“Seeing a long time gym member from Morris is like seeing an energetic teenager with no limitations!” says Lory Beaudoin, full-time health coordinator and fitness specialist at Bronxworks’ Morris Innovative Senior Center in the Bronx since April of 2011. “Our gym has made such a difference. We used to have seniors who just sat around. Now, they wouldn’t miss a day of fitness!”

Beaudoin supervises a dedicated room for physical fitness, equipped with two bicycles, two treadmills, and a variety of machines such as chest presses and lateral pull-downs. Currently the gym has about 75 active participants weekly (200 center members are registered for the center’s various wellness activities).

Before working out in the gym, participants must have their doctor’s permission. They also must meet with Beaudoin to provide a complete medical history, and have their fitness evaluated using the National Academy of Sports Medicine assessment for seniors.

After the preliminary fitness assessment, Beaudoin tries to schedule Personal Training hours every day for at least two weeks with the new participant. During Personal Training, she continues to assess the member’s abilities and to look for root causes of difficulties, such as improper alignment, muscular weaknesses or tightness.

Clients work one-on-one with Beaudoin until they show...
Beaudoin identifies her approach as “corrective exercise.” She teaches each person how to work body parts separately (legs, back, chest, shoulders, biceps, triceps) and how to use core muscles for the greatest efficiency. A bench is always placed behind the client, and clients with walkers or wheel chairs are not asked to free stand.

Beaudoin also addresses pain relief before allowing clients to work out. Her emphasis is on balance and proper stretching, as well as on proper bone alignment and corrective positions as antidotes to pain.

Beaudoin says her focus is on each individual’s potential as opposed to chronological age and chronic disease. Key to her holistic approach is the expectation of personal responsibility. We want an independent person,” she explains. “We want him or her learning not only active body positions but looking after each other and self-responsibility.”

Early in her work with clients, Beaudoin asks them to fill out forms she developed to track their personal progress in terms of cardio, strength, balance and flexibility. “Getting their folder before a workout and keeping the forms current is mental exercise,” she says. “It promotes an ‘I can’ attitude, particularly as they note their improvements.”

Charting also serves another purpose. Reviewing her clients’ folders helps Beaudoin check on important cognitive indicators, such as retention, ability to apply, ability to progress, ability to track progress on paper and to share with or teach others the techniques and exercises they have learned.

In addition to daily personal training, Beaudoin offers classes, several times a week, in Breathing and Meditation, Strength (with segments for beginners, intermediate and advanced students), Movement (progressing from isolation exercises to more complex coordination) and Flexibility.

She also conducts a lecture/discussion every day. “Without education, they'd be bored,” she says. “In my lectures, I try to simplify body problems with the aid of chemistry...But we also go into how to keep the blood strong and discuss such things as making daily choices and staying happy and busy and responsible.”