

Community Footprints



Dreaming Big

On Sunday, October 26, Dermer Dreams “100-Yard Challenge” filled Rumson-Fair Haven High School’s field with **tens of thousands of bags of food**. The event provided groceries to families facing food insecurity while engaging the community in a hands-on, inspiring way.

Dermer Dreams is a grassroots nonprofit powered by teenagers, **founded by Daniel and Alyse Dermer** after Superstorm Sandy, when the family realized how many families lacked access to food. Their mission is to **engage students in the fight against hunger**, proving that the energy, drive and ingenuity of young people can make a real difference. Additionally, they launched a **National Food Drive Challenge**, urging people to bring a bag of food to their local pantries on November 22.

Through these efforts, Dermer Dreams has helped collect **over one million pounds of food**, all of which has gone directly to local food banks and pantries. Thanks to efforts like these, Lunch Break continues serving neighbors in need, proving that **when communities come together, everyone wins**.



GRATITUDE CORNER



Cheese the Day

A huge thanks to Heather Harm of **Taste and Technique Cooking Studio** for leading our Cheese the Day charcuterie class, making it fun, delicious and truly unforgettable for our attendees!



Painted With Love

Thank you to the amazingly talented **James Fitzmaurice** for painting two stunning new murals. These vibrant additions, made possible by our generous donors, bring warmth and creativity to our space.



Picked with Love

A big thank you to David Barclay, owner of **Eastmont Orchards** in Colts Neck, for letting us gather 628 lbs. of fresh apples! We are truly grateful for this partnership and for the continued support that helps us nourish our community.



A Legacy of Love

Just two weeks after his passing, the family of **Christopher Jude Shannon** honored his birthday by donating 556 lbs of food and clothing for Clara’s Closet. Their compassion and bright smiles reflect Christopher’s enduring legacy of kindness. We are truly humbled and they remain in our hearts.



Miles of Thanks

Thank you to **Joey Garofalo and Beacon Events** for choosing Lunch Break as the beneficiary of the Skeleton, Shamrock, and Santa Runs. Your support keeps our community thriving and running all year long.



A Gallery of Giving

A simple message to Caitlin McKenna sparked an unforgettable night at **Kelly-McKenna Gallery**. Caitlin, already creating a print to benefit Lunch Break, enthusiastically said yes to hosting this special event. **Enormous thanks to the incredible team and talented artists who donated their work**.



All You Need is Love

A Message from Our Executive Director



As another year of serving our community comes to a close, we are **deeply grateful for the blessings** that have touched our organization and for your **support during challenges that tested all of us**. We could not have lifted up so many without the strength of your helping hands.

Because of your commitment, we served **117,853 meals**, **provided 33,201 grocery pickups**, facilitated interim housing for families, guided individuals toward meaningful employment, clothed thousands, and distributed backpacks, toys, prom dresses and so much more, each act full of **love, compassion and hope for a brighter future**.

When unprecedented cuts to assistance programs struck in early fall, you once again **showed up in force**. We held our breath, uncertain if or when critical benefits would be restored while preparing for a potential hunger crisis. But as you have so many times before, you mobilized immediately, donating thousands of pounds of food, hundreds of volunteer hours and essential funds to ensure that families, children and countless others would not go hungry. **We are profoundly grateful**.

By supporting Lunch Break in 2025, you **empowered our mission to provide help for today and hope for tomorrow**, despite the extraordinary challenges. So that we may continue this vital work,

a Lunch Break angel has offered to match your gift, up to \$70,000.00, doubling the impact of your dollars! Please consider a gift today.

This is the Lunch Break community: working together, hand in hand, meeting today's needs, preparing for tomorrow's crises and **lifting those we all serve out of poverty**.

Best wishes for a joyous holiday season and a peaceful New Year. God Bless.

Swendely Love



DOUBLE THE LOVE
\$70,000

Thanks to a generous Lunch Break Angel, every donation, up to \$70,000, made through December 31 will be MATCHED!

Your gift today goes twice as far to provide meals, groceries and safe shelter and more for our neighbors in need.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Your \$50 Gift = 20 hot, nutritious meals With a Matching Gift \$100 = 40 hot, nutritious meals	Your \$100 Gift = 2 full bags of groceries With a Matching Gift \$200 = 4 full bags of groceries	Your \$630 Gift = 1 week of shelter for a family With a Matching Gift \$1,260 = 2 weeks of shelter for a family
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For 18 years, Mrs. Love's leadership has been the heart, soul and steady compass of Lunch Break.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Every Number Reflects a Life Changed.



YOUR CHOICE PANTRY

33,201 food pick ups (27% increase over 2024)



COMMUNITY KITCHEN

117,853 meals served (10% increase over 2024)



CLARA'S CLOSET

1,900+ bags of clothing distributed to outreach participants

31,705 visits for clothing on an on-need basis

361 people outfitted through the Suit Up for Success Program



YOUTH SERVICES

Provided holiday gifts for 504 families (1,182 children)

1,500 fully-loaded backpacks distributed to students heading to school



LIFE SKILLS

Our program and coaches help provide appropriate and relevant training, allowing participants to acquire and maintain meaningful employment while improving future career prospects.

160 people per month attended coaching sessions, ESL, computer and financial literacy classes and more.



ALLIANCE FOR SUCCESS

33 enrolled high school students

34 volunteer mentors

14 graduates attending universities or trade schools



VOLUNTEERS

2,435 caring volunteers

42,195 volunteer hours dedicated



FAMILY PROMISE OF MONMOUTH COUNTY

Providing families in Monmouth County with housing solutions, including interim and permanent housing, diversion and prevention services, counseling and life skills.

Guiding Growth

Life Skills in action by Birgit Mondesir, *Life Skills Program Manager*

One evening, as I worked in my office during an ESL class, I kept hearing bursts of laughter and animated conversation. Their instructor was guiding them through new English words and expressions, and I found myself wondering how they could be having so much fun when many of them could barely understand one another.

As I listened more closely, I realized their connection came through their differences. Our students come from all over the world, some speak Haitian Creole or Portuguese, others languages from Eastern Europe, and many speak various forms of Spanish. They represent different races, cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, yet they bridge those divides with ease, finding common humanity in each other and in the challenges they share.

After class, I watched them linger, still trying to communicate despite the barriers. They focused more intently on connecting than many people do when speaking the same language. It was inspiring. When asked why she enrolled, one student said, "I live here. My two children were born and raised here. It's important for me to learn the language, just as I would in my own country." Our instructor added, "Now that I'm retired, I want to give back. Teaching is something I can offer to support and celebrate the Latin community."

In that moment, I couldn't help but think: if the world embraced and celebrated our differences the way these students do, what a different world it would be. To learn more about this program, please visit www.LunchBreak.org/projects/life-skills/.



Planting Seeds of Change

Cultivating Hope with Project Citizen Gardener

This year, more than a dozen community partners grew and donated fresh produce to Lunch Break throughout the 2025 season. We are deeply grateful to: Long Branch Community Garden, Little Silver Community Garden, Middletown Community Garden, Oceanport Community Garden, Holmdel Community Garden, Fair Haven Community Garden, Tinton Falls Community Garden, Cousins' Garden, Stavola Farm in Pennington, St. Anselm's Catholic Church Garden (Tinton Falls), St. John's Episcopal Church Garden (Little Silver), Glenn Garden, Stepanski Garden, Rising Tides Botanical Garden in Colts Neck and so many other caring gardeners and farmers.

Thanks to their weekly and biweekly harvests led by **Bonnie Featherstone Johnson and Gabbie Tanella**, along with the dedicated volunteers, students and parish communities behind them, Lunch Break has been able to provide an abundance of fresh, healthy produce to our neighbors all season long.



Cousins Garden

Stavola Farm

St. John's Episcopal Church Community Garden

Rev. Eve Chamberlain

A Night of Possibilities & Purpose

Imagine the impact we can make together

At Lunch Break's 2025 Gala "Imagine the Possibilities" held at the Shadowbrook, we proudly recognized several friends whose support has had an extraordinary impact on the lives of those we serve. Over 300 guests joined us to honor their commitment to the Lunch Break mission.

Norma Todd Service Award: **Paul & Frances Turner**, Platinum Partner Award: **Jersey Central Power & Light**, Heart to Hand Award: **Chris "Coach Shempy" Champeau**, Emerging Leaders Award: **2025 Night Without a Bed Youth Committee led by Gillian Sahadi**

Thank you to our sponsors, honorees, volunteers and guests for making the night a tremendous success. Together, we're nourishing lives and building hope one meal, one act of kindness and one opportunity at a time.



Lunch Break Board of Trustees

Family Promise Week



Gillian Sahadi, Mark Zill, Memone Crystian & Peter Brophy

Lunch Break's Family Promise of Monmouth County kicked off National Family Promise week with an Open House at its Fort Monmouth campus, welcoming new supporters, friends and local officials for tours and conversations with staff and families. Family Promise, Lunch Break's housing program, provides comprehensive services and case management for families facing homelessness or housing instability. **"We want our community to see not just the programs, but the people whose lives are impacted every day,"** said Executive Director Gwendolyn O. Love.

Monmouth County data shows the growing need: **497 people experienced homelessness on a single night in 2024** and 17.1% of residents face severe housing challenges. Statewide, more than 4,600 individuals in families were counted as experiencing homelessness this year. **"Through Family Promise, we strive to ensure that families facing homelessness are met with dignity, support and a path to stability,"** added Memone Crystian, Director of Family Promise Housing.

Always Moving Forward

Reliable transportation is essential for our guests working toward stable employment, helping them maintain their jobs, support their families and move closer to long-term stability. Lunch Break celebrates Family Promise graduate and Navy veteran **Thurman Perry and his son, James** (left photo). Thurman worked diligently to complete our program and secure stable employment, but an unexpected setback occurred when his car broke down, jeopardizing his ability to get to work to support his family. Thanks to the generosity of the **DeFelice Family and Board Member Joe Wajda of Circle Subaru** in Shrewsbury, NJ, Thurman has reliable transportation! We extend our gratitude to **The Detail Doctor in Shrewsbury** for restoring the vehicle to like-new condition. As an added surprise, the Circle Subaru team gifted James a \$500 Old Navy gift card to help him start the school year with confidence.

When single father **Ziheem Horsley** (right photo) reached out to Family Promise, he was working tirelessly to support his children but struggling to make ends meet. Through the Family Promise Prevention/Diversion Program, the Horsley family received the support they needed to **remain safely housed**. Ziheem is an **active participant in our Life Skills programming completing the Family Promise Prevention/Diversion Program**, completing the Chrysalis program and earning his certificate of graduation. He continues to work with the team to explore new employment opportunities and build a more secure future.

Transportation had become a significant challenge, with Ziheem relying heavily on costly Uber rides to get to and from work.



Memone Crystian, Jill Gwydir, Joe Wajda, Hannah Stavola, Thurman Perry, James Perry & Gwendolyn Love

Thanks to one of Lunch Break's generous donors, **the family recently received a vehicle, an incredible gift that has lifted a major financial and logistical burden.**

Today, with permanent housing, reliable transportation and a path toward stronger employment, the **Horsley family is moving forward with stability and hope.**

To learn more about this program and how YOU can make a difference for a family in need, please email MCristian@lunchbreak.org.



Ziheem Horsley

Save the Date

Night Without a Bed



Saturday, March 28
Fort Athletic Club, 114
Saltzman Ave, Oceanport, NJ

'26 Annual Fall Gala

Thursday, October 15
Shadowbrook, 1 Obre Place
Shrewsbury, NJ

Meet Our New Team Members

Chef Terrence Stewart, *Director of Food Operations*, a seasoned personal chef with years of experience, returns to Lunch Break, where Gwen Love first gave him his start. Terrence brings his years of expertise, excellent culinary skills and insight and deep empathy full circle drawing on years of diverse culinary roles to prepare nutritious and delicious meals for our community. His lived experiences infuse his food with love and connect him to the guests he serves.



Nashalie Garcia, *Intake Coordinator*, is our point-of-contact for individuals seeking services, providing support by assessing needs and connecting guests to resources at Lunch Break or making referrals to partner organizations. As a Monmouth University social work student, she gains valuable hands-on experience in clinical and community-focused social work. Nash, as she is affectionately called, is committed to helping people directly while shaping stronger communities.



Joanna Mionez-Arriaga, *Life Skills Administrative Assistant*, supports the Life Skills Manager with program operations, employment preparation, participant engagement and intake. She is driven by her belief in meeting people where they are and helping them feel seen, heard, welcome and connected within the Lunch Break community.

Ophy (O-Fee) Flemming, Guest Services Care Attendant supports guests with shower and laundry services, making sure these vital resources run smoothly, respectfully and with care. Ophy has been part of the Lunch Break family for years, generously volunteering his time in the warehouse and stepping in wherever help was needed.



Staff Spotlight: Our People, Our Power

At Lunch Break, we are deeply grateful for our incredible staff. Their compassion, professionalism and dedication shine through in everything they do, as they pour their hearts into serving our community every single day.

Whether it's providing essential services, offering a kind word or guiding someone through a challenging moment, our team's commitment touches countless lives in meaningful ways.

Their daily work and interactions makes our mission possible and our impact immeasurable.



LB Staff Members at the 2025 Annual Fall Gala

Say Hello to Our New Board Members

Lunch Break is thrilled to welcome Anthony Dougherty, Scott Koonin, Lauren Holman and Ann Mohamadi (not shown) to our Board of Trustees! Their diverse experience, expertise and commitment to our mission will be invaluable as we continue working to support individuals and families in need.

Anthony Dougherty – Partner at Archer & Greiner, P.C.

Scott Koonin – Investment Advisor at Goldman Sachs

Lauren Holman – Vice President/Partner at Holman Frenia Allison, P.C.

Ann Mohamadi – CEO at Sapphire Strategy Advisors

We are excited to collaborate with them and look forward to the fresh perspectives, guidance and energy they will bring to our board as we grow and strengthen our programs for the community.



(left to right) Scott Koonin, Anthony Dougherty, Gwendolyn Love, Robin L. Klein and Lauren Holman (Ann Mohamadi not shown)

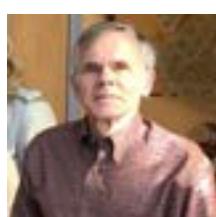
In Memoriam

Cherishing the Angels Who Served Beside Us



Dom Lamberti

Dominick "Dom" Lamberti, beloved husband, father, grandfather and longtime garment industry executive, passed peacefully at 81 on August 30, leaving behind a legacy of family devotion, community service and cherished memories. Thank you for being a part of our family, Dom.



Hans Zwaerink

Dr. Hendrik Jan "Hans" Zwaerink, 86, passed away peacefully on April 13. Born in the Netherlands, he came to the U.S. to study at Cornell and went on to a distinguished career in microbiology, including work at Duke University and Merck. Hans was also an avid cyclist, runner, volunteer and soccer fan.



Urbano Fernandez

Urbano Fernandez, 64, passed away peacefully on February 6, surrounded by loving family. He was a devoted family man who loved traveling, running, music, soccer, gardening, cooking and sharing laughs. He will be remembered for his warmth, humor, and the joy he brought to those around him.



Darby & Anthony



Monmouth University



Volunteers Cathy & Karen



Samantha & Vincent Farrugia



Jersey Shore Girl Scout Troop 197



Community Kitchen Volunteers

Powered by Kindness

At Lunch Break, we are continually inspired by the compassion and dedication of our corporate, student, organizational and individual volunteers and donors. You are the heart and soul of our mission. Your time, energy and generosity make it possible for us to provide essential services and support to our community each and every day.

Volunteers are the driving force behind our mission. They stock our shelves, prepare and serve meals and assist our guests with care and dignity in the Your Choice Pantry and Clara's Closet, mentoring along with countless other behind-the-scenes tasks that keep Lunch Break running every day.

Our donors are equally essential. From Girl and Boy Scout initiatives to corporate food drives, individual contributions and third-party events, the monetary and physical donations we receive help sustain our programs and services year-round. Your generosity ensures we can continue nourishing our community with compassion and hope.

We truly couldn't do what we do without you. Thank you for standing with us and making a meaningful difference.

"Gratitude makes great things possible."



New Jersey Youth Challenge Academy



Whole Foods Volunteers

JANET KRANIS

Since joining Lunch Break in 2014, Janet Kranis has served with dedication, first in the Food Pantry and then as a Homebound Driver delivering meals to those unable to leave their homes. In 2017, she began coordinating meal deliveries, training volunteers and ensuring clients receive both nourishment and connection. Janet's kindness and commitment bring warmth and hope to everyone she serves.



Scan the QR code for more about volunteering



Scan the QR code for more about donations





Lunch Break

HELP FOR TODAY • HOPE FOR TOMORROW

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