

JULY 2023

Making Connections at The Junction



It has been just over a year since Home Sweet Home Ministries first opened our community center, The Junction. With your prayers and support, we have continued to gather and grow together. You have made it possible for us to host a variety of events from job fairs to finance classes. HSHM has also been blessed to work with several community partners including Living Stone Church, Bloomington Public Library, Project Oz, and Star Student Literacy.

We are thrilled to see The Junction's classroom utilized on a weekly basis. Not only has it been a great space for staff development meetings and volunteer trainings, but also for other educational opportunities as well. This past spring, Heartland Community College used the space to teach GED classes.

"Each week we did a practice test. I only read the questions out loud and let them work together to tell me the answers," shares Caryn Clark, Heartland GED Instructor. "And with every single practice test we did, they scored likely to pass the GED. It was so cool to hear them be like, 'Oh, I really can do this!' To see these 40- to 60-year-olds realize that they can achieve their goals was just really inspiring."

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MISSION STATEMENT

Home Sweet Home Ministries demonstrates Christ's love through innovative approaches that instill hope, restore lives, and build community.



A Message from Matt

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

– Matthew 6:10

I reflect on this part of what we call the Lord’s Prayer every day, and I like to think that Home Sweet Home Ministries is faithfully bringing a little part of God’s Kingdom to our community each day.

A year ago when we opened The Junction, we hoped that it would prove to be a place of community and connections – and that is certainly what we’ve seen! We’ve met new people, built new collaborations, and have experienced abundant new opportunities in The Junction over the past 12 months. I’m confident even more are to come.

Of course, The Junction isn’t the only place we see such beloved community in action. Our Bread For Life Co-op has been an outpost of hope to many of our neighbors experiencing food insecurity for almost a decade now. As we rebound from the challenges of the pandemic, we see our membership growing and partnerships expanding.

Home Sweet Home Ministries demonstrates Christ’s love through these and other services thanks entirely to the support from all of you. I pray that you are encouraged as you read through this issue of our newsletter and may God bless you all for your faithful support of our ministry.

Matt Burgess

Matt Burgess
Chief Executive
mburgess@hshministries.org
(309) 828-7356



Last year, over 160 members utilized the Bread For Life Co-op to sustain themselves and their families. With your caring support, the co-op has continued to provide those experiencing food insecurity with access to fresh produce and other healthy food items. A big part of our work relies on faithful volunteers, like Bob Gordon.

Bob has been involved with the co-op for the past nine years. He currently volunteers two days a week for a few hours each day. He says he enjoys coming in to help.

“It gives me the opportunity to get out and do something to give back. I enjoy it,” shares Bob.

At the co-op, you’ll find Bob helping with a variety of jobs, pitching in wherever he can. “One of my best qualities is organizing. I will mostly help with the meat, organizing and stocking the freezers.”

Not only does he enjoy his work but the company as well. “Everyone here including the staff are all friendly and very understanding. It’s just a nice atmosphere to meet new people,” says Bob. “I’ve built relationships with those working on the same schedule as me.”

Bob looks forward to seeing the co-op community continue to grow. It’s a great opportunity to get involved and be a part of something bigger. If you’re interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities including the co-op, please visit hshministries.org and click on the Volunteer tab.

Volunteer With Us!

Discover ways to get involved at

<https://hshministries.org/volunteer/opportunities-to-serve>

Creating Healthier Lifestyles



Home Sweet Home is always striving for ways to better the health of our community. That's why we're excited to partner with the Illinois Nutrition Education Program's Better Health Class. The class starts again this fall on select Wednesdays from 1:30-2:30 pm at the Bread For Life Co-op. It's a great way to learn the cooking skills necessary to lead an active and healthy life with limited resources.

"The spring session went well, it was the first time this curriculum was taught in McLean County," adds Beth Kraft, Community Outreach Worker with Illinois Nutrition Education Programs. "I had nine participants total over the eight sessions. It was fun to see the participants cook using new methods."

In addition to learning about meal planning and healthier eating patterns, participants have fun prepping some tasty recipes. "We created a salad, stir fry, skillet meal, fruity dessert, easy eggs, wrap, smoothie, and a soup. I bring with me several options for each step," shares Beth.

Carol Thomas, a current co-op member, participated in the class this spring and really enjoyed the hands-on experience. "During one class, we made a black bean chili soup that was very good. I took some home with me and had it for lunch the next day."

The next class begins on August 2, 2023. If you're interested in learning more, please call 309-663-8306 or email bkraft@illinois.edu.



JOIN US FOR BIG GIVE

Fall is around the corner and we need your help! Home Sweet Home Ministries, Midwest Food Bank, and Thrivent are busy preparing for Big Give. We are looking for churches, youth groups, schools, and businesses to get involved. Big Give typically occurs in September and October. We are asking community members to help us collect items for meal boxes that we will distribute during Thanksgiving. You can choose to do special shopping days or a planned food drive. We are happy to provide shopping lists, boxes, and arrange pick-ups. It is a wonderful opportunity to give back in a big way! Last year your efforts helped to feed 1,600 families. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to Leslie Bunge, HSHM's Director of Development at lbunge@hshministries.org or 309-319-2820. Thank you!

Wheels In Motion

Save the date for our annual Night in a Car fundraiser happening on **Friday, February 2nd, 2024!** Hosted by Home Sweet Home, this fundraising and awareness event is like no other. Participants "live" out of their cars during the overnight hours, getting a taste of what it's like to experience homelessness. It's an eye-opening simulation that aims to shine a light on the often overlooked reality of car living.



Not only will you have a unique and impactful experience, but you're also supporting an incredible cause. Home Sweet Home Ministries works hard to eliminate homelessness in our community, and your participation can make a real difference. We're challenging each team to raise \$1,000 to support the vital work of HSHM.

So, buckle up and get ready to make a positive change. Join us on February 2nd for a Night in a Car you will never forget. To register for the event and start fundraising, hop on over to nightinacar.org and your team can begin working to drive out homelessness today!

Like us on Facebook
Home Sweet Home Ministries

Like Us!



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Besides serving as a unique spot to learn, The Junction also provides a safe environment to invoke fellowship, leading to new friendships.

“In a more intimate setting, we were able to support each other not just with school matters but also with other personal matters,” says Caryn. “You can take a moment to ask, ‘How are you doing? How can we support you?’ So whether it’s job related or someone in the family is sick, we’re able to talk with each other. It’s not just the education part, we can all just really jive together.”

It’s all these little moments of hope that help The Junction thrive. Whether it’s providing someone with the chance to cool off from the heat or enjoy a snack or simply engage in conversation with someone over a puzzle, it allows us the opportunity to make meaningful connections with our neighbors.

“It’s a place where you can just be you. It’s very inviting, warm, and welcoming to all people,” shares Caryn. “I really hope that more people come. The more students we have, the more diverse activities we can do together,” adds Caryn. “I hope people see the resources that are available and take hold of them.”

If you are interested in exploring new opportunities, please reach out to HSHM’s Community Outreach Manager, Samantha Williams, at 309-828-7356 ext. 228 or swilliams@hshministries.org. Together we can continue to connect and learn.

Current Needs

With your kind support, Home Sweet Home provides nourishment and renewal to individuals and families seeking refuge. Please kindly consider collecting the following items:

- Bottled Water
- Apples/Cuties
- Individual Bags of Chips
- Canned Meat
- Boxes of Tissues
- Deodorant (Men’s and Women’s)
- Body Wash
- Toilet Paper/Paper Towels

Donations can be dropped off at the Bread For Life Food Co-op at 301 East Oakland Avenue in Bloomington anytime Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4 pm. Be sure to check out hshministries.org and click on the “Ways to Give” tab for urgent needs and our Amazon Wish list. Thank you so much for providing for your neighbors in need.

Join Us In Prayer

As Home Sweet Home comforts others this summer, we kindly ask your help in praying for:

- individuals, families, and Veterans seeking refuge.
- our staff and community partners involved with The Junction.
- the Bread For Life Food Co-op and its members.
- community gardeners that provide HSHM with fresh produce.
- the well-being of volunteers, clients, and staff who devote their time in our shelter.

Thank you for surrounding us in prayer. God Bless!