



THE PENNINGTON SCHOOL

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PENNINGTON, NJ, December 18, 2024—The Pennington School Celebrates 30 Years of Making Holiday Magic for Mercer County Families

On Saturday, December 14, The Pennington School welcomed over one hundred local families to its annual holiday party for clients of HomeFront, a Mercer County not-for-profit organization devoted to ending homelessness and poverty in central New Jersey. Over 150 students, parents, staff, and faculty members volunteered their time to serve as hosts, food servers, playmates, readers, crafters, gift wrappers, and more.

The School's special relationship with HomeFront began thirty years ago this month. According to Associate Head of School Chad Bridges '96, the School received an urgent call in December of 1994 from HomeFront founder Connie Mercer. HomeFront's corporate sponsor that year unexpectedly backed out at the last minute, leaving the organization scrambling for a host venue to help with their annual holiday party. Upon hearing that news, The Pennington School administration stepped forward without hesitation, hosting the celebration that year and every year since then.

The School's senior Peer Leaders traveled to HomeFront in advance of the party, learning about the myriad ways in which HomeFront supports neighbors in need. The Peer Leaders were also in charge of organizing a toy drive in the weeks leading up to the festivities. In addition to hundreds of warm hats and gloves, the School community proudly collected over 350 gifts with which to fill Santa's Toy Shop, a place where parents could go "shopping" and have gifts wrapped while their children were entertained with games, crafts, and dancing led by Pennington's student "elves." Families also enjoyed a delicious turkey dinner with all the trimmings, courtesy of CulinArt, the School's dining service, and a visit from Santa helped round out the afternoon fun.

According to Bridges, the true magic of this day comes from creating "a space for families to momentarily escape their daily struggles, to experience joy, and to build relationships. The event gives families the power of choice, fosters dignity, and strengthens the bonds of community." It is a fitting tradition for The Pennington School, which is committed to compassion, teamwork, and service, and aptly reflects the spirit of the holiday season.

The Pennington School is an independent coeducational school for students in grades 6 through 12, in both day and boarding programs. The curriculum is college preparatory, with an emphasis on individual excellence, fostering the development of the whole student through academics, athletics, community service, and the creative and performing arts.

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Photo Caption: Pennington's Senior Peer Leaders and faculty advisors pose alongside the many gifts collected during their toy drive as they wait for families to arrive for the annual HomeFront Holiday Party. Photo courtesy of Tim Wang '28.