeFront recently launched a doula program at their family campus.

“We have a lot of single moms here who are experiencing homelessness and they do not have support or a partner, so they needed more support than what we could offer,” said Senior Family Advocate Liza Peck. “Getting doulas here seemed like a logical choice.”

The program pairs mothers with doulas in collaboration with TruDoulas of New Jersey. While the doulas’s main purpose is to serve as a mentor and educate new or expecting mothers on the health and wellness of their baby, Peck said they provide support that extends beyond pregnancy.

“We’ve had clients who have been in the hospital, not even in labor but...for various reasons, and doulas make sure to go check on

them and advocate,” Peck said. “The amount of care has been really a great surprise.”

In addition to receiving guidance and emotional support, expecting mothers can obtain essential items like diapers and formula from TruDoula’s ‘Stork’s Closet’ to help ease the financial burden of caring for an infant.

“It’s very important for the health of both moms and new babies that women who are going through the stress of homelessness have that extra layer of support.” Peck said.

Aside from the doula program, HomeFront’s family campus offers weekly classes on parenting and pregnancy, focusing on topics such as gestational development, morning sickness, breastfeeding and baby hygiene.

The family campus also connects mothers with healthcare or addiction programs, when needed, and provides clients with access to a team of knowledgeable staff members offering support and advice, according to Peck.

If you are experiencing homelessness and would like to obtain a doula through HomeFront, contact homefront@homefrontnj.org.



Mellow Morning
By Derrick “D9” Branch/HomeFront
ArtSpace

Pandemic-Induced Supply Chain Issues Hit Food Deserts Harder

By Zion Lee

Alongside the Coronavirus Pandemic, global supply chain issues are changing life as we know it. In fact, the international president for shipping company UPS, Scott Price, even warned back in September that consumers should buy Christmas gifts earlier than previous years due to supply chain issues, according to finance.yahoo. So what is a supply chain and why are issues with it affecting our day-to-day lives here in America?

A supply chain is a network between suppliers and distributors that work to get a final product to consumers. Due to the pandemic, the supply chain has directly impacted the food industry as imports into the country have been backed up. As a result, products such as wine usually shipped into certain cities has been either delayed or canceled, according to the Washington Post.

Undoubtedly, this issue has also disproportionately affected areas that

are food deserts: “areas that lack access to affordable and healthy food products”.

When it comes to food insecurity, supply chain issues for fresh produce, packaged food products, and other perishable goods can impact areas where stable sources of fresh food are already scarce. In fact, the shortages even that impact items that we often see food in the stores packaged in, such as items with styrofoam packaging, according to Bloomberg.com.

As the pandemic continues, supply chain issues highlight the need for a solution to food deserts and other areas that are now, more than ever, lacking proper access to fresh foods.

Send story ideas to
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Flaming Dove
by Derrick “D9” Branch/HomeFront ArtSpace

Rescue Mission of Trenton Opens Food Pantry, Aims to Increase Access

By Hannah Keyes

The Rescue Mission of Trenton has been a staple within the Trenton community since 1915 and it now has a brand new food pantry that will further help serve those in the area who need access to food.

According to the Rescue Mission of Trenton website, there was never a need for a food pantry, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for food in the city of Trenton increased dramatically and thus the need for a food pantry became apparent. The World Bank official website states, "COVID-19 impacts have led to severe and widespread increases in global food insecurity, affecting vulnerable households in almost every country, with impacts expected to continue through 2021, into 2022, and possibly beyond as the Delta variant continues its spread." With the rising rate of food insecurity, individuals' health will decline as well. Thus, with organizations like the Rescue Mission, there are opportunities to lower hunger because of the new food pantry.

"This new food pantry is something that became a necessity. Ever since the pandemic so many families were left without work and were unable to provide food for their families," said food pantry coordinator, Arly Uz-Barragan. "This pantry is a way to help those in need. We can provide canned foods, milk, fresh eggs, etc. Anyone that is in need is able to come."

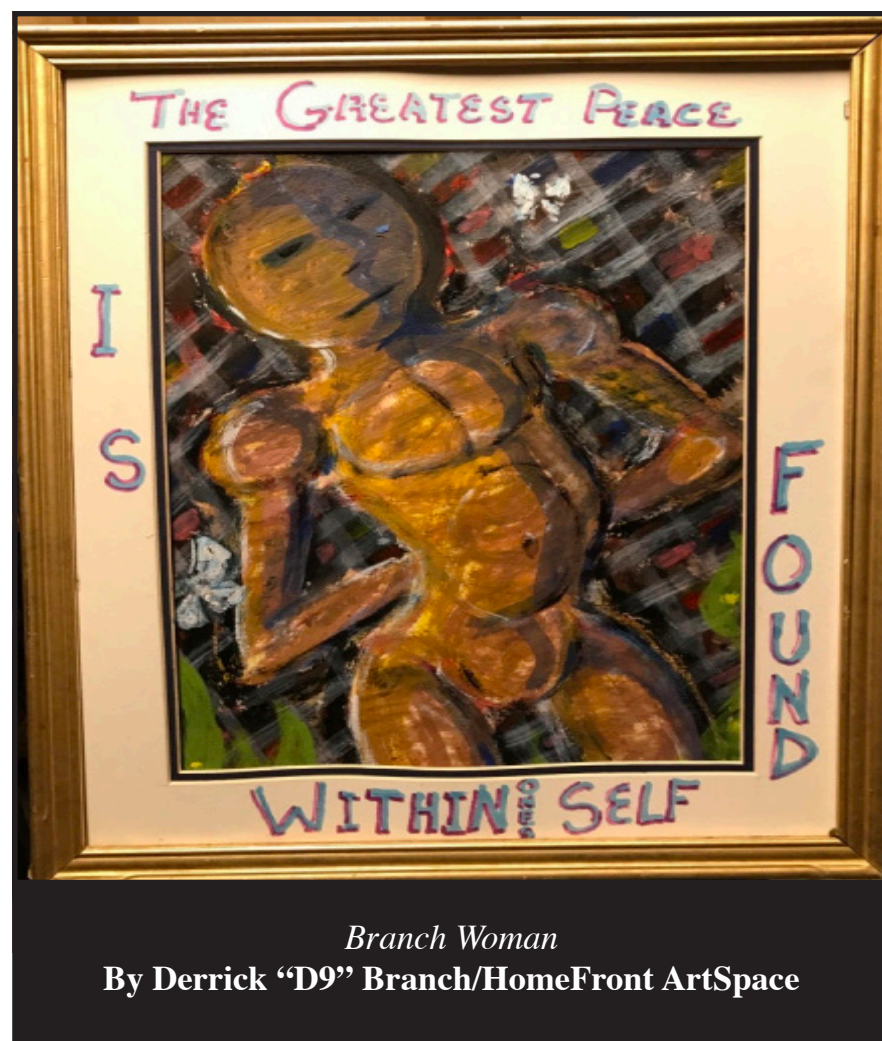
Food is being donated by organizations in the area such as the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (TASK) and the Food Bank at Mercer Street Friends Center, as well as local restaurants, including Pat's Original Diner, Blooming

Grove Inn and Leonardo's II. The food includes prepared frozen meals that need to be reheated, along with chicken, ground beef, fish, canned goods and fresh fruit and vegetables. In addition, Amazon and FEDEX have been donating non-perishable foods.

Uz-Barragan explained his genuine gratitude to those who have been donating food and volunteering to help organize and restock the pantry. Being able to offer resources and support to members of the surrounding community has been meaningful to those working and volunteering at the pantry. "I'm most proud of myself for being able to help these families who have come from other countries with nothing, it is something that brings me warmth to see them leave with a good number of items. We are here to serve and support our community and those in need of a hand," Uz-Barragan mentioned.

The Rescue Mission's food pantry opened its doors on Friday, Sept. 17. It is located inside the Mission's thrift store at 100 Carroll Street in Trenton. It is open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Everyone is welcome, including children, although it is required for one to wear a mask and to complete an intake form that asks for basic information.

If one is interested in volunteering at the New Food Pantry they can go to <https://rescuemissionoftrenton.org> and scroll down the page and click on the "volunteer" button. There will be a form to fill out and one can also send an email to either arlyu@rmtrenton.org or nikisg@rmtrenton.org.



Branch Woman

By Derrick "D9" Branch/HomeFront ArtSpace

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