



HomeStart

Spring 2023 | What People Power Makes Possible

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PROPEL HOMESTART'S 2023 BOSTON MARATHON® RUNNERS TO THE FINISH LINE



For Jack and Trevor, this year's Team HomeStart runners, training daily and running the Boston Marathon's 26.2 mile course is a labor of love that lets them put their beliefs into daily action.

"I strongly believe in [HomeStart's] mission to not only help community members experiencing homelessness obtain and maintain housing, but to also help families avoid eviction in the first place." says Jack.

For Trevor, it's the sheer impact that HomeStart has on the community. "Over the last 25 years, HomeStart has helped over 14,000 individuals experiencing homelessness to find and move into a place of their own!"

When asked what he'd want to share with others in the Homestart community, Jack continues, "It is amazing to see how many lives HomeStart has changed for the better and hopefully with your help we can continue that herculean effort."

They are working together to try and raise \$20,000. The marathon is exactly one month away and they're 79% of the way to their goal. That's like being 20.72 miles into the Boston Marathon, with only 5.48 miles left to run!

**HELP JACK AND TREVOR CROSS THE FINISH LINE BY
DONATING TO TEAM HOMESTART**

**CELEBRATE THE DIFFERENCE WE'RE MAKING TOGETHER!
EXPLORE HOMESTART'S NEW IMPACT REPORT**

As HomeStart's Executive Director Matt Pritchard says in his introduction to this report, it is "a deliberate celebration of the extraordinary resolve and resilience of our team and supporters, and, most of all, a celebration of our clients..."

Take a look inside to find out:

- How cycles of homelessness are broken –for good– by intervening at different crucial moments
- What makes HomeStart a connecting hub for Greater Boston's network of homelessness services and affordable housing resources
- The ripple effect that supporting each of HomeStart's 1,056 clients in 2022 actually makes, told through one woman's story
- How our work on the frontlines led to an innovative program for eviction prevention that's poised to make a national impact

...And that's just a few of the things you'll find inside!

Click the image below for your own copy of our new Impact Report to see the change that your support makes.



IMPACT REPORT

2022/2023



**THEY RAISED! THEY RODE! THEY ROCKED IT! CELEBRATING
HOMESTART'S MOST SUCCESSFUL ICYCLE EVER**

ICycle 2023 was incredible!!! Thank you SO MUCH to everyone who came together– to ride, to teach spin classes, to cheer wildly from the sidelines. It was inspiring to have

over 300 supporters come together as a village to make sure our neighbors experiencing homelessness or housing instability know **they are not alone!**

It's HomeStart's biggest fundraiser of the year and this year broke records, both for turnout and for money raised. This year we raised

over \$500,000 to help

neighbors moving from homelessness into a home of their own and to help them thrive there amid HomeStart's community of support.

THANK YOU, from the bottom of our hearts and on behalf of everyone who will be able to experience the peace and dignity of having a stable place to live because of it. We look forward to riding with you again next year!

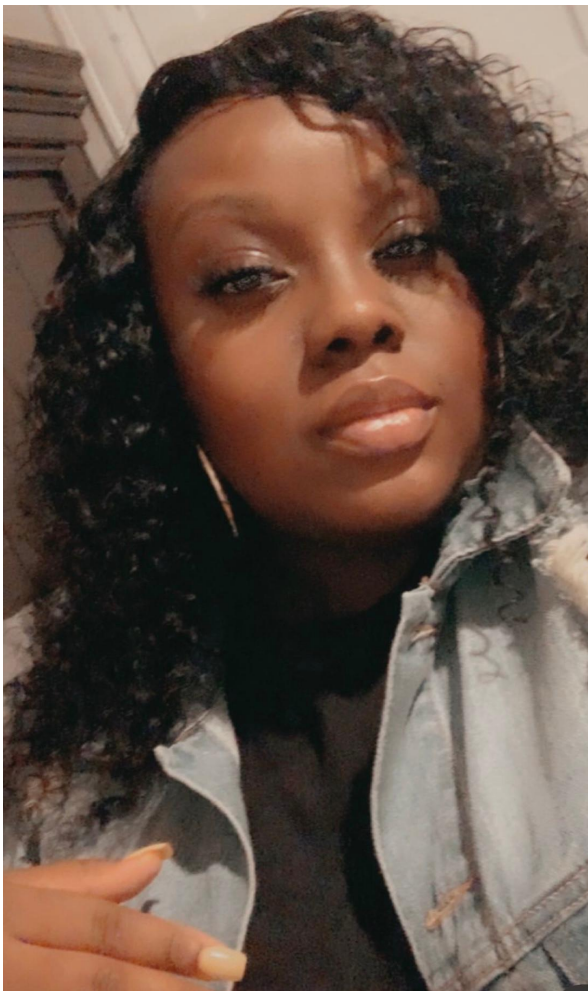
If you have any feedback from the event or are interested in creating a team for next year's ICycle, email neff@homestart.org.

Thank You to Our ICycle Sponsors!!





FROM THE FRONTLINES: AN INTERVIEW WITH HOMESTART'S TYJENAYA HOLMES



Tyjenaya Holmes, Landlord Engagement Coordinator, has endeared herself to HomeStart's clients and landlord partners alike for her heartfelt dedication and ingenuity. She's been in different roles at HomeStart for almost five years, but she may be most familiar to you for her time spent volunteering at ICycle year after year!

What was your path to HomeStart?

Before I got to HomeStart I was working at Metro Housing. I helped clients do the RAFT application [for emergency financial assistance] and process all their documents. That was a temp position and then I ended up seeing that HomeStart had a bunch of openings. Working with this population of people was always what I was looking for. I

didn't just want to be behind the scenes processing an application but working more hands-on.

What drew you to being a Landlord Engagement Coordinator?

I started working at HomeStart as a Housing Search Advocate and this position was a good next step. I'm doing the same thing, but without the ongoing caseload of clients that I had before. I help with other people's caseloads. I really like it. It's something different, but at the same time I still get to be hands-on helping clients with housing search. If they're not able to go to a viewing I go instead, or if they want accompaniment I can take clients to these housing viewings.

I do a lot of reaching out to landlords and having conversations about what we do as an organization to support our clients. I know a lot of landlords hear that our clients have Section 8* and they already have their guard up, like, "Oh, a Section 8 client, they're all..."

So, I feel like my engagement with these landlords is explaining how HomeStart works: **We're here to help the client and try to get them stable housing, and I explain everything we do to support them going forwards so that it doesn't look like we're just trying to house someone that may not be stable enough and then leaving them there to struggle.**

["Section 8" refers to a mobile rental subsidy voucher, where the renter pays a piece of the rent proportional to their income and then another agency pays the remaining amount.]*

What does a week in the life of a Landlord Engagement Coordinator look like?

Throughout the week I keep in communication with all the housing advocates who are in Cambridge because I do landlord engagement for all of them. They'll give me specific clients to assist or a general, "If you could find apartments in this area or that area..." We communicate throughout the day about different viewings and if they're able to come and bring the client. Sometimes I go on the viewings myself. This week, so far I've had four viewings and I have two more left. I like to set it up so that my goal for the week is to see this many apartments or try to get a response from this many landlords. Every week is not always successful, but that's why I set these goals. Because if you keep looking at apartments not all of them are going to say no. Somebody's going to say, "Oh, you know- we're willing to work with you."

Could you share more about the stigma against Section 8 voucher holders that you mentioned earlier?

Some of the landlords will say, "Well, I had section 8 tenants in the past and they destroyed the house." or "They got a lot of complaints from other neighbors." And they talk about it like that only happens with clients who have Section 8- But that could be anybody! That could be someone paying market rent. Other times it's not so much the clients that landlords don't like working with. I had a landlord tell me that housing authorities give them too much to deal with. And some will blatantly tell you that they don't take Section 8.

That's wild, because it's illegal to discriminate based on someone having a mobile voucher!

I've heard it so often that they probably don't even realize that they can't say that. It's been a tough one. I don't know what the stigma is about- people needing Section 8 to afford rent doesn't make them bad people, so I don't know why so many landlords respond like that.

Although some landlords are understanding. **They get it. They work with people with Section 8 and know HomeStart so they're always willing to work with HomeStart again if they have available units.** Those are the ones I definitely keep in contact with so that if a unit does become available I know they are open to working with us.

What is one of the biggest challenges you face in your position and how do you work through it?

Housing Search is obviously challenging when we have clients who suffer from mental health challenges, substance use issues, and then they have extensive CORIs as well. But one of the biggest challenges is when they don't have the "right" income. Right out of the gate, some landlords are asking for a 650-700 credit score and you gotta make this much money- three times the rent- and stuff like that. Some of them, even after you tell them they have a voucher that's going to cover that, they will still say "Oh... they need to have this amount of income." Most of our clients have no income or are on social security, so I feel like that's the hardest part, because I would feel better if they denied them because of something completely different. But something that's not the client's fault... Where Section 8 is going to cover this and their rent is just going to be a portion of that so their income should not really matter because they're going to be able to afford it- it's adjusted to go by their income! That's very challenging because that's one of the things I get a lot.

It kind of feels like their way of saying No Section 8 without saying "No Section 8"

Yeah, that's how I feel!

Do you have a favorite memory from your time at HomeStart?

A favorite memory... I had a client I was working with where I went through so much with that client -I think this person was on my caseload for years!-

and I felt like it just wasn't going to happen, and then she ended up getting housed. Everything was stacked against her. It was like there was no way we were going to help her find a place. Any time we'd take a step forward- getting old court cases closed, clearing warrants so she could get her voucher, sending her to AA meetings and sober homes- she'd come out and relapse. But she was comfortable enough with me to not have to lie or hide whatever's going on. I didn't judge her or make her feel like she was less-than because she had this problem.

She said that she'd experienced that judgment with other people. When she'd go to certain places -even some shelters- they'd look at her like "just someone on the street" and they'd look down on her, like she's beneath them. There's extra stigma against people when they're street homeless instead of being in a shelter with a bed, a roof over your head, meals. **And she'd always express this to me and let me know that she never felt that judgment with me. And that was always a thing for me because I never want anyone to feel like I judged them. I'm just going to do my part to help them through it and give them the resources that they need.**

It was hard to help this client, though, because I'd have to keep canceling apartment viewings due to her drinking. After I had to do that with a few apartments, I decided one day I'm going to catch this client real early in the morning. 8 o'clock. Real early before anything, you know... So finally I got an apartment that was able to get me an 8:00 or 8:30 appointment. So, real early in the morning, we had everything together to go view the apartment, and we did. And it worked out!!

She's in that apartment now. And she's doing very well now. Even with staying sober, she's doing very well. And I figured that would be the case. I figured maybe, if she's housed... it was just easier for her to get a drink because she's on the streets and she has nothing to lose. But, now she's been housed, she has been doing very well.

What do you enjoy most about what you're doing?

Housing the clients. These are clients who haven't been housed in a long time or who have never had an apartment at all. To be able to be off the street or to be able to not be in a shelter... their reaction of "Oh my God..." **Some of them can't believe it. I've had clients tell me, "I don't deserve this. There's no way I'm about to be housed." No matter what your past is, everybody deserves to have a roof over their head! It's freezing outside; it's crazy outside. For them to feel like that, it always hits a soft spot for me because I don't like that some of them think like that.**

So, I'd definitely say that- their reaction. I get a lot of clients who get really emotional and cry just from being housed when they thought this day would never come. Housing them- their being satisfied, them knowing that life is coming together and some good is happening for them. Because in my experience, with the clients I've worked with, they feel like they're not worth anything and they just really can't believe that people are giving them opportunities- that they're finally being housed. That's the part I like the most.

What change would you like to see happen in the next 10 years in the city of Boston, as a whole?

I would like to see more places for homeless individuals to be able to go, because I've noticed, especially where I live, there's a lot of new buildings always being built- these residential buildings- and then you turn the corner and we have people homeless on the street. Seeing them on the street, especially in the winter outside with nowhere to go because all the shelters are full or whatever, it's crazy. It's a soft spot for me because I see it and it makes me feel like.... As a city, Boston can do better in that area. **Everywhere you**

turn there's construction being done with new buildings and I feel like there's not enough places for the homeless population in Boston. So I would like to see a change in that.

There's also people that I house who say they want to go back to school or get a job, but they're struggling. I'd like to see more resources to help with that. You never know where a person's come from or what they could do with that support. I had one of my clients who had her Master's degree and she used to be a teacher, then something happened in her life to make her where she is now. She said when she gets housed she wants to go back to school or go back to teaching. That's her dream to go back into that. But going back to school costs funds. And even with financial aid, depending on where you go, it can usually take extra payments.

Is there anything else that you'd want readers to know?

I would definitely let them know HomeStart does a *lot*. They have their different departments, but they also do a lot to cater to each of their clients. During my time that I've been working here, I've seen HomeStart do the utmost for these clients. Even in their worst state. Like I said, even with things where it feels like it's not going to happen, HomeStart rides with the clients to the end. Through good or bad. Whether you see how there's going to be any good end result or not, you just stay with them and keep trying.

Complete these sentences:

I am passionate about The work that I do now. Obviously this is a job and I get paid, but I don't do it for that.

I'm currently reading..... A book of poems. I forget the title. I can't write them, but I like reading poetry and I like to go to Spoken Word to hear other people.

I'm currently watching..... Grey's Anatomy- I love it. I've rewatched it so many times!

I'm currently listening to..... Gospel and old-school R&B, always! On my car ride this morning, I was listening to the Maverick City Singers' "Jireh"- a gospel song.

"HOW CAN WE HELP?" SUPPORTING CLIENTS MOVING OUT OF HOMELESSNESS WITH *WELCOME HOME* PACKAGES



Recently we held two incredible Welcome Home Events hosted by Fidelity Investments, where volunteers gathered to create **Welcome Home Packages** for clients moving out of homelessness. HomeStart staff joined to set up the items that the Fidelity teams had purchased to donate into packing stations, and share about HomeStart's work. It was a great team-building activity for the volunteers, who'd gathered at Fidelity's main office from their home offices all over the world- with many of them meeting each other in person for the first time. We heard feedback from each group about how meaningful the experience was for those involved.

Thanks to their donations and volunteering, we've been able to give clients these packages of housewarming home essentials that help turn a bare-bones apartment into a home.

If you're interested in hosting your own Welcome Home Event, email neff@homestart.org

WELCOME HOME INGREDIENTS*:

*each Welcome Home Package should have at least these 10 essentials

- 1 2 NEUTRAL-COLORED DISH TOWELS + BOTTLE OF DISH SOAP 
- 2 MULTI-SET OF KITCHEN GADGETS/COOKING UTENSILS 
- 3 1 PACKAGE OF LARGE GARBAGE BAGS 
- 4 2 ROLLS EACH OF TP & PAPER TOWELS (INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED) 
- 5 1 BAG OF LAUNDRY DETERGENT PODS 
- 6 1 PACKAGE OF STANDARD LIGHT BULBS 
- 7 1 BOTTLE ALL PURPOSE CLEANING SPRAY OR WIPES + PACKAGE OF SPONGES 
- 8 1 BASIC FIRST AID KIT 
- 9 2 ADULT TOOTHBRUSHES + 1 TUBE OF TOOTHPASTE 
- 10 1 CLEAR SHOWER CURTAIN LINER + SET OF SHOWER CURTAIN RINGS 

items can be packaged in a 48-qt storage container or a medium-sized duffel bag



www.homestart.org/welcomehome

for ideas, shopping tips & a list of bonus items

News & Views:

- [How Silicon Valley Bank's Collapse Affects Financing for MA Affordable Housing](#)
- [Labor Traffickers Are Taking Advantage of MA's Limited Housing Supply](#)
- [30 People Share What The Experience of Homelessness Is Like](#)
- [HomeStart Advisory Board Member and Pulitzer Prize-Winner Matt Desmond's new book *Poverty, by America* Identifies How Poverty is Sustained by Benefits to Americans with Wealth](#)
- [Even After Finally Receiving a Mobile Voucher, Finding A Home Eludes Many](#)
- [Rough Sleepers chronicles the work of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless' Dr. Jim O'Connell](#)
- [Boston City Council Advances Mayor Wu's Rent Control Plan](#)
- [Housing Advocates Rally Focuses on Costs, Living Conditions for MA Residents](#)

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**MAKE A DONATION TO END AND PREVENT
HOMELESSNESS**
