

# Biennial Review

## 2019–2020



Homes for the  
Homeless









# Table of Contents

A Message from Our President & Chief Executive Officer ..... 1

HFH Family Residences & HFH Summer Camps ..... 2

Our Mission & By the Numbers ..... 3

Early Childhood Education ..... 6

    Early Literacy & Creative Expression

    Parent & Caregiver Engagement

    STEM for Early Learners

*Partner Spotlight: 'Proton John' & Mad Science*

K–12 Afterschool & Recreation ..... 12

    Project-Based Learning at HFH

    College & Career Readiness

    Social-Emotional Learning & Student Expression

*Student Spotlight: Chrystel*

Meet the Parents: Education, Employment & Engagement ..... 18

    Employment-Related Workshops & Programming

    Self-Care & Self-Confidence for Parents

    Family Engagement Events & Activities

*Parent Spotlight: Mary at Prospect Family Residence*

HFH Through the Years: 34 Years & Counting ..... 23

2020: Introducing Allie’s Place Family Residence  
& Center for Culinary Education & Employment ..... 26

2020: HFH’s COVID-19 Response ..... 29

HFH Summer Camps: The Last 10 Years ..... 33

HFH in the Community ..... 39

Special Thanks ..... 41

# A Message from Our President & Chief Executive Officer



Dear Friends of HFH,

Prior to the 1980s, the face of homelessness in New York City was that of an older, unemployed male, living on the streets, perhaps with a history of substance abuse and mental health issues. However, a new picture of homelessness was fast emerging, that of the homeless family, typically headed by a young, single mother who was under- or unemployed with an incomplete education and one or two children under the age of 18 in her care. There were just 982 families in New York City’s homeless services system in 1982. Just four years later, when Homes for the Homeless (HFH) was founded, that number had jumped to 4,183—an astounding 340% increase.

That was the impetus for our dream. A dream where families experiencing homelessness would find a place that enables parents to stabilize their lives and to rebuild nurturing environments for their children. A place of safety and community with a foundation solidly built on the integration of our three pillars: education, employment, and social services for parents and children. A place like Allie’s Place Family Residence and Center for Culinary Education & Employment—the fulfillment of our dream—opened its doors in March of 2020. It took 34 years of experience, data, input, and lessons learned serving more than 55,000 families and about five years from the initial go-ahead to develop and build a new, state-of-the-art facility where families could reside, children could attend childcare, UPK, afterschool and recreation activities, and parents could go to class, train, and ultimately obtain jobs in the culinary industry: all on-site.

At the same time, our staff organization-wide also demonstrated a remarkable level of resilience as 2020 turned them into frontline heroes as they faced down the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing their nimbleness and thinking differently in order to keep our shelters safe, clean, orderly, and maintaining continuity of services. As an organization that must run 24/7, it is sometimes in times of crisis that your mettle is tested and I am proud of the work that has been accomplished during this time of uncertainty.

I also know that HFH will continue to adapt and serve the needs of New York City’s most vulnerable families as we move towards our 35th Anniversary next year and well beyond. Educational enrichment for children and job training and preparedness for their parents are at the heart of HFH because we know that homelessness is more than simply a housing issue.

This **Biennial Review** shares some of our program highlights from 2019 and 2020. Thank you for your ongoing collaboration and support.

Ralph da Costa Nunez, PhD

# HFH Family Residences & HFH Summer Camps



HFH Summer Camps (off-map)  
Harriman State Park, Central Valley, NY

Prospect

South Bronx

Williamsbridge

Williamsbridge  
Gun Hill Road Section, Bronx

Allie’s Place

Soundview Section, Bronx

Saratoga

Jamaica, Queens



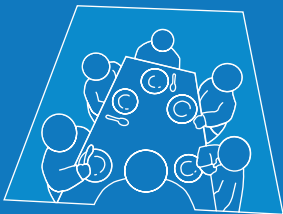
# Our Mission & By the Numbers

HFH provides families experiencing homelessness with more than just a place to sleep. Our four **HFH Family Residences** are located in the Bronx and Queens. Each offers on-site childcare, early education programming, after-school recreation, wrap-around social services, and employment training intended to ensure a holistic and community-oriented support system for our families.



**20,811 Children**  
in **New York City** shelters on any given night in May 2020, which amounts to nearly **40%** of all individuals living in shelter.

**4 HFH Family Residences**



**530 families with 725 kids**  
receive essential services and shelter from HFH on any given night.



**More than 140,000**  
New York City public school students have experienced homelessness over the past seven years.



**325 Kids**  
enrolled in HFH education programming in 2019.



**Nearly half a million**  
meals served to families at HFH in FY2019 and FY2020.



**249 families**  
moved out of HFH Family Residences in 2019.

**80% of families**  
at HFH move out of shelter within one year.



**259 children and youth**  
in K–12 Afterschool & Recreation programs in 2019.



**66 young learners**  
in Early Childhood Education programs in 2019.



## Fast Facts



**10,753 or nearly 45%**  
of children in the NYC shelter  
system were ages 0–5 in 2019.

**1 in 4**  
mothers nationwide who've experienced  
homelessness reported quitting a job or school  
due to difficulties finding childcare.



Early childhood education interventions benefit  
students' long-term:

- Academic Success
- Emotional Regulation
- Social Development
- Health & Wellness

## Early Childhood Education

Knowing that children five and under made up the largest percentage of all New York City children residing in a homeless shelter, we were at the forefront incorporating mainstream interventions, such as play-based early learning on-site, to benefit children experiencing homelessness. A wide-ranging curriculum offered age-appropriate exposure to topics like chemistry, salsa dancing, robotics, and even filmmaking. All the while, our teaching staff invited parents and caregivers to play a key role in their children's learning every step of the way, from family engagement events to at-home learning prompts.

### Early Literacy & Creative Expression

Early literacy experiences are critical to supporting children's future reading success, jumpstarting their vocabulary, and nurturing emergent language skills. At HFH Early Childhood Education Centers, teachers go beyond just storytime to keep students engaged in early literacy learning. In the 2019–2020 school year, creative projects and celebrations gave students the chance to apply their new vocabulary while fostering self-expression:

- In the 2019–2020 school year, students retained important **new social studies vocabulary** through a series of cultural events. Early education assessments show that using cultural events is a key technique to help improve reading comprehension. Through art projects, storybooks, and music lessons, students learned about Hispanic Heritage Month, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Three Kings Day, Black History Month, and the Lunar New Year.
- Over the course of several weeks, students created and starred in their own short films during a **filmmaking unit**. The unit culminated with the students debuting their work in front of staff and parents at a Family Film Festival. This type of project-based learning exposes children to high-order skills, requiring them to plan and implement, promoting an overall culture of learning.
- Oral storyteller, Adadoma Bediako, visited Prospect for an **interactive storytelling show**, featuring several African folktales, a brief geography lesson, and a Swahili-language sing-along. The storytelling show was an extension of students' Black History Month unit, which included lessons on Black inventors like Garrett Morgan, inventor of the traffic light.





## Parent & Caregiver Engagement

Early learning begins at home, with parents and caregivers playing an essential and sustained role in their children's education. That's why we prioritize engaging the entire family in programming, whether through special events or at-home activities built to reinforce classroom learning. Incorporation of solid family engagement strategies is one of the four key standards that New York State uses to evaluate early childhood programs for its Quality Stars designations. During the 2019–2020 school year, our Early Childhood Education teachers worked together with parents to support young learners in the classroom and at home:

- At Saratoga, parents and caregivers joined their students at the beginning of the school year for a **Back-to-School Bash**. During the celebration, parents and caregivers had the opportunity to tour the classroom, with teaching staff explaining how each area would contribute to students' learning through play throughout the year. This provides an opportunity for parents to hear first-hand from teachers why project-based learning and learning through play is so important for young learners.
- Helping children gain social-emotional and cognitive skills enables them to be ready-to-learn when they head to elementary school, builds resilience, and positively impacts future life outcomes. Our staff sets the stage at the beginning of the school year with a **social-emotional learning unit** that introduces students to **green** (positive) and **red** (negative) choices through open-ended discussions and the creation of individual and collective Classroom Rule Books. These skills were further reinforced with parents supporting them at home with two picture-based daily morning rituals.



## Four-Star Ratings

Both Prospect and Saratoga Early Childhood Education Centers have received four-star ratings from QUALITYStarsNY, indicating a high-quality early childhood education program in the state.



## STEM for Early Learners

Students at our Early Childhood Education Centers build a foundation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) through a hands-on and play-centered approach. Through early exposure to STEM concepts, children learn to see and reinforce the building blocks of STEM throughout their day, turning a class pet into a case study in animal science. On many occasions in the 2019–2020 school year, our teachers adapted important foundational concepts in STEM for toddler-friendly, interactive lessons:

- Each HFH Early Childhood Education Center received 12 fertilized chicken eggs and an incubator for a **chick-hatching unit**, which introduced students to the life cycle, the concepts of inference and observation, and the fundamentals of animal science. After two weeks, the chicks hatched, and students were delighted to take turns holding and interacting with the baby chicks. While they thought they were just having fun with “class pets,” they were being exposed to the scientific method, forming a hypothesis, and doing math.
- Throughout the 2019–2020 school year, students participated in a number of **toddler-friendly STEM workshops**, including lessons on robotics and chemistry. These workshops introduced complex concepts in a way that was accessible and playful to young learners, using play-based learning and a hands-on approach.



“On the first day, we do a whole family program with the parents and the kids to help ease the transition. The parents get to see how the kids are going to be learning this year through play, and hopefully we’ll alleviate some of the stress parents have on the first day of school.”

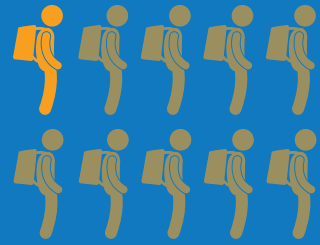
—Jodi Daniels, Director of Childcare, Saratoga Family Residence.

## Partner Spotlight: “Proton John” & Mad Science

For children in our Early Childhood Education Centers, lessons from visiting partners and volunteers supplement curriculum by adding a dose of diversity to students’ lives and exposing them to new people, topics, and experiences. In 2019, students at Prospect Early Childhood Education Center received a visit from Proton John of HFH partner Mad Science, which produces interactive STEM lessons. Proton John, also known as John Theodorou, led students through a hands-on chemistry workshop. Theodorou first introduced the students to the concept of mixing, before applying the concept to create a large bag of playdough. The students, who assisted in the playdough creation process, were given a small cup of playdough to take home. According to Theodorou, introducing STEM in a playful and engaging way lays the groundwork for young learners’ relationship with STEM in the future. **“If you start with stuff like this, where it’s hands-on and really silly, the word science is no longer a scary word. It’s not something to be afraid of,”** he explained. “They’ll say, ‘oh, I remember I did science. Science is in my world every day’.”



## Fast Facts



**1 in 10**

New York City public school students experienced homelessness during the 2016-2017 school year.

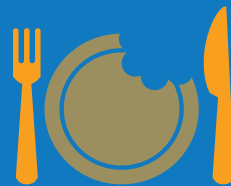
Nearly **1 in 6** NYC homeless students drop out of high school prior to graduation.

Homeless students in NYC are at a higher risk for:

- Chronic Absenteeism
- Dating Violence
- Bullying & Violence at School
- Depression & Suicide

**Only 23%** of NYC homeless students meet grade-level ELA and math standards.

Nearly **1 in 5** NYC children experience food insecurity, which is why meals and snacks are always provided for children in HFH programming.



Quality after-school programs support K-12 students':

- Self-control & confidence
- Relationship & social skills
- School attendance, grades, & behavior
- Career interests & work habits

## K-12 Afterschool & Recreation

From sports teams to language clubs, K-12 Afterschool & Recreation is a place where students are encouraged to ignite their interests and enrich their worlds. It's also where school-aged children and their families can find community at HFH, through regular family engagement events and workshops. During the 2019-2020 school year, our students showcased their excellence through STEM competitions, student-led publications, and service-learning projects. Dedicated education and recreation staff also provide students with effective and consistent academic and social-emotional support—from the traditional daily homework help to weekly yoga classes, a Girl Scout troop, and youth councils.

### Project-Based Learning at HFH

Our students regularly engage in real-world problem-solving through Project-Based Learning (PBL), a pedagogy shown to improve student retention and engagement. In PBL, students are asked to solve real-world challenges through critical thinking, multidisciplinary knowledge, and teamwork. [Saratoga's after-school LEGO Team](#), called Legends of the World, tackled the issue of food insecurity by researching and working together to develop a LEGO-based prototype for a vertical farm and vegetarian restaurant concept. As a part of the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Leggo My LEGO robotics competition, our LEGO Team presented their prototype before a panel of judges, ultimately advancing to the citywide semifinals of the competition and receiving the Inspiration Award for their embodiment of the LEGO League's values.

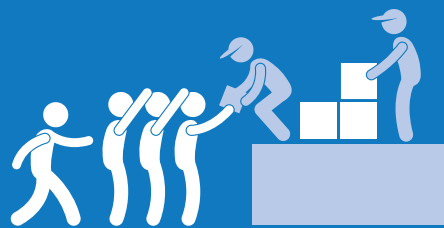




## College & Career Readiness

In New York City, nearly one in six students who've experienced homelessness in high school drop out of school within four years. Quality out-of-school time (OST) programs can play a key role in keeping older students on track for graduation and beyond. In the 2019–2020 school year, our K–12 programs catered to the unique needs of older learners by focusing on college readiness, life skills, leadership development, and career exploration. Children from higher socio-economic circumstances have a higher level of access to OST programs, which provide enriching experiences that augment or build upon what students experience in their daytime learning at school. Far from mimicking the school day, at K–12 Afterschool & Recreation, students develop the soft skills most sought out by future employers and college admissions offices, through both on-site activities and field trips.

- Students ages 10 to 17 participated in a [weekly financial literacy class](#), where they explored the fundamentals of budgeting and money management. Students also attended a [weekly college and careers class](#), with themes including college essays, SAT prep, and resume-building.
- At the [2019 Job Hop](#), students ages 12 to 16 from all HFH Family Residences came together to explore different careers “speed-dating” style. The event was made possible through a group of diverse professionals, from firefighters to children’s authors, who took the time to speak with students individually about their education and career goals.
- HFH introduced a series of [weekly visual arts lessons](#), geared toward learners ages 10 to 17. These lessons focused on the intersection of the arts and social justice, with students encouraged to leverage their artistic voices to effect change in their communities. These types of experiences help the youth practice skill sets like inquiry, curiosity, negotiation, and communication.



**11,532 volunteer hours**  
in Fiscal Year 2019 and Fiscal Year 2020.



- In response to growing interest from students 12 and up, Williamsbridge Recreation designed and debuted a [Teen Lounge](#), a space specifically designed and furnished with older students in mind. The new Teen Lounge attracted greater participation in programming amongst older students, not only because they had a space that reflected them and their interests, but because they felt heard and encouraged in their self-advocacy and input on programming.
- Saratoga K–12 Afterschool & Recreation introduced a [new Student-in-Training program](#), designed to nurture student leadership within the Saratoga community. This program was later adapted into an [HFH-wide Student Council](#), with students encouraged to provide feedback and leadership within the HFH K–12 community. This kind of programming nurtures students’ public speaking, leadership, organization and presentation, collaboration and teamwork skills, helping them to navigate their current life experiences, while building a foundation for their future.

## Social-Emotional Learning & Student Expression

Social-emotional learning (SEL) empowers students to build resilience, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills. For students experiencing homelessness, SEL can be a powerful tool for coping with stress and instability. This skillset was especially helpful to students during the COVID-19 crisis. During the 2019–2020 school year, students often explored concepts like growth mindset, mindfulness, and emotional expression through the arts, writing, and movement-based activities:

- Students participated in a [weekly dance and social-emotional learning program](#), which combined a high-energy dance workout with a life skills curriculum built around promoting positive self-talk, fitness, and mindfulness. The curriculum often used dance as a metaphor for understanding the importance of practice, determination, and teamwork.
- Throughout the year, students engaged weekly in a rotating selection of [yoga, meditation, tai chi, and drama-based workshops](#). After-school staff also introduced students to the concept of [restorative circles](#), which provide a safe space for exploring peaceful and respectful forms of conflict resolution.
- Students and staff at Williamsbridge Recreation debuted their own [monthly publication Inspiration Magazine](#), featuring student artwork, writing, at-home activities, and program announcements. Students also worked together on a series of short films, which were premiered to parents during a family movie night.
- Saratoga K–12 Afterschool & Recreation acquired a new [kiln](#), which has been used for pottery creation. The kiln has enhanced Saratoga’s [visual arts programming](#), which already possessed its own classroom and robust painting and illustration curriculum for nurturing students’ creative expression, including periodic art gallery showings for the entire family.
- In addition to publishing their own [monthly newsletter The Saratoga Scoop](#), the Saratoga Communications Club began producing [videos](#). The videos, which also served as student recruitment videos for Saratoga K–12 Afterschool & Recreation, feature interviews with students and staff as well as programming updates.





“

My advice would be to do your best, and do what you like to do, and don't let anybody get in your head about what you like and what you want to try. It's you, and if you feel comfortable with it, go for it.”

—Chrystel, 13, Saratoga K–12 Afterschool & Recreation Student on her advice to younger writers.

## Student Spotlight: Chrystel

At just 13 years old, Chrystel, a student at Saratoga Afterschool, has already received recognition as a produced playwright. In 2020, her original work *Kidnapping* was chosen for inclusion in HFH partner Writopia Lab's prestigious 11th Annual Worldwide Plays Festival. Normally, a group of New York City theater professionals work with the honorees to bring their plays to the stage during a live off-Broadway performance. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's production instead took the form of a series of professionally produced podcast episodes. According to Chrystel, her play *Kidnapping* centers on “how people change depending on how hurt they are.” Chrystel played an integral role in the production process, attending virtual meetings with directors, producers, and actors from Writopia Lab. The final podcast debuted on Spotify in the Summer of 2020.



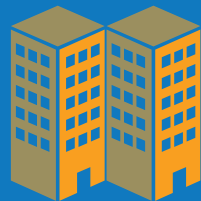
## Fast Facts



**75% of single mother-headed households** in NYC have inadequate income to meet their families' basic needs, including food, housing, and health care.

**30% of families**

enter the NYC shelter system due to domestic violence, the single largest cause of family homelessness in NYC.



**10,767 families** lived in the NYC shelter system in 2020.

**1,200 parents**

met with Saratoga Family Services staff in 2019 to discuss their housing, employment, and education goals.

**155 parents**

secured employment with the support of Saratoga Family Services staff.



**92% of families with children** at Williamsbridge do not return to shelter within one year of moving out.

## Meet the Parents: Education, Employment & Engagement

We are committed to providing holistic support to parents and caregivers as they strive to secure stability and independence for their families. That support comes through Family Services teams at each HFH Family Residence who work alongside parents on employment, housing, and wellness, while their children are engaged in a variety of education-focused programming and activities. For more on our new Center for Culinary Education & Employment, please see our section on Allie's Place Family Residence on page 26.

### Employment-Related Workshops & Programming

Families' housing stability is closely linked to parents' access to stable and full-time employment. That's why at each HFH Family Residence, our dedicated Employment Specialists meet one-on-one with parents to develop their career ambitions, workforce readiness, and employment opportunities. Other Family Services team members as well as education and recreation staff often complement these services.

At Saratoga and Prospect, Employment Specialists are also responsible for working with parents enrolled in **Family Works**, our in-house job training and internship program. All parents enrolled in Family Works complete a three-month-long paid internship in building operations, security, or the custodial field. Participants also attend a weekly on-site employment class with an intensive work-readiness curriculum. During 2019 and 2020, parents at HFH engaged in an extensive array of employment-related programming:

- Parents at Prospect attended a series of **monthly career exploration workshops**, covering topics like work-readiness and fast-growing jobs and industries. Family Services staff also connected parents with **one-on-one career advisers** and **employment-related workshops** from the Bronx Workforce 1 Career Center.
- Two graduates of Saratoga's Family Works program, both single mothers with school-aged children, went on to become full-time employees within Saratoga's security department. As residents, both parents enrolled their children in Saratoga K-12 Afterschool & Recreation and HFH Summer Camps, providing them with the flexibility they needed to focus on their employment and permanent housing goals.



## Self-Care & Self-Confidence for Parents

Securing stable housing, employment, and childcare in New York City can be challenging under the best of circumstances. For parents experiencing homelessness, the search can be especially discouraging, requiring high levels of resilience, motivation, and persistence. In addition to offering parents with direct employment and housing assistance, in 2019 and 2020, HFH provided parents with substance abuse counseling, adult education classes, mental health services, and other supports intended to foster self-care and self-confidence for parents:

- Parents at Saratoga benefited from a robust **weekly adult education schedule**, featuring nutrition, the arts, ESL (English as a Second Language), financial health, and computer-based job search classes. In 2019, parents in Saratoga's adult art class had their artwork featured in a **Family Art Show**, where parents and their children had the chance to admire and reflect upon residents' artwork and participate in a parent-child craft.
- Parents at Williamsbridge attended a **self-care and work readiness event** called Celebrate Your Greatness, featuring interview tips, professional makeup artists, and a barber. A facilitated workshop offered mothers the chance to practice expressing their strengths and engaging in confidence-building activities. At the end of the workshop, parents had the chance to receive professionally photographed LinkedIn headshots, to use for future job searches.
- Williamsbridge Family Services designed a **six-week vision board workshop**, in which parents were asked to visualize the intersection of homelessness, mental health, unemployment, family, and love through the creation of a vision board. The workshop also offered parents a safe space to explore their past experiences and future aspirations through open dialogue and mutual support.
- Parents impacted by substance abuse and addiction were able to access **free, on-site individual and group counseling and treatment services**. These services were critical to supporting parents' self-care and long-term goals.
- At HFH's **2019 and 2020 Resource Fairs**, our staff had the opportunity to connect with representatives from local organizations, who were invited to share their expertise on topics like gender-based violence, LGBTQ+ healthcare, and immigration law. The events were intended to give our staff access to more resources and the connections necessary to best serve the individualized needs of families at HFH in one easy location.

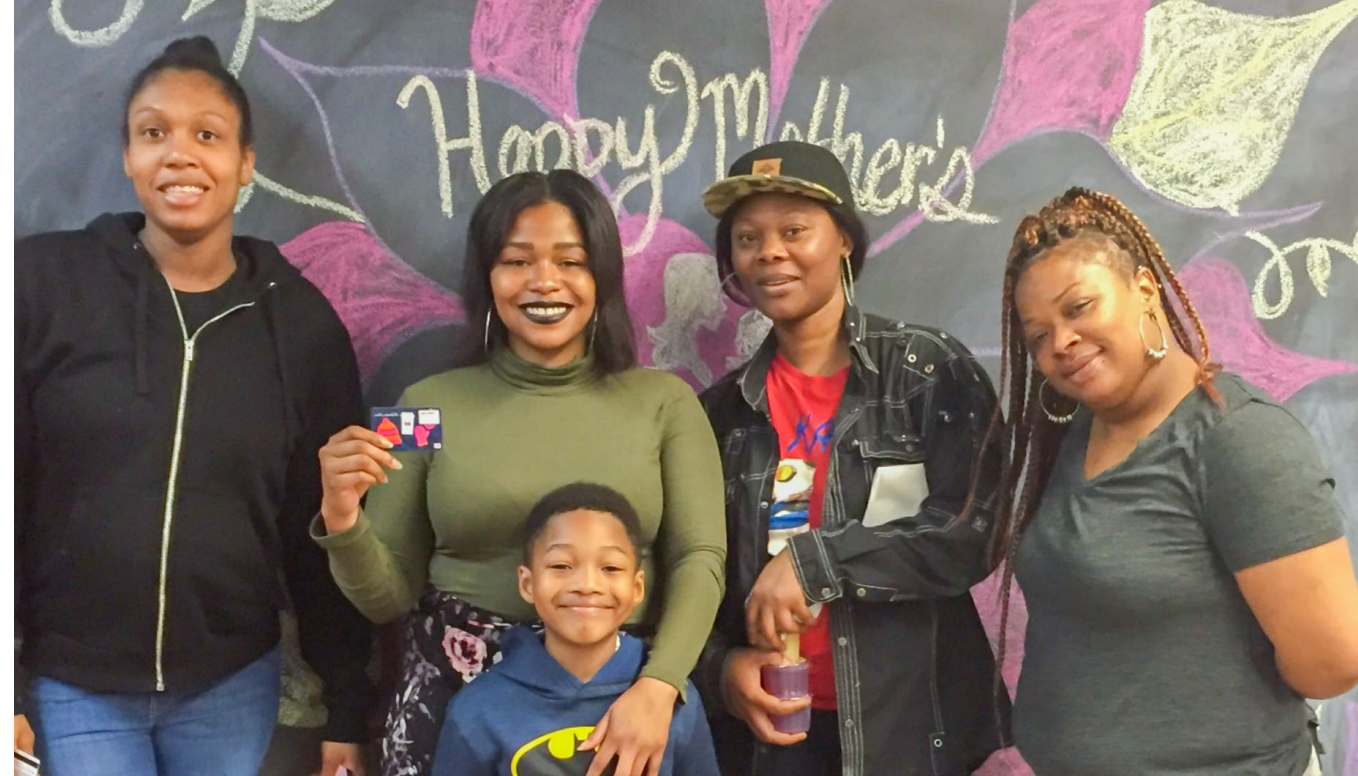




## Family Engagement Events & Activities

Meaningful parental involvement in education can play a powerful role in student success, reducing the risk of chronic absenteeism and benefiting parents and children alike. At HFH, our parents stay active in their children's learning through family workshops, parent-child learning opportunities, and a culture of parent-teacher partnership. In 2019 and 2020, HFH Family Services, Early Childhood Education, and K-12 Afterschool & Recreation programs worked together to integrate family engagement into all aspects of learning at HFH, truly working to create community within our sites:

- Prospect Family Services' Client Care Coordinators, all of whom are LMSW social workers, worked with after-school staff to organize an **F is for Family workshop** for parents and students applying materials developed for explaining the experience of homelessness to young children. Previously, representatives from HFH and ICPH served as advisers in the development of these resources by Sesame Street in Communities, which provides multi-media tools and materials for explaining important issues to young children. In addition, parents from all HFH sites participated in focus groups in English and Spanish, giving their opinions about the materials, such as a children's book and web content.
- A mother at Saratoga worked with K-12 Afterschool & Recreation staff to plan a **Family Talent Show**, which celebrated students and parents through dance, music, and theater. The talent show was one of many family engagement events regularly held at Saratoga Family Residence.
- Parents and caregivers joined their students at Prospect Afterschool for a series of hands-on **space-themed STEM workshops**. During one lesson, families watched a video about Mars, worked together on an educational tablet game, and engineered their own Mars robots.
- Parents and caregivers joined their children for a new monthly **family engagement event series** at Williamsbridge. Events in the series included an interactive live animal show, a family film premiere, and a series of parent-child holiday celebrations, designed to foster connections between families at Williamsbridge.
- Parents joined their children for a series of **weekly family wellness workshops** at Prospect Afterschool. During the workshops, families learned about the importance of nutrition and participated in a variety of group workout sessions, including parent-child Zumba.



**We just need the confidence to build ourselves up and to let us know that everything is going to be alright. That this isn't the last step that we're going through and we're going to achieve plenty of other goals."**

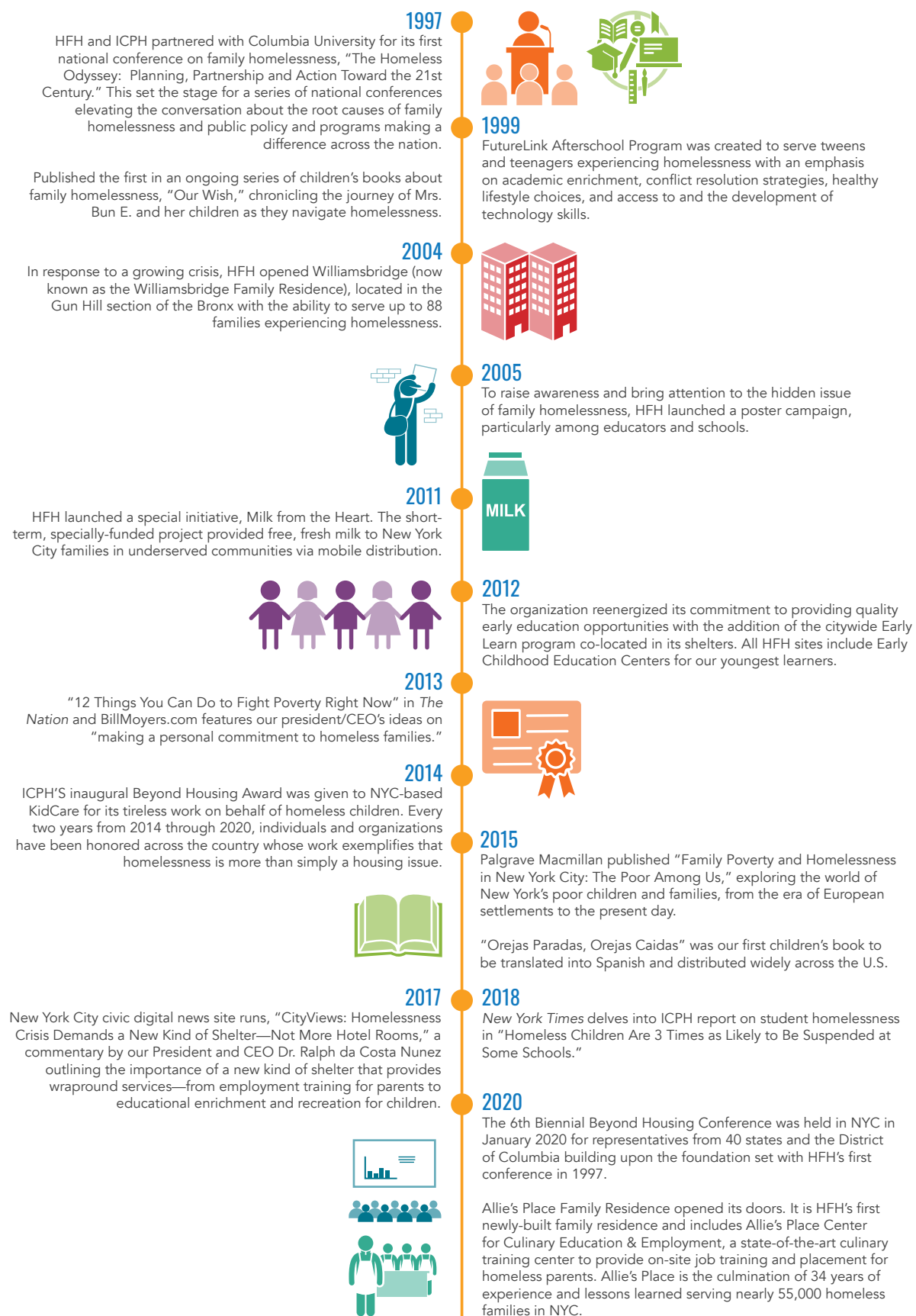
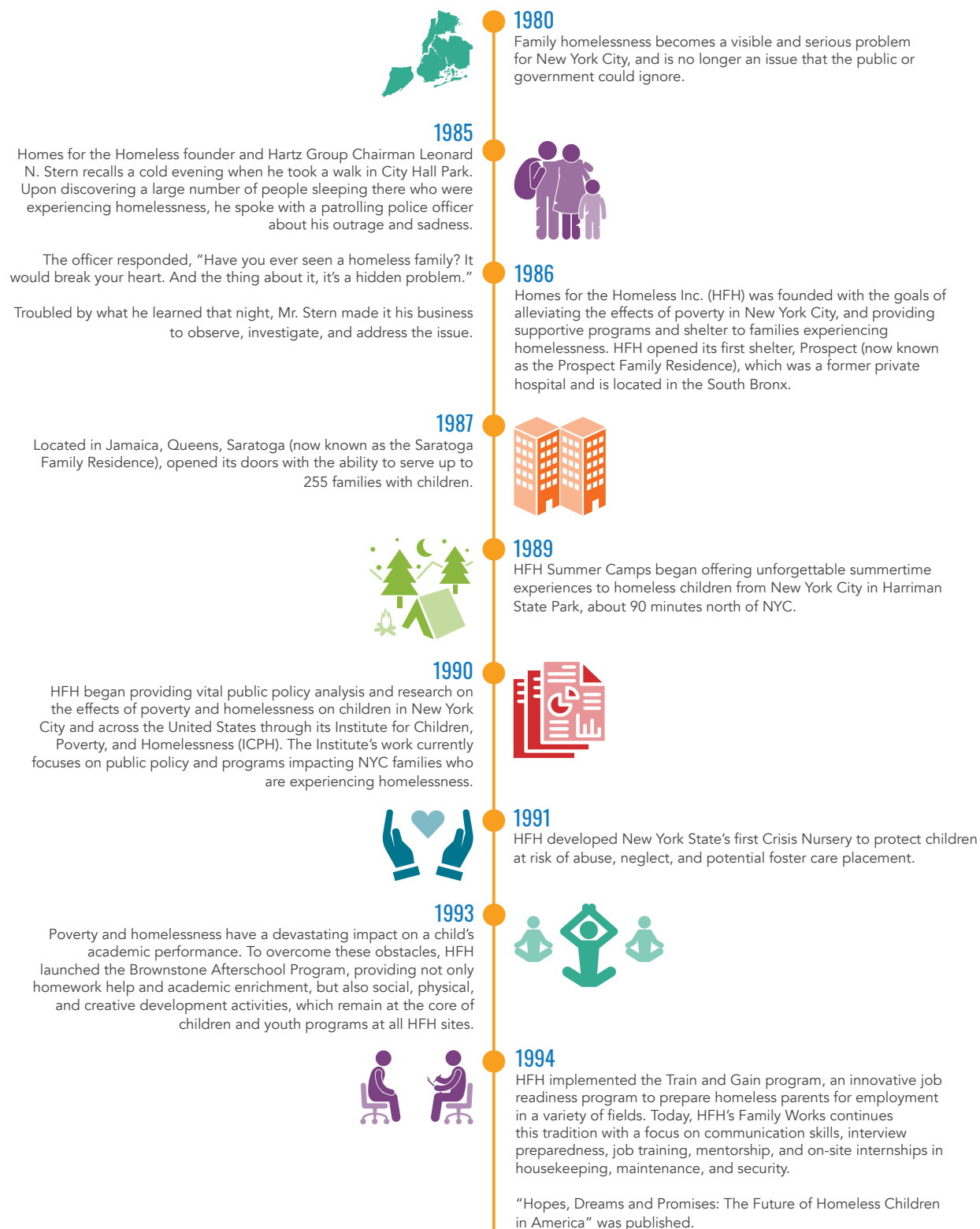
—Mother at Williamsbridge's Celebrate Your Greatness event.

## Parent Spotlight: Mary at Prospect Family Residence

When Mary, a former HFH client, first arrived at Prospect Family Residence, she was several months pregnant and had few resources. After giving birth, with the support of Prospect Family Services, Mary secured childcare for her newborn son, which allowed her the flexibility she needed to focus on establishing security and independence for her family. Mary joined Prospect's in-house Family Works program, through which she gained valuable skills and experience in the custodial field. With the assistance and encouragement of Family Services staff, Mary took initiative in attending numerous job fairs, which resulted in several interviews. She successfully secured employment as a Sales Associate at a retail store, which ultimately allowed her to move into stable permanent housing with her young son. Though Mary now lives in her own apartment, she occasionally calls staff at Prospect to thank them for their role in supporting her and her child's journey towards stable housing.



# HFH Through the Years: 34 Years & Counting





## Fast Facts



**3,200 sq. ft.**

state of the art culinary kitchen, baking space, classrooms, and barista training.

**99 studio units** for families with children.



On-site  
**K-12 after-school and enrichment**  
programming.

**Offices and meeting space** for social services team to meet with and assist clients.



On-site **herb garden & playground.**

## 2020: Introducing Allie's Place Family Residence & Center for Culinary Education & Employment

### Allie's Place: Development & Legacy

From its very conception in 2013, Allie's Place integrated important lessons learned from HFH's nearly 35 years of experience serving homeless families in New York City. Unlike our other Family Residences, whose buildings were repurposed from other facilities, Allie's Place was built from the ground up, imbued with an attention to detail that prioritized the learning and living experience of children and their parents. Child and family-centered by design, Allie's Place welcomes families with [colorful mosaics along the walls, an abundant outdoor playground and green space, gardening space, and bright and expansive classrooms](#). Even waiting rooms outside of social services offices where parents may wait for a meeting with a case manager or housing specialist include immersive learning activities, games, and books (for children to take with them), all purposefully designed at child height, built to engage and welcome.

Allie's Place was founded at the intersection of food and family, with cooking together acting as a springboard for intergenerational connection, cultural fusion, healthy living, and, most importantly, a career path. For parents, it's an opportunity to receive [hands-on training, marketable skills, and job placement opportunities](#).

[Allie's Place Center for Culinary Education & Employment](#), which opened in March of 2020, was designed to prepare adult students for employment in a variety of culinary settings, including commercial and institutional kitchens, restaurants, cafes, and cafeterias.

In the lead up to Allie's Place's opening, HFH's new culinary education team began workshopping curricula with families at HFH Family Residences. Opening its doors at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Allie's Place is not yet ready to offer its full complement of in-person coursework. However, HFH's culinary education team has temporarily pivoted to develop virtual Culinary and K-12 Afterschool & Recreation programming, including a [culinary education series called \*What's Cooking\*](#), serving as an outreach tool to gain interest for future cohorts of training classes.







# 2020: HFH's COVID-19 Response

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on New York City rendered our work supporting families experiencing homelessness more important than ever. As the crisis unfolded, our employees stepped up to provide support to families as they navigated a host of unprecedented circumstances, from school closures to the transition to remote learning. Frontline workers, including custodial, facilities, security, education, recreation, and social services staff, deserve particular recognition for their tireless work to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and continuity of programs and services for the entire HFH community. While those working behind the scenes in positions from finance, human resources, and IT to programs and operations kept us moving forward in this digital age, demonstrating new ways we can rethink, reshape, and rework the provision of shelter while still keeping education and employment central to our operations. The combined efforts of our staff, partners, and supporters were integral in our ability to swiftly adjust to this “new normal.”

## Program Highlights

- At the beginning of the pandemic and stay-in-place orders, we ensured that all city, state, and federal health department guidance was followed. We increased attention to **cleaning and sanitizing** common areas, fully stocked our warehouse of emergency and other supplies, and provided both staff members and families with face coverings. In addition, we implemented **temperature checks** for staff and residents as well as other critical measures like **social distancing** and availability of **hand sanitizers**.
- Several of our sites utilized **video monitors** set up throughout the facilities to promote the latest government and health-expert information about COVID-19, such as the importance of **handwashing, mask-wearing, and social distancing**. The video monitors also featured messages from trusted staff members about ways to **remain active and engaged with shelter services**, from K–12 programming to family services, by phone, virtual meetings and lessons, or when necessary, in-person meetings. Some messages even featured the **children's projects**. Frequent flyers, in **Spanish and English**, as well as phone calls, texts, and emails when appropriate were also used to keep communication flowing to parents and children.
- Saratoga K–12 Afterschool & Recreation created an **Independent Learning Lab**, which allowed students to engage in safe and socially distanced academic enrichment, creative expression, and tutoring. The Independent Learning Lab also allowed students a private space to work on projects outside of their families' studio units, offering a needed respite to families.
- Our staff curated and encouraged families to access a central hub of **remote learning resources** on the HFH website. HFH LEARN features free English and Spanish resources on everything from coding games to toddler-friendly yoga classes.

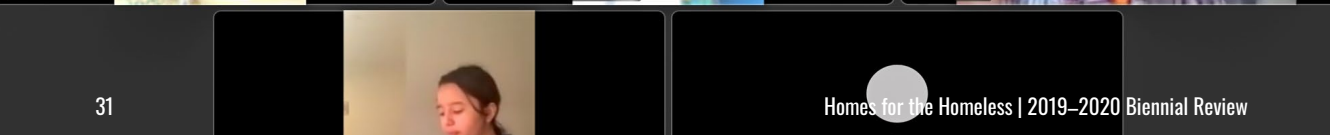
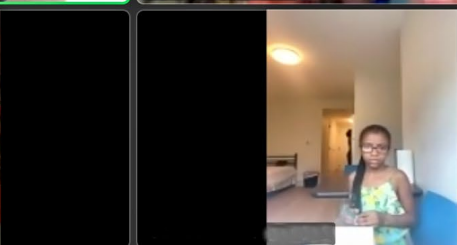
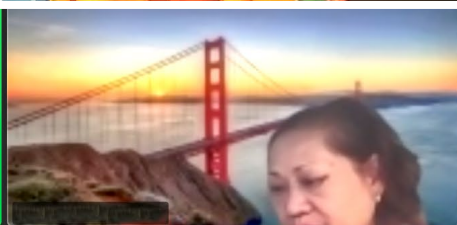
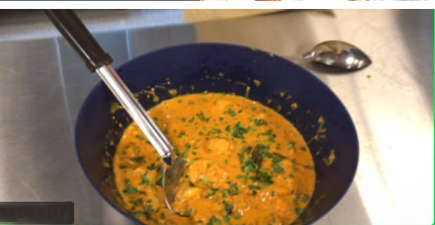
- Early Childhood Education staff kept in touch with parents and students through *Remind*, an interactive remote learning application. Teachers adapted quickly to remote learning by connecting families with **virtual storytimes**, a **color-based scavenger hunt lesson**, and even a **playlist of music** often played in the classroom. Children were also able to leave messages for their favorite teachers to say “hi.”
- We worked to give both parents and children the tools and resources they needed during the stay-in-place order with **regular care packages**, filled with art supplies, headphones to help with virtual lessons and activities, coloring books, playing cards, hand sanitizer, and activity booklets featuring social-emotional learning prompts. Throughout the crisis, our staff encouraged families to reach out with any requests for additional learning or recreational materials.
- Students received **one-on-one virtual tutoring** through a partnership with University of California at San Diego's Partners at Learning (PAL) program. HFH staff facilitated tutoring-

sessions, while undergraduate volunteers assisted students with their academics.

- Longstanding HFH collaborators, including **DMF Youth, Lineage Yoga, and Writopia Lab**, transitioned to providing virtual classes for our students. This allowed children and youth to continue to stay active, mindful, and creative while in-person programming was on hold. Kids also kept those critical connections to trusted instructors during a time of uncertainty.
- With the opening of Allie's Place Family Residence and its Center for Culinary Education & Employment in March of 2020, both parents and children throughout HFH benefited from a series of **virtual cooking classes** developed by Allie's Place's on-site culinary education team. Our staff also provided families with an original cookbook called *Healthy Microwave Meals, Vol. 1*, filled with easy, nutritious, and affordable kid-friendly recipes. During the COVID-19 crisis, staff encouraged parents and children to explore the new recipes together first via virtual lessons on iPads on loan from the program exclusively for this use.









# HFH Summer Camps: The Last 10 Years

Since 2010, HFH Summer Camps has provided two weeks of summer fun and enrichment to over [4,870 NYC children](#) ages seven to 13 who have experienced homelessness offering them access to the serene nature of [Harriman State Park](#). In the lead up to the summer of 2019, dedicated Camp Recruiters connected with families experiencing homelessness across New York City. They also held [Family Fun Day recruitment events](#) at each HFH Family Residence, where they provided activities and giveaways for potential campers while they walked their parents through every step of the camper application process.

During our typical summer camp stay, campers benefit from arts, swimming, sports, science, and nature programming, plus plenty of community, friendship, and cabin spirit. Over the years, [Carnival Day](#) has become a tradition for each session, featuring ice cream, tie dye t-shirt making, and special games. Similarly, spirited themed days and events, like [twin day](#), [glow stick parties](#), [movie nights](#), and [camp songs](#) have become well-worn traditions among repeat campers and those who recommended it fondly to younger siblings and friends. A newly constructed miniature golf course, built by volunteers as part of an Eagle Scouts project, has added yet another attraction to our beloved Camps Wakonda and Lanowa.

While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented us from running our in-person sleepaway Summer Camp, our [daily Virtual HFH Summer Day Camp](#) kept campers from our four HFH Family Residences connected to their favorite camp activities. Virtual programming in 2020 included a photography club, craft club, nature class, vision-boarding, and much, much more. We even offered [virtual field trips](#) to the Catskills Animal Sanctuary, Wonders of the Night Sky from the Liberty Science Center, and the Noguchi Museum, featuring an exhibit and lesson tied to the sculpture of theater and dance.



“I’m going to miss my mom because I’m not used to that stuff—but when I went last year, it was fun. Now going this year, I’m not scared anymore. Every single day is like a new day. I like looking at the animals and seeing deer. I like swimming in the water. It’s lots of fun. Just joy. No sadness, no madness—just joy.”

—Julian, 12, Camper at HFH Summer Camps.







“

Camp last year was fun. We had activities like art, nature, swimming, and more. I'm really excited to go back there. I like to explore and I'm an adventurous person. It's really fun and I like to do creative stuff there. I learned how to do a lanyard called box. I miss the counselors and I hope some of my friends that I made last year will come.”

—Jenae, 10, Camper at HFH Summer Camps.

## Staff Spotlight: Julio Colon, Camp Recruiter

Julio Colon, Camp Recruiter for HFH Summer Camps 2019, knows just what to say when parents or potential campers express reticence about signing up for camp. “If they have any questions about camp, I know how to respond, because I lived the experience both as a camper and as a counselor,” he said. Colon, who first attended HFH Summer Camps at the age of 12 and has also worked as a Camp Counselor, takes pride in recruiting for a program he himself benefited from as a child. As a recruiter for the summer of 2019, Colon spent months reaching out to families experiencing homelessness at HFH and other providers. Camp Recruiters like Colon played an integral role in the lead up to HFH Summer Camps 2019, assisting families in the application process and building excitement for a summer at Camps Lanowa and Wakonda.









# HFH in the Community



## Old Navy's Stacey Engebretson Honored

General Manager of Old Navy Green Acres, won **Old Navy's Donald G. Fisher Award for Staff Excellence** in recognition of her volunteer service with HFH. Along with her team at Old Navy, Engebretson organized a **Family Fashion Show** for parents and children at Saratoga as a creative alternative to a typical clothing donation.



## Family Safety Day at Saratoga: Three Years & Counting

Saratoga staff, families, and volunteers from the NYPD and FDNY joined together for what is fast-becoming an anticipated annual event at the shelter: **Family Safety Day 2019**. Staff first developed it in 2017 as a way to spark dialogue about fire safety, security, and community in an engaging, "block-party-type" atmosphere. Parents and children enjoyed the NYPD Community Affairs Bureau's mobile rock-climbing wall and kids donned FDNY hats as they learned critical fire safety tips from the FDNY's Fire Safety Education Unit and had a chance to walk through a "Smoke House" trailer that simulated a house fire and helps children to go through the motions of how to calmly exit the house. Other highlights included McGruff the Police Crime Dog who not only talked to kids about crime prevention but also got adults and kids dancing. Information booths on Saratoga's afterschool, recreation, child care, and early education programs were also set up so families could learn more about these helpful on-site resources.



## Fashion Firm Lacoste Staff Hosts Golf Lessons

Apparel company Lacoste invited K-12 students from HFH to participate in an **introductory golf clinic** at City Parks Junior Golf Center. On the day of the event, students learned the fundamentals of golf with professional instructors, practiced their new skills on a driving range, and received free sneakers and other gifts.

## HFH Executive Director Featured on UN Commission on Social Development Panel

John Greenwood, Executive Director of HFH, served on a panel at the **58th Session of the UN Commission on Social Development** hosted by the non-profit Make Mothers Matter. The topic was single mothers' vulnerability to homelessness and the impact on children. Greenwood's remarks focused on NYC and the services provided by homeless shelters such as those operated by HFH.



## Queens Library Bookmobile

*The Christian Science Monitor* published an article chronicling a visit from the **Queens Library Bookmobile** at Saratoga. During the visit, parents and children at Saratoga had the chance to browse books and other media, sign up for a library card, and learn more about library resources. The Queens Public Library was later honored with a Beyond Housing Award at the **2020 Beyond Housing Conference** for its dedication to bringing services and resources directly to families experiencing homelessness.

## St. John's University Students Lend a Helping Hand

A group of student volunteers from St. John's University completed a **large mural project at Saratoga** as a part of their Discover New York course. During the first phase of the mural project, the students painted a group of outstretched hands and the words "love" and "happiness" over a previously blank wall.



## NYC DYCD Shines Spotlight on Saratoga Afterschool Program

In 2019, the NYC Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD), which provides grants for afterschool programs across NYC, including the one at our Saratoga Family Residence, highlighted Saratoga in its quarterly newsletter. The overall program and Michael Chapman, Director of K-12 Afterschool & Recreation at Saratoga, were featured, noting Chapman's innovative teaching style and the individualized approach to programming and dedication to nurturing student leadership the program embodies.



# Special Thanks

Over the past two years, HFH's dedicated partners have enhanced and supplemented HFH programming by connecting children and their parents to a wide variety of activities, from family dance classes to resume workshops. In 2019 and 2020, families at HFH benefited from a large number of partner organizations, both longtime collaborators and new members of the HFH community:

- Camelot
- Columbia University College of Dental Medicine
- CUNY Creative Arts Team
- DMF Youth
- DreamYard
- KidCare
- Knock Knock Give a Sock
- Lacoste
- Lineage Yoga
- Lufthansa
- Mad Science
- New York Cares
- NYC Department of Homeless Services
- NYC Department of Youth & Community Development
- Old Navy Green Acres
- OMG Accessories
- PBS KIDS for Parents
- Queens Public Library
- Red Lips for Change
- Sesame Street in Communities
- St. John's University
- Super Soccer Stars
- That Suits You
- The New York Children's Health Project at Montefiore
- University of California San Diego (UCSD) PAL Program
- Writopia Lab

In addition to our dedicated community partners, every year, our donors and volunteers play an integral role in supporting families with children at HFH. This *Biennial Review* includes activities, information, and data from 2019 and 2020. In some instances the time period is the calendar year, fiscal year, or school year. Any other time periods are specifically referenced.

Our full list of donors, volunteers, and partners can be found on our website at [HFHnyc.org](https://www.hfhny.org). Every effort has been made to provide an accurate listing. We apologize in advance for any inadvertent error or omission. Download the web version of this review for a full list.





# Board of Directors

Thank you to our HFH Board of Directors for their leadership and sound stewardship of financial resources ensuring that we are able to provide continuity of operations, programming, and services to New York City families.

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