

MESSAGE FROM CEO, BERNIE FLYNN

Summer months are the ones that fly by quickly! As we enter the Fall, we're delighted to share with you a variety of stories that focus on the work of Mercer Street Friends: food, family, and education. You'll read about the Summer Bridge program, an extension of the Community School initiative that provides ongoing academic, emotional, and social support to students in Trenton. We're pleased to introduce you to Mike Rodriguez who helps our students in Rivera Community Elementary School. We also recognize the passing of our friend, Louis LeFevre, a dedicated former member of the Mercer Street Friends Board of Trustees and a supporter of the mission for decades.



As a community, we have overcome many challenges over the past two and a half years. We are entering a new phase where we still have hurdles to jump, like the increasing cost of goods, and supply chain issues. At Mercer Street Friends, we adapt and remain ready to serve the community. Our mission to nourish minds and bodies and empower families and communities drives us to meet the needs of our neighbors throughout Trenton and Mercer County.

We continue to address food insecurity through Mercer Street Friends Food Bank; distributing generously donated and purchased food to about 100 pantry partners with the help of over 200 volunteers. We are enhancing our services to better serve our families looking for avenues to learn about healthy parenting and social emotional wellness. Access to education is a key pillar of a child's development so we work with numerous partners throughout Trenton to be sure children are provided the resources they need in their most formative years. Expanding to our third Community School – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School – allows us to remove non-academic barriers to education for more students in the Trenton Public School District.

I encourage you to read on in this edition of Friends Talk to learn more about the great work of Mercer Street Friends, its staff, and volunteers. We are so grateful for those who have made philanthropic contributions to support our mission. Thank you for believing in what we do.

I am proud of the Mercer Street Friends team and privileged to be working along side them in meeting our mission and doing what is right for the community.

Thank you,

Bernie Flynn

REMEMBERING LOUIS LEFEVRE

In June, Mercer Street Friends lost a dear friend.

Louis LeFevre was a leader with a kind and caring heart. Serving on the Board of Trustees from 1992 to 2001 and completing a second term of service from 2002 to 2011, Louis' guiding presence and love for Mercer Street Friends supported the Board and organization through many successes, challenges and changes. He chaired the Audit and Business Operations Committee, was Board Treasurer and also served on the Quality and Planning Committee. As one of the first members of Stewards of the Mission, Mercer Street Friends' Legacy Giving program, he laid the groundwork for others to join him in leaving a personal, philanthropic legacy, ensuring Mercer Street Friends' future was strong and secure.

Louis had a deep understanding of Quaker business principles and much knowledge of Trenton, its residents, and their needs which made him a staunch advocate for positive change and social justice. For years, Louis acted as the Board liaison to Trenton Monthly Meeting and brought robust Quaker testimony to his Board service.

We celebrate his life, passion, and accomplishments and are grateful to his dedication to Mercer Street Friends that extends well beyond his 18 years of extraordinary Board service.

SEPTEMBER IS HUNGER ACTION MONTH



The work of Mercer Street Friends Food Bank never stops. We met the need when the conditions of the pandemic caused increases in demand for several of our food pantry partners. Now, our neighbors are facing the challenges of inflated prices in essentials like groceries and fuel, increasing rents, and an end to federal COVID-19 relief. Although the Food Bank has felt the same pressure as wholesale food costs dramatically increased, we have 100,000 Mercer County residents to help feed. Families, children, and seniors rely on Mercer Street Friends Food Bank and our network of partners as a source for nutritious food.

Direct support is provided by the Food Bank through Send Hunger Packing (SHUP), a weekend meal bag program for students who are eligible for free and reduced school meals, and the Community Food Bag (CFB) program that was adapted from SHUP in March 2020 when schools closed during the pandemic, therefore SHUP bags could not be distributed, and more families were seeking food assistance. The Food Bank quickly pivoted to address their needs. Community Food Bags provide 16 meals to families to help fill the meal gap. Since January of this year, the Food Bank has distributed 49,000 Community Food Bags. Over the summer we continued to serve school-aged children with SHUP bags and with school in session we are planning to distribute 5,000 SHUP bags a month to more than 30 sites.

The work we do is critical, distributing millions of pounds of food to our partners throughout the County, but we can't do it alone. Volunteers are integral members of our team.

We are deeply appreciative to our dedicated and committed volunteers who come to the Food Bank to sort, box, and label donated food and pack Community Food Bags and Send Hunger Packing bags.

Another key figure in our operations is Pamela Sims Jones, Program Associate for Mercer Street Friends Food Bank. Pam has been with the Food Bank for 6 years and currently manages our pantry partner relations and government food programs: The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) which provides the Food Bank with commodities from USDA; the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP); and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), which supplements low-income seniors' diets with a monthly package of balanced, nutritious foods. In addition, Pam purchases items for the CFB and SHUP programs. She has seen firsthand how "prices have been steadily climbing and people are struggling with how to balance buying food, gas, paying rents and mortgages all while being underemployed, unemployed or transitioning from one job to another."

Pam continues to observe that "our pantry partners are still seeing increased serving numbers, doubling even tripling over the past 2 and a half years and we aren't the only ones. Food banks across the country are keeping up with demand to ensure that those who need it receive food."



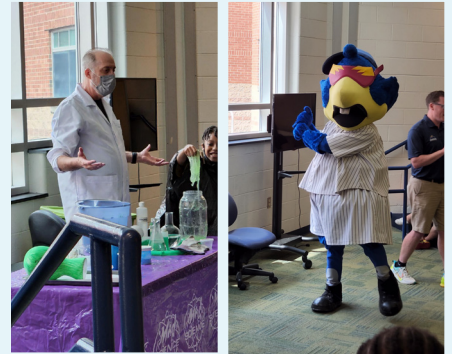
Join Pam and Mercer Street Friends Food Bank in the fight against hunger this month as we recognize September as Hunger Action Month.

SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

This summer, Mercer Street Friends welcomed nearly 150 elementary and middle school students from Mercer Street Friends' three Community Schools – Luis Munoz Rivera Community Elementary School, Gregory Elementary School, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School to our Summer Bridge Program. This initiative was established to limit summer learning loss; without active instruction, students can lose up to two months of progress and may enter the next academic year behind. The curriculum engaged students in the morning with reading, writing,

and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math). After lunch, students attended interactive classes on social justice and emotional wellness combined with athletic experiences like yoga and Zumba.

Throughout the program students also had the chance to attend fun field trips. Elementary students went to Franklin Institute, Camden Aquarium, a Trenton Thunder game, Shady Brook Farms, and Funplex. The middle school students went rock climbing, to Big Kahuna Waterpark, Princeton Blainstown Center, and laser tag.



ADULT EDUCATION

GRADUATION *Ceremony*



On July 8, 2022 Mercer Street Friends Adult Education Program celebrated seven graduates. We are thrilled that they chose us to be a partner on their education journeys. The program pairs students with an instructor or tutor following New Jersey Common Core Standards and College Career Readiness Standards. Completing the requirements to earn their diplomas during a pandemic is an achievement within itself, but some students persevered through job changes and managing households, as well. The success of the graduates doesn't stop with them; it is a ripple effect that touches their families, their communities, current students of the program, and future students who may be questioning their own paths.

Filled with enthusiasm for their own success, students often recruit family and friends to enroll in the program, joining them on their educational journey. With great excitement, Gertrude brought her aunt in to enroll the day before the graduation ceremony. Another student, Aaron helped his cousin enroll a few months before. LaBella worked as a full-time Critical Care Technician while completing the requirements for the program, suggesting that her niece, Nikishau join her in class. And she did!

LaBella and Nikishau knew that careers in health care were in their futures, but in order to move ahead diplomas were required. LaBella is continuing her educational journey working towards her Bachelors of Science in Health Administration. She has her sights set on becoming part of a management team in the health care field. Nikishau enrolled in the program in the beginning of 2021, earning her diploma in November of last year and celebrating at this year's graduation ceremony. She immediately enrolled in Fortis Institute and is on track to become a certified medical assistant this November. Nikishau is now considering Mercer County Community College as her next step.

We congratulate the graduates, we celebrate their incredible achievements, and we cheer them on as they pursue additional degrees and careers!



To learn more about the Adult Education Program,
please contact: Michelle Obermeier at
mobermeier@mercerstreefriends.org
or 609-278-6904

HOW CAN I *contribute?*



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GIFT OPTIONS *Cash gifts, made online or by mail or by wire transfer, offer you a charitable tax deduction.*



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Attn: Development

- **MATCHING GIFTS** – Have your gift matched by your employer!
- **DONOR ADVISED FUND** – If you have established a DAF, consider recommending a grant to MSF.
- **STOCKS, MUTUAL FUNDS AND OTHER SECURITIES** – By making this type of gift, you can avoid paying capital gains tax that would otherwise be due if you sold these assets. See www.mercerstreetfriends.org donation page for transfer information.
- **PLANNED GIVING** – There are many ways to leave a personal legacy to Mercer Street Friends. As a member of our Legacy Society – Stewards of the Mission – your gifts will have a lasting impact on the Trenton and Mercer County community. Please speak with your financial or legal advisor to learn about ways to include Mercer Street Friends in your estate plans. Gifts may include:
 1. Including Mercer Street Friends in your Will
 2. Naming Mercer Street Friends as a beneficiary of your retirement plans and life insurance policies
 3. Establishing a Charitable Gift Annuity or Trust to receive income for life and additional tax benefits

OTHER OPTIONS

To discuss coordinating a crowd funding initiative to benefit MSF, please contact Courtney Matlock: 609-656-5202.

To volunteer at MSF Food Bank, please contact Sherries Anderson: 609-278-5546.

Food donations can be received at 824 Silvia Street, Ewing Township, NJ 08628.

For more information concerning giving, contact Courtney Matlock, Chief Development and Marketing Officer 609-656-5202.

MEET MIKE RODRIGUEZ –

Site Coordinator for Luiz Muñoz Rivera
Community Elementary School!



Mike Rodriguez started with Mercer Street Friends in November 2021 as a Community School Site Coordinator. He works with the Luis Muñoz Rivera Community Elementary School and its administration to help determine health and social emotional needs that families in the Trenton community may have that prevent students from learning in their classrooms. Once the needs are identified, Mike connects available resources to the student and their family to reduce barriers that challenge them. The Community School Initiative is designed as a collaboration of community partners and school administrations to ensure students receive support needed to flourish and thrive in school. As such, Mike also works closely with families on prioritizing consistent attendance, encouraging parent engagement in the student's school life, and developing strategies for student safety.

In his work over the summer, Mike saw some students and families experiencing apprehension about redistricting, leading students to attend new schools with brand new classmates and teachers. He checked in with students via phone, email, and text to see how they were coping with the change, hoping to ease some of their anxiety. It was also important to see if parents were ready for challenges caused by the school changes. Mike often repeats the mantra "we're in this together" so that families know they have a solid partner in advocating for their needs and seeing to it that students have social, emotional, and academic tools to succeed in school.

When reflecting on this past year, Mike shared that his favorite thing about working with students is "the moment you see the smile when a student recognizes that you are a person that can help them. When you acknowledge their individual feelings, you can see the progress, see the change."

He remembers when he was asked to provide individual support for a student who was exhibiting difficulties managing her behavior on the school bus. At the initial meeting, the student lacked accountability for her actions and was not engaged in meeting or speaking with her case manager. As time progressed they identified puzzles and educational supplements to occupy her time on the bus. With the help of Mike and her case manager, there have been no further issues on the bus and she was selected as student of the month. Her grandmother has noted the improvement in behavior and that she feels better about herself.

Mike is excited to bring new ideas and perspectives to his Community School work. There is not a blanket solution to address barriers that affect a student's ability to learn, so Mike is ready to meet individuals' talents, temperaments, and convictions with kindness and understanding to build a culture of success at Rivera Community Elementary School.

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YEAR-ROUND PRESCHOOL FUN!

There's never a dull moment at Mercer Street Friends Preschool. A creative summer program curriculum combined with a full in-person school year means classrooms have been filled with bubbly personalities of children between the ages of 3 and 5 years old for the past 12 months.

The six-week summer program hosted at our Preschool in Trenton welcomed 45 students in July through August. Underwritten by the NJ American Rescue Stabilization Grant and Newtown Friends Meeting, each week had an activities-based theme including camping, sharks, and insects. The Preschool took a trip to the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank touring the facility and learning about their weekend meal bags. The summer program concluded on an exciting note with ice cream week as the Ice Cream Emergency truck visited with cones and popsicles for all!

Being back in the classroom for a full year has brought joy to students and educators, alike. Virtual learning posed challenges for engagement, but in the classroom, teachers are thrilled to teach in an in-person environment, better allowing students to retain what they're learning. In-person instruction also allows more time to develop relationships with the families.

Byron Phillips, affectionately known as Mr. B, has been with the Preschool for 21 years. A Trenton native, he loves interacting with the children, seeing their different personalities, and watching them progress academically and socially. Mr. B thinks giving back to his community is important because he

experienced firsthand others making a positive impact on his life when he was growing up. He enjoys engaging with the children in a way that makes lasting connections. He remembers a father of one of his former students thanking him for establishing his daughter's love of learning which enabled her to pursue a pre-med college program. Mr. B "believes in everything that Mercer Street Friends does as an organization and it means a lot that he gets to work at a place where he is appreciated."

Kandace Banks has been a Mercer Street Friends Preschool teacher's assistant for the past 7 years. From collaborating on lesson plans to setting up the environment to be warm, safe and welcoming Kandace helps the head teacher in any way she can. She is dedicated to the children in her classroom and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Kandace's favorite aspect of working with the Preschool is being a part of children's progression – watching their cognitive development, writing their names, some even speaking Spanish by the end of the year and helping children with their emotional regulation. She had a blast meeting new faces working with the summer program and is looking forward to learning from her paired head teacher and teaching literacy to the incoming children.

With 100% enrollment in September, 90 children and their families will experience a high-quality education, preparing students for kindergarten and beyond.



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Celebrating OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY LEADERS



On Tuesday, June 14, 2022 Mercer Street Friends welcomed nearly 200 guests to the Food Bank to honor individuals who have dedicated their professional and personal lives to leadership and service in their communities. The 2022 Leadership Awards Celebration recognized Kevin Cummings, former Chairman & CEO of Investors Bank, as the Corporate Leadership and Public Service Award honoree. The Corella & Bertram F. Bonner Foundation was honored with the Philanthropic Leadership Award. Drew Paglia and Heather

Paglia of 5Help Foundation were the Generational Leadership Award honorees, and Barbara and David Fraser had the Robert M. Appelbaum Service Award bestowed upon them.

That evening, CEO Bernie Flynn, shared remarks about the tremendously positive impact each honoree has on the communities they have served.

When receiving his award, Kevin Cummings mentioned that the chemistry of the evening was fantastic! Attendees enjoyed food and beverages from 1911 Smokehouse BBQ and Daphne's Catering and were offered an opportunity to tour the Food Bank and learn more about Mercer Street Friends programs which focus on food, family, and education.

The evening's event was underwritten by generous sponsors including: Investor's Foundation, NJM Insurance Group, Capital Health and Kevin and Patricia Cummings. Thanks to their support and those who purchased tickets and sent in donations, Mercer Street Friends reached its fundraising goal!

We look forward to another terrific event next year!