BY DENIS SLLATTERY  
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ONE of the borough's most highly regarded nonprofits is about to begin a series of major renovations at its Grand Concourse community center.

BronxWorks is celebrating its 40th anniversary with upgrades to its rooftop play area and gymnasium.

But wait—the beloved organization is planning an even bigger splash: buying a brand new liner to keep the water in one of the Bronx's most popular indoor pools.

"We've been in the building for about 20 years and we've been steadily making improvements," said Tim Serraille, BronxWorks' director of operations. "But nothing on this scale."

This summer, the group launched a massive fund-raising drive to renovate the 87-year-old building, which has become a center of neighborhood activity on the Concourse.

The group got a huge boost earlier this year when it received a $500,000 grant, authorized by Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr., and a $750,000 grant from term-limited Councilwoman Helen Diane Foster.

BronxWorks is one of the largest nonprofits operating in the borough. More than 35,000 Bronx residents utilize the group's 27 locations annually.

The organization expanded under the stewardship of recently retired executive director Carolyn McLaughlin, adding programs for immigrants, the homeless and people with HIV/AIDS.

That is why the Concourse headquarters will be renamed in McLaughlin's honor this fall.

"She is a beloved figure at BronxWorks, so I think it's fitting," said Serraille.

The hulking, four-story Classical Revival structure was built in 1926 by the Bronx Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Later, it was operated by the Young Men's Hebrew Association for more than 20 years.

Last year, BronxWorks expanded its pool services, adding classes and after-school sessions for children.

"Almost all of the children's programs in the building utilize the pool to some degree," Serraille said.

The 60-by-20-foot tile pool became a neighborhood hot-sport, averaging 400 swimmers a week, but leaks threatened to close the beloved basement swimming hole.

"I'm happy that people are going to help with pool," said 8-year-old Amanda Crespo. "It's where I learned how to swim."

The feisty third-grader has attended classes at the pool almost daily for the past year.

"One day I want to be a lifeguard," Amanda added, listing the different strokes she learned while attending BronxWorks classes at the community center. "I wish I could swim every day."

Carolyn McLaughlin (below), recently retired executive director of nonprofit BronxWorks. Photos by Richard Harbus, Mariela Lombard