

# Dignity & Hope

Domenica Foundation 2023 annual report

## New grantees

### Meet our newest grantees!

We're excited to introduce you to two community partners who joined the Domenica Foundation family in 2023.

The Domenica Foundation funds grassroots organizations in Camden and South Jersey that work to improve the quality of life for underserved communities. We have four focus areas: education and youth, hunger, housing and homelessness, and community development.

Check out our grant philosophy at [www.DomenicaFoundation.org/grants](http://www.DomenicaFoundation.org/grants) to see if your organization can fit in!



## Summer camp

Several Camden young people spent a week at Camp Speers in the Poconos thanks to our grant to Camden Y, a branch of YMCA of Greater Philadelphia.

Along with campers from all over the region, our Camden kids explored nature, went kayaking and horseback riding, and learned archery. On climbing walls and ropes courses, they tested their limits and collaborated to overcome challenges.

"City kids often get stuck indoors all summer long," said Elena Piperno, Domenica Foundation director. "We were thrilled to send a few of them to summer camp."



## Grocery distribution

Also in 2023, we added Wholesome Riches to our portfolio of community partners who fight hunger in greater Camden.

Wholesome Riches reaches families where they are by partnering with community schools to get the word out and to distribute groceries to families at school sites. We adopted one site, Veterans Memorial Family School, for both funding and volunteer support. Our funding supports much-needed supplies that help the distribution run smoothly.

The Pipernos, shown left, volunteer regularly to help distribute food. See page 2 to learn about this and other volunteer opportunities with community partners.



# Spring into Action is back!

Our annual volunteer day, Spring into Action, came roaring back in April 2023 after a pandemic-induced hiatus.

More than 80 volunteers came together to make a difference with seven community partners: Cathedral Kitchen, Joseph's House of Camden, LUCY Outreach, Ronald McDonald House, Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Center, and St. Joseph Carpenter Society.

Volunteers prepared meals for guests, worked on grounds and gardens, and did spring cleaning for our partners—including a massive project to clean out a former school building that will become housing for low-income Camden residents.

Spring into Action 2024 is around the corner! Watch your email and our website for news about the April 20th event.



## Domenica FOUNDATION

**PEPE PIPERNO**  
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Dignity & Hope is our annual report  
to our friends and supporters.

**JAN GALLAGHER**  
editor

## Volunteer opportunities

Spring into Action isn't our only volunteer opportunity. In 2023, Domenica Foundation began recruiting and organizing volunteers on a regular basis for two community partners.

- Cathedral Kitchen: prepare and serve meals, with opportunities about once a month
- Wholesome Riches: bag and distribute groceries on the fourth Monday of each month at Veterans Memorial Family School

We plan to add more volunteer opportunities in 2024! Go to <https://domenicafoundation.org/volunteer/> to learn more and sign up. Thanks for helping!



# Domenica Scholarships

Every year, the Domenica Foundation awards scholarships to 20 rising ninth graders to help fund their attendance at one of four Catholic high schools in Camden and Philadelphia. In 2023, we supported a total of 68 high school students as Domenica Scholars.

“There are plenty of college scholarships out there,” noted Pepe Piperno, Domenica Foundation founder. “But to get to college, Camden kids need help to afford a high-quality high school education. That’s the niche we chose.”

Since we began awarding Domenica Scholarships in 2006, over 350 students have graduated. Our on-time graduation rate is 100%.

## Class of 2027

In spring 2022, we awarded four-year high school scholarships to 20 new Domenica Scholars.



## College visits

We sponsor college visits to help Domenica Scholars envision themselves as college students. In 2023, we visited The College of New Jersey, La Salle University, Rowan University, and St. Joseph’s University.



## Class of 2023

All 22 members of the Domenica Scholarship class of 2023 graduated in June. Of those students, 21 are going to college; one joined the Marines.



## S’more fun

We’ve added fun outings to our offerings for current Domenica Scholars. These events allow scholars from different high schools to bond as a cohort of high-achieving students. Last spring, we took students to Sky Zone to celebrate the end of the school year. This fall, we went on a hayride. Most students had never made s’mores before!



## Class of 2019

This year, most members of the Domenica Scholarship class of 2019 graduated from college. Judith Okwamba, pictured here, graduated with a pharmacy degree from Pitt.



**2023**  
**Domenica Scholars**  
had an average  
GPA of 3.6.  
Together, they received  
more than  
**\$3.5 million**  
in college scholarships  
and awards.

# Supporting Catholic Partnership Schools



CPS needed a bus to get kids to extracurricular activities. To fill this need, we committed \$125,000 over five years to fund purchase of a new school bus.

Our annual grant to Catholic Partnership Schools helps CPS offer affordable high-quality education to students who would otherwise have to attend underperforming public schools. CPS operates four K-8 schools and one dual-language pre-K in Camden.

CPS provided high-quality education to 869 students in 2022-23. CPS students have a 99% high school graduation rate—far above the averages for both Camden and New Jersey as a whole.



We support music programming at CPS schools in partnership with Symphony in C.



Jameka Walker, pictured here with Elena and Pepe Piperno, was one of three finalists for the 2023 Opus Prize. Jameka was recognized by the Opus Foundation for her social entrepreneurship as executive director of Catholic Partnership Schools. As a finalist, Jameka received \$100,000 for CPS.

## Polar Express

As presenting sponsors, we rode the Polar Express with 25 seriously ill children and their families from Ronald McDonald House. We loved seeing the joy on the faces of kids and caregivers as they took a much-needed break from medical appointments and constant worry.



## Impact

In 2023, we awarded \$924,350 to 22 grantees in the four areas shown in the pie chart. As always, the largest chunk of our support goes to community partners who support the education and development of children and teens.

Contact us to see how you can get involved with the Domenica Foundation or our community partners.

