AUDREY'S SOCIETY WHIRL

BronxWorks gala celebrates milestone 45th anniversary

By Audrey J. Bernard
Society Editor

They are still celebrating what Bronxites affectionately refer to as home — the Boogie Down Bronx — over the success of one of the borough’s most beloved and distinguished nonprofit organizations, BronxWorks, which celebrated 45 years of lifting lives and building futures in the Bronx Communities at its annual 2017 Sapphire Gala on Monday, June 12, 2017 at the beautiful 583 Park Avenue in Midtown, Manhattan. The elegant evening featured a cocktail reception, silent auction, a cornucopia of great food choices and desserts from several buffet stations, and several open bars serving premium libations.

Laura Behnke, ABC7 Eyewitness News Weekend Sports Anchor, returned as the Mistress of Ceremonies, and New York Knicks legend Walt "Clyde" Frazier served as Special Ambassador and thrilled guests by posing with them for pictures and selfies. During the program Frazier shared with attendees his life experiences and the importance of lending a helping hand to "your community" to thunderous applause.

Guests were then buoyed by motivational greetings and special remarks by BronxWorks Board Chair Roger Regelman and Executive Director Eileen Torres. The evening's inspirational program featured an impassioned speech by Detective Roberto Oviedo, who stated that he attributes part of his success to the people and programs at 1130 Grand Concourse, now known as the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC), in honor of the BronxWorks former executive director. "As a kid growing up in the projects, I learned to swim in the pool at 1130 Grand Concourse and played basketball in its gym, stated Detective Oviedo. "It was truly a safe and special place to me. I'm pleased that it serves the same purpose for kids today, and also a resource to many adults."

Then James Ford, PIX 11 News Reporter made an inspiring and amusing call to action, asking audience members to help provide needed.

The event also celebrated the contributions of a distinguished group of honorees who serve the Bronx community. The BronxWorks 2017 Sapphire Gala Honorees were Mutual of America, The Lemen and Wolff Companies and Paul Lipson of Barretto Bay Strategies.

BronxWorks Board Vice Chair Janice Hart presented the award to Mutual of America. "For over 30 years, BronxWorks has entrusted a critical part of our employees' assets to Mutual of America," she noted.

Brian Q. Severin, executive vice president, accepted the award on behalf of the company.

BronxWorks Board Development Committee Chair Tom Watson presented the award to Pat Logan on behalf of Lemen & Wolff, a full-service firm that has developed or preserved thousands of affordable apartments and today manages over 6,000 units across the city. "We are thrilled to honor such a trusted partner to BronxWorks," said Watson.

Paul Lipson, who Torres described as "a pillar of the Bronx community," was the final honoree of the evening. Lipson has spent his career developing lasting renewable and clean transportation solutions. He also founded The Pont Community Development Corporation, an organization that initiated the revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the Bronx. When accepting the award, Lipson described the sense of community in the Bronx and the lessons he has learned from BronxWorks. "We are responsible for one other. That is the lesson Carolyn McLaughlin, Eileen's predecessor taught me so many years ago and it is this spirit that animates Eileen's work and the work of the enormously dedicated team at BronxWorks," Lipson said.

Lipson said funding to support programs that are based at CMCC, the BronxWorks flagship location.

BronxWorks received fantastic support from companies, individuals and local businesses and thanks its sponsors and supporters.

A competitive silent auction sent many guests home with unique experiences and valuable memorabilia. This year’s "Wine Wall" sponsored by Marks Paneth LLP was once again a big hit as attendees purchased wine to support BronxWorks. Each bottle was wrapped, so every purchase was a surprise! (Photos courtesy BronxWorks)

About BronxWorks

Founded in 1972 as the Citizen Advice Bureau, BronxWorks is a settlement house and social services agency. The BronxWorks mission is to help individuals and families improve their economic and social well-being. From toddlers to seniors, we feed, shelter, teach, and support our neighbors to build a stronger community. Our staff reflects the diversity of the people we serve and speaks more than 15 languages. Each year BronxWorks assists over 40,000 Bronx residents across 36 locations. To learn more about BronxWorks, please contact Gianna Dell’Olio, Director of Advancement and Communications at (646) 393-4007 or gdelolio@bronxworks.