Sowing the Seeds for a Healthier Bronx: Summertime Gardening, Fitness, and Fun
The July 2017 Newsletter

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During the warmer months, BronxWorks student and senior program participants enjoy getting their hands dirty. They tend the gardens at the BronxWorks E. Roberts Moore Senior Center, the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center, and at South Bronx Preparatory Academy. The summer sunshine brings their fruits, veggies, herbs, and flowers to life. Here's a closer look at these BronxWorks gardening projects.

**South Bronx Preparatory Gets in the Weeds**

Two years ago, the gardens at South Bronx Preparatory were in shambles. BronxWorks Program Coordinator Dina Brown leads the Schools Out NYC (SONYC) afterschool and summer camp programs at South Bronx Prep. Dina worked with her students to reimagine the gardens. The participants cleaned out the plant beds, removed weeds, put mulch down, and planted flowers, fruits, and veggies. After preparing the garden, the middle school students learned how to test soil, which plants complement one another, and how to grow companion plants. The students grew strawberries, tomatoes, parsley, chives, sweet peppers, and green peppers, and at the end of the school year they used some of these fresh ingredients to make a nutritious and tasty soup.

During the summertime, about fifteen SONYC camp participants maintain the garden. The participants call themselves
"The students are learning about healthy eating habits, how to beautify their community, and how to give back," said Dina. "At first they weren't too interested, but gradually became really engaged," she added.

Los Amigos de Moore: Harvesting Friendship

The Los Amigos de Moore is a group of dedicated seniors who among other things tend to the garden in front of the BronxWorks E. Roberts Moore Senior Center. They plant squash, cilantro, tomatoes and thyme and engage with the seniors in the community about eating healthy. But above all, says member Anita Gonzalez, the group is like a family. "The best part of Los Amigos is being together, exchanging experiences, laughing..." she says. "We help each other out."

Los Amigos also attend gardening and cooking workshops at Hostos Community College and Columbia University. Last year, they taught others how to make Sofrito, a blend of herbs and vegetables used as the flavor base in Latin American cuisines. They even created a cook book that includes recipes they made from ingredients in the garden.

"My favorite part of gardening is watching the plants grow," says Anita. "When you see a grown plant and it's big...wow, you don't even know what to say."

CMCC Takes Gardening to New Heights

At the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center, children from kindergarten to fifth grade regularly climb six flights of stairs to the building's sunny rooftop. They play on the playground, decorate the fences with art, and grow herbs and vegetables. Dave Rosenthal, the resident horticulturist, teaches the students how to cultivate and care for plants. BronxWorks kitchen staff members make the local favorite Bronx Salad using ingredients from the garden. The salad includes tasty vegetables like kale, corn, and peppers, and the kids enjoy having it as part of their program meals. "Today we had someone from the Cornell Cooperative come," said Kim Haynes, BronxWorks Afterschool and Summer Camp Program Coordinator, "and they were surveying the children, asking who likes salad, who eats vegetables? And most kids said, I do!" To complement their lessons from Dave, instructors from the Cornell Cooperative Initiative visit the students once a week to teach lessons on cooking as well as healthy eating.

"They talk about the food that is good for your body and how to do things in moderation," said Kim.
The program participants stay active, as well. In addition to climbing the stairs, the kids bike ride around Cortland Park, participate in team sports, and play on the roof playground.

These are just a few of the gardens BronxWorks has across our 37 sites in the borough. Check out upcoming newsletters for more information on our gardening initiatives.

SAVED! The Senior Homelessness Prevention Project

BronxWorks is thrilled to announce that the New York City Council recently voted to save the BronxWorks Senior Homelessness Prevention Project (SHPP), a unique and much-needed eviction prevention program based in the Bronx County Housing Court, with a $250,000 investment. The program has helped prevent over 400 seniors, many of whom are immigrants with limited English proficiency, from becoming homeless. Without SHPP, low-income Bronx seniors are at greater risk of eviction, but the program was at risk of shutting down this summer without continued funding.

"We are extremely grateful to City Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, Council Member Vanessa Gibson, the Bronx Delegation and entire City Council for recognizing the needs of seniors in housing court and saving the Senior Homelessness Prevention Project," said Eileen Torres, Executive Director of BronxWorks. "As our city's senior population continues to rise, the number of tenants in need of this support will only continue to increase."

Home to the highest eviction rate in the city, the Bronx County Housing Court sees nearly 2,000 tenants a day. Senior homelessness is becoming a crisis, with rates predicted to increase 30% by 2020 and double by 2050, according to the Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness.
Former Bronx Housing Court Supervising Judge Jaya Madhavan observed the challenges seniors were facing, and in 2014 he worked with BronxWorks to establish SHPP. Now, when seniors appear in housing court, oftentimes overwhelmed and scared, a judge can refer them to SHPP for counseling and support.

The success of the BronxWorks program lies in the holistic approach caseworkers employ in order to help seniors avoid eviction in the short-term and stay in their apartments long term.

Not only do they assist seniors in navigating Housing Court and help them avoid an immediate eviction by, for example, securing funds to pay back rent, caseworkers also identify eligibility for benefits or subsidies, provide budget counseling to ensure future ability to pay, and communicate with landlords and/or relatives to address other barriers to continued independent living.

SHPP is the only program in the city that specifically targets seniors with this comprehensive approach. In the past two years, it has prevented more than 400 seniors from becoming homeless. Thanks to the City Council, this important work will continue. BronxWorks would also like to thank all of the individual donors, staff and friends for their support of SHPP.

"The BronxWorks Senior Homelessness Prevention Project is essential. It's important to the court that we have somewhere to refer our seniors who need help. If we didn't have BronxWorks SHPP, we don't know what would happen to our senior litigants." - Judge Miriam Breier, Supervising Judge at Bronx Housing Court.

Participants Pool their Resources from the 3rd Annual BronxWorks 5K

BronxWorks is excited to announce that all proceeds from the recently held BronxWorks 5K, as well as the funds raised by a special BronxWorks raffle, will go toward providing swimming lessons at
The newly renovated BronxWorks indoor pool located at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center for our preschool and elementary school students!

BronxWorks is proud to operate one of the few indoor swimming pools in the Bronx, where we teach children and adults from the community to swim. Thanks to the generosity of many supporters, staff and friends, BronxWorks will be able to provide more swimming opportunities for our community. Thank you!

BronxWorks Special Raffle

Grand Prize Apple Watch Series 1

$5 EACH OR 5 RAFFLES FOR $20
DRAWING TO BE HELD AT THE BRONXWORKS ANNUAL STAFF PICNIC FRIDAY, AUGUST 25, 2017 AT 2:00PM

Proceeds to be used toward providing swimming lessons for our preschool and elementary school students at the newly renovated BronxWorks indoor pool.
Staff Profile: Estrella Montanez

Born and raised in the Bronx, Estrella Montanez is dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk families in the borough. As Residence Director at the Nelson Avenue Family Residence, she supervises all aspects of the residence’s services for families and day-to-day operations. Estrella works with her staff to ensure that families have a positive experience in the shelter as well as a plan to move forward.

"Our goal and our approach is to assess a family's immediate needs and prepare a plan to get families back into the community," she said, "finding employment, saving, and exploring resources such as family and friends."

Estrella has a background in working in a variety of social service roles. After receiving her Bachelor's degree in Developmental Sociology from Cornell University, Estrella worked in a multi-systemic therapy program for youth in the juvenile justice system as an alternative to incarceration. "I worked to help them remain in the community and stay away from trouble," she said.

Estrella’s work inspired her to pursue a Master's degree in Social Work at Columbia University. After receiving her MSW, Estrella worked in an outpatient mental health program for children and youth. Having excelled in her previous roles, Estrella was ready for a more senior position. "I asked myself, How else can I assist in this field?" Estrella joined BronxWorks as a Case Management Supervisor in November 2015; her first supervisory role. Estrella was promoted to Director of Social Services at Nelson Avenue in January of 2016 and to her current role in May. "I’ve done a lot!" she says with a smile. "All with children, youth, and families."
No longer in a direct service role, Estrella enjoys working with colleagues to have an impact. "I've grown to like seeing staff grow and develop," she says. Helping families secure housing has been particularly rewarding to Estrella.

"We recently had a parent with a child at camp and they just found an apartment. They called their child to say, I have a surprise for you when you get home," Estrella said with a smile. "It's their own place—that's big."

Photo Essay

Boogie on the Boulevard in full swing!

The best summer party in the Bronx returns to the Grand Concourse on select Sundays. Boogie on the Boulevard brings music, games, dancing, biking, art and a whole lot more to the Grand Concourse between 162nd and 170th Streets from 12:00 - 4:00 PM. There's still time to join the party-- come hang out with your neighbors on August 20 and then again on September 10 for the next Boogie on the Boulevard and get your Bronx on!
July 4th celebration at Heights Senior Center
The BronxWorks Heights Senior Center enjoyed the beautiful July weather with an outdoor barbecue courtesy of the BronxWorks senior center staff.

HOT Appreciation
Recently Mayor Bill de Blasio (center), Dr. Herminia Palacio, Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services (far left) and Steve Banks, Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services (bottom right) met with the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) to express the City's gratitude and appreciation for their hard work. Since 2005, the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach efforts have resulted in a 57% decline in the borough's street homeless population.
Twin Day at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center

Every Friday in July is a dress up day for the kids at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center Summer Camp. July 7th was "twin day" where participants were encouraged to find their long lost brother or sister and dress identically.
Jobs-Plus comes to the Melrose Houses
The BronxWorks Jobs-Plus program officially began providing services to the Melrose Houses. To commemorate this event BronxWorks hosted a party for the Melrose House residents at the Classic Community Center Gymnasium. Jobs-Plus helps individuals connect to free trainings, focused workshops, better employment opportunities, free tax preparation assistance, access to credit reports, supportive services and much more.

Upcoming Reminders

BronxWorks will again participate in Giving Tuesday this coming Thanksgiving season! Please consider joining us! Be on the lookout for more information.

Black Friday. Cyber Monday.
#GIVINGTUESDAY™

November 28, 2017
The TCS NYC Marathon takes place on Sunday, November 5, 2017 and BronxWorks is proud to have 5 runners fundraising to support the BronxWorks mission. [Click here](#) to help our runners reach their fundraising goals.

**SUPPORT #TEAMBRONXWORKS**

Help our team reach their fundraising goals

**DONATE**

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If you have any questions or would like more info about BronxWorks, please reach out to Allison at [agangi@bronxworks.org](mailto:agangi@bronxworks.org) or 646-393-4002.

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