



2016 NEW GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARDS

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HomeFront Family Campus

Founded 25 years ago, HomeFront is dedicated to ending homelessness in Central New Jersey any way it can. For its latest project, the Family Campus in Ewing, HomeFront took an old Naval training station and converted it into a “village of healing and hope.”

The catalyst for the project was the sale of the state-owned facility that housed HomeFront’s emergency family shelter, creating a sudden need for new space. Thanks to the vision of HomeFront’s leaders, the organization acquired the 8.5-acre decommissioned Navy base at no cost. However, changing the base’s utilitarian “cube” structure into a warm and welcoming family preservation center proved to be a singular challenge.

The Family Campus had to be completed on a tight schedule. The interior was completely demolished, leaving just the building shell, and the construction called for new windows and skylights, plumbing, wiring, appliances and furnishings, flooring and light fixtures, and repaving of the parking lot. Solar panels, donated by NRG, were installed by staff volunteers.

Today, the 42,000-square-foot family preservation center accommodates 38 families in dorm suites, with comfortable spaces for the families to sit and visit, a welcoming dining hall, and activities for both the children and parents. Importantly, there also is on-site access to childcare, job training and other services designed to break the cycle of homelessness. The location employs 32 full-time and 27 part-time workers.

The Family Campus was completed on time and on budget thanks to Princeton Construction Group’s oversight and collaboration with HomeFront’s executive director and founder, Connie Mercer, and COO/CFO Celia Bernstein, along with the outpouring of support from a caring community of government agencies, foundations, corporations, civic/community groups, houses of worship and thousands of individuals. HomeFront is now poised to move from transforming the structure to the even more important role of transforming the lives of families living in the ever-present shadow of homelessness.