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**BronxWorks celebrates 40 years of community service**

By Patrick Rocchio

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BronxWorks has now been serving the Bronx community for more than four decades - and that's something to celebrate.

And celebrate they did on Monday, Dec. 10, just blocks away from where the organization opened its first storefront office at E. 181st Street and the Grand Concourse in December 1972 as the Citizens Advice Bureau 40-years-ago to the day.

Mayor Bloomberg declared the day BronxWorks Day in New York City as the organization - which has about 25 city contracts to reduce street homelessness as well as to implement programs for youth, seniors, immigrants and those suffering from HIV/AIDS - celebrated what they called “40 years of lifting lives and building futures.”

The reason the organization has endured was simply put by its executive director Carolyn McLaughlin, who has been at BronxWorks for 34 years: “We try to see what the issues are in the community, and then develop programs to meet those needs.”

She said that during her time at BronxWorks, she has seen improvement in the borough's communities in reduced crime, increased civility, and slightly decreased poverty and unemployment rates.

McLaughlin also said that much new housing has been built in the borough, but that the share in rent that low-income people pay is now often at least 50%, and in the case of some seniors, almost their entire incomes going towards rent. When she started, she said that lower income people could afford more easily rents in the borough.

At a ceremony honoring the organization that included attendees like Department of Homeless Services commissioner Seth Diamond, Department of Youth and Community Development commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav, and Deputy Borough President Aurelia Greene all spoke highly about the organization.

Greene said of BronxWorks that “it is unusual to see one agency excel in so many different areas.”

BronxWorks’ “Strong Fathers, Strong Families” program graduate Alfredo Chaucer, 40, said that he learned how to be a better father to his children, and that the agency had helped him find work as a bookbinder.

He was made to complete the program by Family Court after he did not pay child support. Now
Chaucer said he has a job and is a “changed man,” he said.

“I am working because of that program,” said Chaucer. “They sent me to at least four or five places every week for a few months to help me get a job. They helped me get a job and get my life going. That is why I am so grateful.”

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