

MESSAGE FROM CEO BERNIE FLYNN



“With the increased cost of food and the scarcity of certain items, we’ve had our work cut out for us.”

Summer should get a speeding ticket!

While the end of summer is bittersweet, we are extremely proud of the progress our students made during Summer Bridge 2023 facilitated by a team of exceptional educators and counselors. In continuing to fulfill our commitment to providing year-round support for students and their families in our Community Schools, you’ll read about the ways this program fills the summer gap to ensure back-to-school readiness.



Speaking of Community Schools, we’re excited for you to read about the Spring 2023 recognition ceremonies for outstanding achievement in our Reading Intervention Program. What a joy to see a room full of celebrated young readers surrounded by proud parents, educators, and district leaders.

Mercer Street Friends’ food bank team continues to work tirelessly with our more than 100 pantry partners to address food insecurity in Mercer County. With the increased cost of food and the scarcity of certain items, we’ve had our work cut out for us. We have expanded our resources and partnerships, including helping our Community Schools families to receive SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps), and co-hosting New Jersey’s first conference on food insecurity.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the Leadership Awards Celebration held in June. Honorees Bristol Myers Squibb, Jack Morrison, and Odie and Bob LeFever have all served this community for decades. We are grateful for them, and for those of you who made philanthropic contributions in support of our mission. We cannot do it without you!

It is inspiring to work side by side with an extraordinary team, dedicated to addressing the needs of our neighbors in Mercer County. It is an honor to lead Mercer Street Friends and I look forward to continuing to do so for many years to come.

On behalf of our outstanding staff and dedicated board of trustees, I thank you for your shared interest in being of service to our community.

With gratitude,

Bernie Flynn

CONVERSATION, COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY

In partnership with the Community FoodBank of New Jersey, Food Bank of South Jersey, Fulfill, and Norwescap, Mercer Street Friends hosted Feeding New Jersey 2023, the state's first conference on food insecurity for food pantries, soup kitchens, and other local food assistance organizations. Nearly 300 representatives from more than 145 nonprofits across the state attended the conference held at Rider University in June.

Feeding New Jersey provided a unique opportunity for attendees to connect with like-minded leaders and peers to ignite meaningful conversation around our successes and challenges.



The schedule included an advocacy panel with all five food bank CEOs, an engaging welcome address by New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin (L) and

Office of the Food Security Advocate Mark Dinglasan, peer-to-peer discussions, networking lunch, a town hall on operational excellence, and closing remarks from Claire Babineaux-Fontenot, CEO of Feeding America.



“ Together with our strong network of local pantry partners, Mercer Street Friends is consciously bringing new resources and making impactful investments so that families in our community aren't having to make difficult choices around basic needs.”

—BERNIE FLYNN, CEO MERCER STREET FRIENDS

We're already hard at work planning Feeding New Jersey 2024!



MAKING SUMMER BRIDGE MEMORIES



More than 150 students, in kindergarten through 8th grade, joined us for Summer Bridge 2023, an extension of Mercer Street Friends' Community Schools initiative in the Trenton School District.



Our Summer Bridge program is a continuation of classroom teaching led by current and retired district educators using a hands-on, interactive model that builds confidence and encourages creativity. We've found that experiential learning encourages active listening and keeps students engaged.

At B.C. Gregory Elementary yoga was incorporated into the program as a way of modeling calming techniques for the children to regulate their breathing and their emotions.

This is part of our year-round commitment to social and emotional learning and teaching overall health and wellness in our Community Schools.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School students were offered a variety of enrichment opportunities to step outside their comfort zones and experience something new. With drumline, dance, art-making, comic drawing, sports, cooking and social justice – there was something for everyone.

Students enjoyed a nutritious breakfast, lunch and two healthy snacks each day, and middle schoolers had the option of taking a cooking class using fresh vegetables they picked from the garden at school. Educators discussed the benefits of garden-to-table eating and making healthy food choices. Students had as much fun preparing recipes as they did eating them!

Seventh and eighth grade students enjoyed an additional week of Summer Bridge with our partners at Princeton-Blairstown Center for a week-long overnight camp experience spent outdoors in nature.



THE PICTURE OF LEADERSHIP



On June 13, more than 200 guests gathered to celebrate local leaders for their dedication to service to the Greater Trenton community. (l to r) Courtney Matlock, Chief Development and Marketing Officer, Mercer Street Friends; Robert (Bob) LeFever; Jack Morrison; Adam Taliaferro on behalf of Bristol Myers Squibb; Bernie Flynn, CEO of Mercer Street Friends; (front) Odie LeFever

The common thread among the distinguished group of award recipients at our 2023 Leadership Awards Celebration is the longevity of their loyalty to service to Mercer Street Friends. With a combined 75+ years, each of the honorees has supported our organization for over 25 years and counting! We are incredibly grateful for their collective commitment to making our community better.



Jack Morrison, President of JM Group, received the Philanthropic Leadership Award.

Jack's 25-year relationship with Mercer Street Friends' food bank began with a turkey drive, and through the years expanded to provide more enduring support for food bank initiatives to combat food insecurity county-wide.



Odie and Bob LeFever were awarded the Robert M. Appelbaum Service Award

for their tremendous leadership and dedication to the service of Mercer Street Friends. Former trustee and board chair, Odie LeFever, and husband Bob, former Director of Advancement, are excellent examples of Quakers being in service to their community.



Adam Taliaferro, Director of Strategic Alliances, and former New Jersey Assemblyman, accepted the Corporate Leadership and Public Service Award on behalf of Bristol Myers Squibb.

Supporting Mercer Street Friends' mission since 1997, Bristol Myers Squibb employees continue to generously share their time and talent with the organization's food bank helping with critical programs for students and seniors.

Significant Strides **IN** **READING INTERVENTION**

One of the highlights of the year thus far was shining the light on the achievements of the young readers in our Community Schools at Benjamin C. Gregory Elementary and Luis Muñoz-Rivera Elementary.

Our Reading Intervention Program began during the pandemic, in partnership with Gregory Elementary school principal, Jeannette Harris, because of an obvious need for small group reading support.

When we learned from Principal Harris there was a significant number of students impacted from the changes in schooling during COVID, many of whom were reading below grade level, we knew we had to get to work. And, thanks to the Princeton Area Community Foundation (PACF), we were able to secure financial support to launch the program.

In 2020 when school was virtual, our reading intervention initiative was a small-scale program. It has since evolved into a robust reading intervention program coordinated and staffed by Mercer Street Friends with the goal of ensuring first through third grade students are reading at grade level proficiency and above.

Our reading specialists meet with small groups of students four times per week for 30 minutes. They identify students' weaknesses in phonics and reading comprehension, and then create strategies to help students avoid those errors.

In addition to Gregory and Rivera elementary schools, Mercer Street Friends leads the Community School program at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School with Site Coordinators and Case Managers.



Mercer Street Friends hosted award ceremonies and luncheons to recognize achievements in reading for first through third grade students at Benjamin C. Gregory and Luis Muñoz-Rivera elementary schools.

Ways to Give

We are dedicated to **nourishing** minds and bodies and **empowering** families and communities.

Mercer Street Friends provides comprehensive programs to address poverty and the physical and emotional trauma it creates for children, families, and the community. Our work is focused on three critical areas: **food**, **families**, and **education**.

There are many ways to support our mission. Your involvement at any level makes an impact.

DONATE ONLINE

Donating online has never been easier. Be it a one-time gift or recurring, simply scan the QR code or visit mercerstreetfriends.org.



MAIL A CHECK

Feel free to send a check made payable to *Mercer Street Friends* using the enclosed envelope.



GIFT MATCHING

Designate Mercer Street Friends as the recipient of funds in your employer's gift matching program.



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 gift will have a lasting impact on the Greater Trenton community. Please speak with your financial or legal advisor to learn about ways to include Mercer Street Friends in your estate plans.



VOLUNTEER

Time is one of the greatest gifts you can give to Mercer Street Friends.

To inquire about volunteer opportunities, please contact Sherries Anderson at sanderson@mercerstreetfriends.org.



STOCKS AND SECURITIES

By making this type of gift, you can avoid paying capital gains tax that would otherwise be due if you sold the assets. To make a gift of stock and appreciated securities, please contact Nancy Jankowski at njankowski@mercerstreetfriends.org.

NEW AND NOTABLE



JAMES G. ALLEN
Chief Operating Officer and
Food Bank Director

We're pleased to announce James "Butter" Allen is the newly-appointed Chief Operating Officer for Mercer Street Friends.

Butter initially joined the organization as a member of the Board of Trustees and served nine years. In 2019, Butter volunteered to lead Mercer Street Friends' weekend meal program for students called Send Hunger Packing. In March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, he assumed the role of Food Bank Director where he expertly supervised all food bank operations during the COVID crisis.

In addition to his food bank responsibilities, Butter will help CEO Bernie Flynn with all Mercer Street Friends operations. His experience, insight, and sound judgement makes him an invaluable leader in the Mercer Street Friends organization.

Butter retired from The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) in 2005 and currently serves on the college's Board of Trustees. He also worked for the City of Trenton as Deputy Director of Public Works and is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Delta Upsilon and Gamma Nu Nu chapters, and is a Prince Hall Mason for the state of New Jersey where he serves as Grand Secretary Emeritus.

We are grateful for Butter's commitment to nourishing minds and bodies and empowering families and communities across all of Mercer Street Friends.



XIUMEI CHEN
Director of Finance

In February 2023, we welcomed Xiumei Chen to Mercer Street Friends. In her role as Director of Finance, Xiumei (pronounced "shoe-may"), manages the accounting, financial reporting, financial analysis, and budgeting for the organization.

Xiumei has rich experience in virtually all aspects of finance and accounting management, including financial reporting, budgeting, financial modeling and analysis, internal controls, cash management, internal and external reporting, government grant management, and fundraising data analysis. In addition to more than 15 years of nonprofit finance and accounting experience, she is also well-versed in human resource management.

Before joining Mercer Street Friends, Xiumei was an instrumental part of Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. She holds an MBA in Finance and Accounting from La Salle University in Pennsylvania and a Ph.D. in Physics from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China.

Xiumei has taken the Finance and Accounting Department to the next level at Mercer Street Friends.

THANK YOU, DAVID ZBORAY



David (Dave) Zboray began his distinguished career at Mercer Street Friends in 2000 as a computer specialist. During that time, he created Trenton Digital Initiative, a program that helped refurbish and deliver computers to low-income families in Mercer County.

As a result of Dave's significant contributions to help Mercer Street Friends navigate the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, he was promoted to Chief Operating Officer in

2020. In his leadership role, Dave represented Mercer Street Friends in the community, provided oversight over the finance and human resources departments, and assisted with the development and management of the organization's budget.

Dave retired on July 31, 2023, to spend more time as a Husband, Father, and Grandfather with the goal in mind of not having to set his alarm clock.

On behalf of Mercer Street Friends' staff and Board of Trustees, we thank Dave for his tireless efforts and dedication to supporting our mission.

OFFICERS

Kenneth Blackwell
Chair
Jaap J. Ketting
Treasurer
Wendy B. Kane
Secretary

TRUSTEES

Laura Bond
Tara Butler
Michael L. Carter, MD
Gerald Delk
Bill Heinemann
Robert Holt
Corina Lewis
Soyini Wilson
Tonya Woodland

Chief Executive Officer

Bernard M. Flynn

Chief Operating Officer and Food Bank Director

James G. Allen



151 MERCER STREET
TRENTON, NJ 08611
TEL (609) 396-1506
mercerstreetfriends.org



NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 352
Bellmawr, NJ 08031



Scan to make a donation or
visit mercerstreetfriends.org

A HUGE APPETITE FOR LEARNING: The Hungry Caterpillars

For more than 30 years, our outstanding preschool program has successfully prepared district children for the transition to kindergarten. Preschool families benefit from all of Mercer Street Friends' programs including the Food Bank, Parenting and Adult Services, Community Schools and an impressive six-week summer program.

Summer 2023, *The Hungry Caterpillars*, was a thoughtfully curated curriculum incorporating routine, beginning literacy and math lessons. Each week was a different theme with matching literacy and math lessons to coincide with the themes. Popular themes included: Shark Week, Cooking Week, Camping Week, and of course, Ice Cream Week.

There's no shortage of creativity when it comes to the themed curriculum. For example, during Cooking Week many children had the opportunity to taste certain fruits and vegetables for the first time such as dragon fruit, star fruit, and papaya. We also hosted a summer cook-off where each preschool class created their own version of peach cobbler. Families were invited to taste test them all, cast a ballot and select a winner!

Children who attended our summer program benefited greatly from the continued instruction and socialization with peers.

Mercer Street Friends Preschool continues to cultivate a love of learning with unique hands-on experiences helping children to discover new interests, passions, and tastes, in a safe, comfortable, and caring environment.

