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The BronxWorks February 2019 Newsletter

BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department Spotlight

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The BronxWorks 2019 Dip Against Homelessness
BronxWorks is committed to addressing the needs of all Bronx community members, including the most vulnerable. As one of the premier homeless services agencies in New York City, BronxWorks offers programs to help men and women living on the street secure a safe place to stay, obtain medical services, and transition to permanent housing. The BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department supports homeless individuals with a mobile unit, drop-in centers, shelters, and a variety of social service programs. BronxWorks also helps community members address substance abuse issues and other impediments to achieving shelter and stability.

The Agency's work with the homeless often begins on Bronx streets. The BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) is a mobile unit that works with homeless individuals 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Even in extreme weather conditions, HOT helps homeless people obtain crisis assistance, medical and psychiatric services, referrals to alcohol treatment facilities and emergency shelter, and benefits assistance, among other services. This committed group of staff members is highly adept at assisting men and women as they take the first step towards permanent housing.

Community members who are engaged by HOT will often obtain basic services at The Living Room, which is the only 24-hour drop-in center in the Bronx for street homeless adults. Living Room staff members provide emergency services, as needed, and participants are welcome to use the laundry and showers, eat a hot meal, and meet with a case manager.

Homeless individuals may also find temporary shelter at the BronxWorks Safe Havens, which offer housing placement and benefits assistance, medical and psychiatric care, nutritional assistance, medication monitoring, substance abuse counseling, and drug and alcohol treatment referrals.

Program participants at The Living Room and Safe Havens also partake in opportunities for socializing and health and wellness activities. BronxWorks staff members lead recreational activities, such as arts and crafts, and
Alfred Charles, Activity Specialist at the Living Room/Safe Haven (left) with BronxWorks program participants at a special performance at the Hostos Center for the Arts Culture.

Pictured above is the Naloxone nasal spray used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Harm reduction is a core component of the Agency’s efforts. BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services staff members and participants attend health and safety trainings on an ongoing basis and earn certifications, such as CPR and Naloxone Training (also known as Narcan). The training sessions typically take place at the Living Room, and the Naloxone Training in particular has helped to address the opioid crisis in the community. Naloxone is a medication that reverses overdoses from opioids such as heroin and prescription painkillers. Click here to learn more about naloxone. BronxWorks also provides workshops on substance abuse and information on how to get help.

In addition to helping participants meet basic needs and improve their health, the BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department supports community members as they begin on a path to self-sufficiency. "Our work doesn't end until our participants achieve permanent stable housing, start the process of recovery, and begin fostering a belief that they can make positive change in their life," says Noel Concepcion, Department Director, Adult Homeless Services.

To achieve these goals, participants in the Adult Homeless Services Department often receive referrals to other BronxWorks services. Click here to read about Giuseppe E., a Bronx resident who experienced homelessness before receiving assistance from HOT and achieving permanent housing. Giuseppe currently lives at the Brook, a supportive services residence developed by Breaking Ground.

Click here to see a recent BronxNet feature about BronxWorks program participants Giuseppe E. and Ronald G.

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Staff Profile: Michael Plummer
Michael Plummer, Shift Supervisor at The Living Room, has worked at BronxWorks for four years. His genuine nature and friendly personality helps him establish a rapport with program participants who are experiencing homelessness.

"My favorite part of my job is talking to the men and women at The Living Room, getting to know them, and going from there," Michael said.

Participants have often experienced trauma while living on the streets and may struggle to adjust to the structure that The Living Room provides. "Participants may feel defensive when they first come to The Living Room. When I get to know them, they gain respect for me and I begin to earn their trust," Michael said. Establishing relationships is invaluable to rebuilding social skills, regaining stability, and taking the first step towards permanent housing.

Michael began his career at BronxWorks as a Safety Monitor at The Living Room before being promoted to his current role. Over the years, he has built on his skills as a member of the site's security staff by earning health and safety certifications, such as CPR and naloxone training, that are offered at BronxWorks.

Michael drew on this invaluable training to resuscitate a participant named Jake*, who was found unresponsive after an overdose. Michael administered CPR and naloxone to Jake before an ambulance arrived. After staying in the intensive care unit for over two weeks, Jake left the hospital with a clean bill of health and immense gratitude to Michael. "Jake and I have a strong relationship," Michael said. "He is very thankful."

Although the recent spike in opioid use in the community has subsided, Michael remains prepared to administer the emergency procedures. "The experience boosted my confidence," he added. Michael was born and raised in the Bronx and currently lives in the Morris Park neighborhood. When he's not at BronxWorks, Michael is likely spending time with his two children or riding his motorcycle. He is inspired by the Agency's mission and work in the community.

"I believe we are changing lives for the better. I see that in my work, and I love being a part BronxWorks."

*name has been changed
At midnight on January 28, over 4,000 volunteers began canvassing the five boroughs in an effort to count the homeless people sleeping in public spaces. This is the 14th year New Yorkers have participated in the Homeless Outreach Population Estimate, or HOPE Survey. HOPE is organized by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). HOPE remains one of the most comprehensive efforts nationwide to help estimate service needs and allocate resources for men and women experiencing chronic street homelessness.

But did you know that in 2014, BronxWorks worked with local partners to initiate a count of homeless individuals in Bronx hospitals in what became an annual city-wide event? Over the years, Keona Serrano, Program Director, Stable Homes to Health has helped organize the Hospital Homeless Count in partnership with the Bronx Health & Housing Consortium. The event's goal remains to bring attention and resources to the "hidden homeless" who use hospitals as shelter and may be overlooked. In response to this on-going challenge, BronxWorks now has dedicated staff members present at the BronxCare Emergency Department as well as other hospitals. This year, 30 New York City hospitals participated, and 10 BronxWorks staff members helped count homeless community members staying in Bronx hospitals.

"The Hospital Homeless Count helps assess the impact of homelessness on our healthcare system and advocate for assistance to help these community members obtain permanent housing," said Keona.

BronxWorks Partners with BronxNet and The Bronx Polar Bears for The 2019 Dip Against Homelessness
On Saturday, February 9, BronxWorks partnered with BronxNet for the fifth annual 2019 Dip Against Homelessness, which was the Agency's largest Dip to date! Participants gathered at Orchard Beach to brave the waters of the Long Island Sound to promote awareness about the issue of street homelessness. Despite the cold and windy weather, 34 participants registered for the event, which raised over $11,000 to support the homeless men and women of the Bronx. In addition to raising vital funds for the BronxWorks Homelessness Services Department, many donated socks, gloves, hats, and other warm winter items for the homeless.

The Dip Against Homelessness kicked off with upbeat music from the Bronx-born DJ collective Uptown Vinyl Supreme. While sipping soup and hot chocolate from the Havana Café, participants gathered at the Orchard Beach Pavilion to hear remarks from Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodrigeuz-Rosa, BronxNet Executive Director Max Knobbe and BronxWorks Executive Director Eileen Torres.

"Thank you all for attending the Fifth Annual Dip Against Homelessness. Each year, the event helps BronxWorks provide our most vulnerable neighbors with support and ongoing opportunities, such as arts and crafts sessions or trips to see local shows," said Eileen.

Dozens of dippers and spectators gathered on the beach in advance of the big plunge. Members of the Bronx Polar Bears led warm-up exercises, including jumping jacks and high knees while chanting in anticipation. Dippers wore swimming gear, bathrobes, and costumes, such as polar bear onesies, Sponge Bob, and shark body suits for additional flair. With the blow of a conch shell, dippers ran into the water, which was approximately 32 degrees Fahrenheit and felt like 11 degrees with the wind chill!

Participants were met by family members and friends with warm towels on the beach. Later on, a group of participants was welcomed at Brewski’s Bar and Grill, where they enjoyed complimentary appetizers and drinks. Staff members from BronxWorks and BronxNet as well as the Bronx Polar Bears are already looking forward to next year's event, which will hopefully fall on a warmer day! Click here for photos of the event.
NYC Parks Department Breaks Ground at St. Marys

On January 29th, BronxWorks staff, community members and representatives from other local organizations joined the NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchel J. Silver and City Council Member Diana Ayala to celebrate the start of construction in St. Mary's Park. The Mayor's $30 million investment as part of the Anchor Parks initiative will ensure this park remains an integral piece of the South Bronx community for generations to come. Reference: NYC Parks Press Office.
Sprague Energy Visits the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center

Special thanks to Steven J. Levy, Managing Director of Sprague Energy for visiting the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center at 1130 Grand Concourse. Steven toured our facility and presented BronxWorks with a generous donation for the Year-End Appeal.

Popular Foundation Supports Center for Achieving Future Education (CAFÉ)

The BronxWorks CAFÉ Program recently received a generous grant from Popular Foundation. Based at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC), CAFÉ helps youth transition from middle school to high school, high school to college, and college entry to graduation. From left to right, Alexander Scanga, Area Manager for Queens, Popular Bank; BronxWorks staff Gianna Dell'Olio, Director of Advancement and Communications; Shalima McCants, Assistant Director, Children and Youth- Adolescent and Young Adult
Bronxchester Ties Together

Community volunteers came to visit the BronxWorks Bronxchester Afterschool Program recently and teach the students how to tie a tie! Special thanks to the volunteers and to all who donated ties to make this event possible!

Black History Celebration at PS 42

On Friday, February 15, BronxWorks students and staff at PS 42 celebrated Black History Month by performing traditional African dances, poetry and music. During the celebration, students learned about the many struggles and accomplishments of famous black leaders, inventors, and artists.
BronxWorks is once again this year a charity partner in the TD Five Boro Bike Tour, America's largest cycling event. On Sunday, May 5th, 32,000 people will ride over 40 miles of car-free streets through all five boroughs in New York City.

We are excited to announce that the BronxWorks 2019 TD Five Boro Bike Tour team is full!

Click here to help our charity riders reach their fundraising goals!
The BronxWorks 2019 Lifting Lives Gala takes place on

Tuesday, May 14, 2018
6:00pm - 9:00pm

THE GRAND HYATT NEW YORK
109 E. 42nd Street, New York, NY

Click below to RSVP and learn about tickets, journal ads and sponsorship opportunities.

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