



Collective Philanthropy Powered By Women

**Executive Summary 2023
Women, Children & Families Focus Area**

Organization Name: The Heart of Camden

Organization website: <https://www.heartofcamden.org/>

County where organization headquartered Camden County

County(ies) being served by proposed project: Camden County

Organization Mission: Heart of Camden’s work is about home. We build the places to live and raise families, the places for neighbors to gather, the places that nurture, the places that inspire. We build all the types of spaces that strengthen communities, support families, and change lives. Home – it’s where the heart is.

Organization's Projected Operating Budget 2023: \$2,152,475

Proposed Project Name: HOC’s Bridge Builders Project at the Michael J. Doyle Fieldhouse

Proposed Project Summary:

The Bridge Builders Project is a unique initiative that aims to connect critical services to residents, youth, women, women with children, and families in the Camden community. Additionally, the project will serve as a bridge to connect outside volunteers and supporters of Camden, educating them about the city and building stronger connections with the community.

At the heart of the Bridge Builders Project is the story of the bridge builder, which has been passed down through generations. As Monsignor Doyle once said, the bridge builder was the most powerful person in the Roman army because without bridges, the Roman Empire could not expand. This story provides a powerful metaphor for the important work of the Bridge Builders Project, which aims to identify and support the bridge builders in our community - individuals and organizations that work tirelessly to connect residents with the critical services they need. The Bridge Builders Project recognizes that building bridges is not just about connecting physical structures but also about building stronger connections between people and communities. By working together, we can create a more resilient and thriving community for local women, children, and families.

Through this initiative, we hope to empower and uplift the community by providing critical services and support, as well as fostering a greater sense of connection and understanding between individuals and organizations. By building bridges between communities and strengthening the existing ones, we can create a brighter future for Camden and its residents.

HOC proposes to expand programming and services offered at our South Camden community center, the Michael J. Doyle (MJD) Fieldhouse. With support from Impact100, HOC will build on ten years of success at the MJD Fieldhouse to maximize our capacity to improve the lives of women, children, and families living in low-

to-moderate income households in the Waterfront South neighborhood, South Camden, and the City of Camden as a whole.

HOC is a grassroots organization located in the Waterfront South neighborhood of Camden City primarily serving our host neighborhood and its surrounding communities (known as South Camden); however, all Camden residents are eligible to access programs and services at the Fieldhouse. The population we serve is approximately 50% African American and 40% Latinx with a median household income of \$27,000 and approximately 30% of the population living below the federal poverty line. One in every three local residents are a child under the age of 18, and all youth in our area are considered “at-risk” due to consistently high crime and poverty rates. While not the primary population we serve, some of those who access our services are housing insecure.

At the Fieldhouse, HOC operates a full-scale recreational gym, a food pantry, an arts/culture loft, community-accessible conference rooms, and nonprofit offices. Programming historically ranges from youth sports to open gym sessions to family-friendly BBQ’s. Services have ranged from food distribution (box lunches, non-perishable items, sandwiches) and clothing distribution (baby clothes, pajamas, jackets) to diaper and formula giveaways to vaccination clinics and healthcare screenings. While the past 10 years have been a success, HOC’s recent neighborhood planning process revealed that we are not meeting the full needs of women, children, and families in Waterfront South and South Camden.

Through the Bridge Builders Project, HOC will expand our programs and services at the MJD Fieldhouse to maximize our impact on supporting the basic needs and overall well-being of local women, children, and families. This funding will give us an opportunity to implement the most successful and in-demand services/programs from the past 10 years while adding new services/programs that were identified during the neighborhood planning process.

In conclusion, the Bridge Builders Project is a powerful metaphor for the important work of connecting residents, youth, women, women with children, and families to critical services and building stronger connections between people and communities. By working together as bridge builders, we can create a more resilient and thriving community for all.