



Founded on Agape
Unconditional Love

Thea's Notes

A Newsletter of Thea Bowman House

Fall 2020

A Thousand Thanks

COVID-19 is no match for the generosity of our benefactors. We pause from the hustle and bustle of our new daily routines to thank you for your support. We dedicate this issue to all of you. You have called to see how we are doing. You have purchased gift cards to supermarkets so that our poorest families can have food on their tables. You have provided COVID-19 prevention kits for distribution to individuals and families that use our St. Clare's Food Pantry. Still other angels are making up bags of personal care and hygiene products.

We also want to thank Oneida County Department of Social Services and the Child Care Council of Cornell Cooperative Extension for going above and beyond all expectations to keep childcare centers like ours in operation during times like no other.

We are held up by your kindness and compassion.

Keeping Safe in the COVID Epidemic

Childcare is considered an essential service. Many of our parents are working in hospitals, nursing homes, and food service. They cannot work without childcare and so, after a two-week closure last March, we reopened using guidelines from New York State.

Each morning we screen all children before they enter the building with temperature and health checks. We meet their parents at the door and ask the vetting questions required by the Health Department. Everyone washes their hands upon arrival and our dedicated staff CLEANS AND CLEANS ALL DAY LONG. We have learned the importance of the proper wearing of masks. Social distancing is a real challenge with our littlest ones so we have learned that outdoor play is a great way to have fun, and we are really enjoying our outdoor playground this year. We keep updated on the latest developments and can't wait until we can return to more carefree days.

Pre-k News

Once COVID-19 struck, we could no longer have the children in their regular programs. Pre-k learning materials were delivered by our little school bus. On graduation day, a procession of pre-k teachers and support staff rode the bus bearing gift bags, diplomas, and balloons to celebrate a most unusual ending to the school year. Our teachers get an A+ for creativity and compassion as they kept in touch with their students and parents.

We have just welcomed a new pre-k class and continue to enjoy working with four-year-old children from all over the world. They are adjusting to face masks, but we miss seeing their smiles.



Find us on the web: www.theabowmanhouse.org or facebook.com/theabowmanhouse

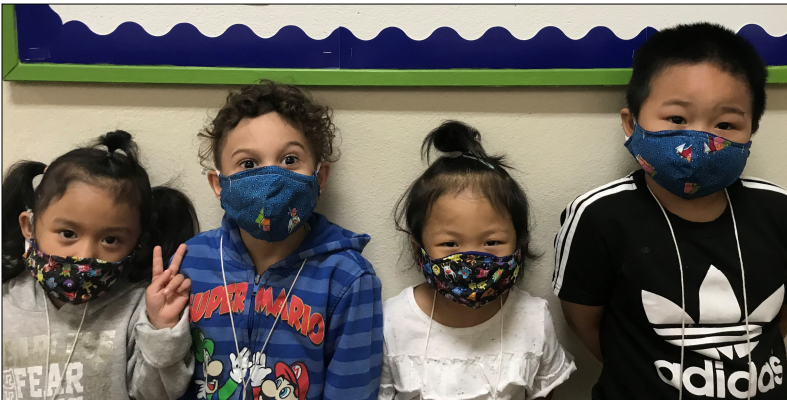
Helping Hands



An anonymous donor called one day with a brilliant idea. In addition to the families that we serve, we also have a very active food pantry and clothing shop. Household cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, and disinfectants are seldom available to our poorest families. The COVID-19 epidemic really increased our awareness of this situation. Then there was the new issue of the need for face masks and hand sanitizer. Then came the brilliant idea of our benefactor. COVID-19 kits were created and to date 50 of them have been given out at Thea Bowman House in reusable shopping bags.

Yet another angelic seamstress, Mary Jane, has made over 400 masks from scraps of material. These protect the children at our center and the adults that serve them in style.

Our friends at the Hartford Insurance Company and Bank of America have made sure that the children are equipped with school supplies and book bags in anticipation of the beginning of the school year. The kids are ready!!



The Mask Modelers



SUMMER FUN IN SPITE OF A PANDEMIC

A favorite event at Thea Bowman House is the annual August week at Camp Kingsley. We were not able to hold it this year because of the pandemic, and we had to get creative. Our littlest ones "camped out" in the backyard at our Lafayette Street site and enjoyed their pretend fire and marshmallows. Our older kids weren't able to go far from home, but were able to enjoy trips to Delta Lake and the Clinton swimming pool thanks to the generosity of the John Winter Family Fund.





Food pantry on Lafayette Street

Thanks to a grant from the American Heart Association, Thea Bowman House was able to enter into partnership with Nancy Grove of Old Path Organic Farm in Sauquoit. Each Wednesday fresh produce is delivered to our pantry door and prepared for distribution to our 200+ monthly consumers. For many people, these vegetables and fruits are an unaffordable luxury. The American Heart Association is dedicated to promoting healthy eating habits. It is a well-known fact that low income and at-risk populations suffer from heart disease due to a poor diet. We are so grateful for this pilot project and look forward to continued partnerships like this.

DOING DOUBLE DUTY!

Childcare is an essential service and this year many school-aged children are not able to attend school in person. They arrive at Thea Bowman House each day with Chromebooks that have been supplied to them by the Utica City School District. This has caused all of us to realize the importance of becoming “tech-savvy.” Our Thea Bowman House staff deserves praise for the outstanding job that they have done during this time.

The DeSales Corner

Known to most Uticans as the former St. Francis deSales School, the four-story building at 309 Genesee Street continues to serve Thea Bowman House’s pre-k, school-age childcare, and Kids with Promise programs. It is also home to the Latino Association and the newly arrived Academics First 24/7 child care center. We want to take this opportunity to thank the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties for helping to “rebuild” this center that serves hundreds of people each day. Most recently, a grant for \$15,000 funded repairs to alleviate flooding and address heating and plumbing issues on the ground floor. This was made possible by the Erich K. Kupfer Memorial Fund and the Winifred K. Quin fund. Thank you for giving this building “new life.”



Thea Bowman House

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Mission Statement

The mission of Thea Bowman House is to provide a safe, nurturing environment to enable culturally diverse children and families to achieve their full potential. The foundation on which Thea Bowman House is built is *agape*, "unconditional love."

Jane Domingue
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School-Age Program Director

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Wish List

- Used Chromebooks or laptops in good condition
- Canned food for pantry
- Gift cards to supermarkets for unemployed or ill families
- Tech-savvy volunteers—ideal opportunity for someone with no health concerns who can work with children during the day
- 2 industrial vacuum cleaners
- Cleaning supplies
- Diapers sizes 4 and 5 and pull-ups

Please contact Jane at 315-797-0748 or info@theabowmanhouse.org if you can help with any of the above.

In Memoriam

Thea Bowman House is blessed by many volunteers who help us to serve our children and families. On April 25, 2020, we mourned the death of one of our most faithful volunteers, Diana O'Looney. Diana and Jim O'Looney were among our first volunteers and they gave hours of time to help others. Diana volunteered every day as a tutor well into her 80s. She used her skills as a reading teacher to help so many children learn to read and best of all to enjoy reading. The O'Looneys were at every fundraising event to cheer us on in all seasons. Their legacy of reaching out to those in need will live on for years to come.

I would like to make a contribution to Thea Bowman House.

Name _____

Gift Amount _____

◇ General Support _____

◇ Specific Program _____

◇ In Honor of _____



United Way of
the Valley and
Greater Utica Area

PLEASE SUPPORT THE UNITED WAY

United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area helps to support three Thea Bowman House programs. These are childcare for low income families, the Kids with Promise teen program, and our food pantry called St. Clare's Cupboard. They also fund many of our collaborating partners. Our local United Way works tirelessly on behalf of our community through advocacy and volunteerism. They have recently helped start a valuable resource called 211 so that people in need can connect with appropriate services. They deserve our support.