For the Love of the Kids

Camp was a big success because of so many generous donors. Special thanks to some fan favorites. The kids LOVED the food we were able to order at summer camp thanks to the Albertson Foundation and ACME stores. Chef DiBari brought his Dough Nation Pizza truck and donated all the pizza the kids could eat. The kids had a little room for ice cream from Chef’s friends at Bona Bona Ice Cream who joined in the fun. The White Plains Rotary Club provided a day of arts and crafts, cotton candy and The Disability Guys Markoff and Mittman, PC organized a wonderful carnival with amazing games and prizes. Lastly, Jennifer made adorable teddy bears for campers.

Leon, one of our volunteers shared his observations. This was Leon’s first summer at camp and he didn’t quite know what to expect. He couldn’t believe how dramatically the kids changed once they ate. They went from zero energy and feeling stressed to joy and being able to focus and participate whole heartedly in all of the activities. He was shocked to see this transformation in the kids. Thanks to so many caring people in our community, the kids were even able to take food home for dinner too.

We heard heart-warming stories everyday about how your support impacted the kiddos…

• A Mom shared that she couldn’t get her daughter up for school in the morning. But for camp, which included a literacy component, she was up, dressed and waiting for the bus every day.
• Diane, one of our literacy tutors told us the kids experiencing homelessness really struggle with social skills and it has become even more challenging because of the pandemic. Yet, one of the most beautiful things about summer camp is the kids learn to look out for each other. Diane saw the older kids helping the little ones.
• One camper made a really cool ship out of Lego’s with people on deck. When we asked him “who are all the people?” he told us they were all homeless and he brought them on the ship so they would have a home. We all got a little teary eyed about this one.

You all made a world of difference and we can’t thank you enough for your continued support.
Invisibility  Society’s Perception of the Homeless

By: Alfredo Roldan

I first became homeless in 1990 when I was twelve years old. After losing my parents to AIDS, my maternal grandmother to bronchitis, and running away from abusive relatives, a lifetime of foster care, shelters, prisons, and living out of various ‘holes in the wall’ ensued. If you had asked me then, what I thought society’s perception of homeless was, I’d have responded that I was an “Invisible Kid” because “nobody ever saw me”. And not because I was hiding either! Unless I was hiding in plain sight, and unbeknownst to me, I was.

As a society we either face our problems or ignore them, but ignoring them doesn’t make them go away or cease to exist. Many of my homeless 12 year old nights were spent sleeping on the New York City Subway system. I was hungry and penniless. The longest running train in transit is the A train because it runs from The Bronx all the way to Far Rockaway. Experienced homeless people know this because the longer a train’s route, the longer you get to sleep without the conductor kicking you off at the last stop. During these long rides I would see all the commuters going to work in Mid-Town Manhattan, wearing the latest business attire and carrying the best briefcases. In my young mind they epitomized success and day after day, ride after ride, I longed for one of them to notice me... and take me home. I just wanted to have a family, food, and a warm bed. A normal childhood to be shared with people who really cared about me. But day after day as I slept on the cold steel seats of New York City Transit, unshowered, unfed, sickly, and usually without a coat, no one noticed me.

I was invisible.

Occasionally I would get noticed by sexual predators and older kids that thought it would be fun to rob me or beat me up just for kicks. So it was normal to be awakened from a subway slumber by the feeling of a fellow passenger rummaging through my pants’ pockets hoping to steal some money and escape from the train as the conductor said “watch the closing doors”. I never had any money so I wasn’t too concerned.

But one night during a slumber, after feeling my pockets being caressed, I awoke in time to see the perpetrator, a tall, slim white guy, casually dressed with spectacles, leaving the subway car. I checked my pockets to see what he had done and I found a crisp ten dollar bill folded up! I never ever forgot that guy because he had seen me. Neither I nor my struggle were invisible to him, and that has always given me hope.

My vagabond lifestyle led me all the way from the streets of New York as a child to the White Plains Housing Projects in Westchester County, NY. It was running the streets, still homeless, in Westchester that I found out about the Open Arms Men’s Shelter in White Plains. A lot of guys that I knew from being homeless were going there and doing considerably better. I could just tell that they had a different glow about themselves. They were dressing better, eating healthier, and looking happier. That was something that I had never seen before. I used to stand across the street from Open Arms and envy those guys. I’d tell myself that Open Arms was where I wanted to be and I’d constantly ask how I could get in there, because I knew if I could get in there I’d be successful. I just knew it! I could tell that there was something special going on there and that someone was really “seeing” these guys and helping them.

I have since made it to Open Arms and become a resident. Open Arms Men’s Shelter, its staff and its resources have exceeded any expectations I may have had. Every day I am seen, not only as who I am, but also the man I am set to become. I am constantly supported in all areas of living positively and accomplishing my goals. Whether it’s housing, clothing, nutrition, employment, education, or just having someone to talk to, I am never neglected or made to feel invisible.

I’ve been given so much that often people don’t believe I am in a homeless shelter. “But you don’t look homeless” is what they say. And I say “well, that’s your perception”.

Today, I have my own place, in my own name, and all the bills that come with such responsibility. I am gainfully employed and I continue to set goals such as buying a car, and returning to school. I never imagined that living a “normal life” could be so exciting!

But no matter how far in life I travel, I’ll always remember where I came from and everyone that has helped me get where I am today.

Restoring Independence

Thanks to our community and foundation partners and individuals donors for funding the initial pilot program (formerly called Pathways), Charles, the Director of Employment Services worked with a very motivated Alfredo to find a job and Denise, our Housing Specialist, worked with Alfredo to find housing. Alfredo just needed a lift from the community to restore his independence and thanks to you and our partners he is doing great!

RESTORING INDEPENDENCE PARTNERS:
Westchester Medical Center
Westchester Community Foundation
Bank of America
Wells Fargo Bank
Westchester County, CDBG
Key Bank
United Way
Affinity Credit Union
Too many individuals to name!
Join us for a day of fun and community to lift up children. This is our second largest fundraiser of the year and we need your help to make it a big success. This event will be primarily outdoors with social distancing when indoors.

**WELLNESS ACTIVITIES**

**Aroma Balance Workshop**
Giuliana Lonigro, Neal’s Yard Remedies Consultant

Aroma balance is a sensory journey that encourages you to choose essential oils with your heart instead of your head. It is important not to know the name of the oils you are smelling until after you have chosen your favorite(s) — this enables you to choose the perfect oils that are right for you at the time. Giuliana will provide a few scent strips for participants to choose from, and talk about the history of essential oils and aromatherapy, and safe ways to use essential oils.

**Skills for Self-Care and Stress Management**
Dr. Brenda Boatswain, Montefiore’s To Your Health! Wellbeing Manager
Stephanie Saklad, LCAT, Montefiore’s To Your Health! Creative Wellness Program Manager

We all know the last year has been difficult, from the pandemic, to figuring out a new normal, and life’s usual ups and downs. No matter what we may experience, there are many science-based skills that can help us have gratitude for the good in our lives, during both times of uncertainty and joy. Join us for an introduction to these different techniques, from deep breathing to art-based self-care activities, taught by mental health experts from Montefiore’s To Your Health! Associate Wellness team!

**Nutrition Workshop**
Georgette Goldson, Registered Dietitian at Montefiore CMO

Come join us to learn how to eat healthy food choices and enjoy them while benefiting to improving your health. Nutritionists know the science of how food and nutrition affect your health and the importance of making healthy choices. The food we eat has a significant impact on our health, according to several scientific studies. Changes in diet can help prevent or control many health problems, including but not limited to obesity, diabetes and certain risk factors for cancer and heart disease. Hope you can come and learn something that may change your health.

**Fit Walk**
We welcome all fitness levels to experience our boot camp-style program that incorporates high-intensity interval training (HIIT) to burn up to 500 calories in a single session while increasing your energy by up to 20%, along with mindfulness challenges, that help reduce stress. In this session our fitness trainers guide you to build muscle, burn fat and feel centered. Please wear appropriate footwear, bring a mat, and be ready to work out!

Let us know before class if you have any injuries or orthopedic conditions so we can help keep you safe.

**Yoga**
Athletic in rhythm and pace; vinyasa’s fluid movement shifts, changes and sustains through active use of the breath. Sequences will be crafted to heal and nourish not only your body, but also your mind and soul. Swift, unique, yet meditative movements will build throughout class, to open, strengthen, stretch and heat; you will leave feeling spacious, restored and alive.

**Tennis and Pickleball**
Singles, doubles and all levels welcome. We will match you up with a partner if you don’t attend with a buddy. Please bring your racket and can of tennis balls. Rackets will be available to rent and tennis balls may be purchased.

**RSVP by October 1st at luwgolf.givesmart.com and/or to participate in the online silent auction.**
Together We Lift

This Pandemic Stinks!
There we said it and we know you agree. It stinks for everyone! But for some people in our community it is continuing to wreak havoc on their wellbeing and they don’t have the support or the resources to overcome the challenges that continue to come their way.

That’s where folks like you come in. We have an awesome community of believers. You know that when we help lift someone else up, we all benefit.

Together we have accomplished some amazing things in 2021 and with your ongoing support, we will continue to make sure no one in need is ever turned away.

We hope you enjoyed reading about your impact in our new 2020 Annual Donor Impact Report that was emailed.

Be sure to check it out at www.liftingupwestchester.org.

Congratulations to LUW!
Lifting Up Westchester (LUW) earned the seals for transparency and best business practices from The Better Business Bureau and Guidestar. This means that we are in tip top shape to steward your generosity responsibly and wisely.

THANK YOU!
“Thank you Denise and Ada for all the help you have given me. I have a beautiful mold free apartment and furniture that Denise took me to pick out. I am so grateful for everything you and Ada have done for me. My health is getting better and for that I thank you. God bless you both.” —Teri