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The BronxWorks January 2019 Newsletter

BronxWorks Workforce Development Department Spotlight

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BronxWorks is committed to working with community partners in order to break the cycle of poverty in the Bronx. Serving young adults to seniors, the BronxWorks Workforce Development Department offers work-readiness programs, vocational trainings, financial wellness services, and education, all designed to meet the needs of under-served Bronx residents. Workforce programs empower community members, some of whom are immigrants and public assistance recipients, on multiple levels, personally, professionally, and financially. BronxWorks also offers new opportunities to community members on an ongoing basis, providing participants with lasting skills to improve their lives and help them become more self-sufficient.

Since 2011, a pillar of the BronxWorks Workforce Development Department has been the Jobs-Plus program. The BronxWorks Job-Plus program currently serves New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents living in the Melrose, Dr. Ramon E. Betances, Monsignor E. Roberts Moore, and Courtlandt public housing developments. With over 900 members strong, Jobs-Plus is currently the largest program in the Workforce Development Department. Funding for the program is provided by the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA).

Jobs-Plus provides work-readiness training, employment counseling, vocational trainings, career development, job placement, and referrals to social services. Financial literacy counseling was introduced to the model by BronxWorks. This new component has been replicated in the 9 other NYCHA Jobs-Plus programs and other Jobs-Plus programs across the country. Jobs-Plus members are encouraged to enroll in workshops, attend events, and seek one-on-one support from BronxWorks on a long-term basis. BronxWorks serves as a key employment partner to Jobs-Plus; in fact, approximately 60 Jobs-Plus members currently work in various capacities at the Agency. With an extensive network of partners and a high job-placement rate, the BronxWorks Jobs-Plus program has a widely-recognized track record of helping community members find long-term employment.

Based on the success of the Agency's Workforce Development and social service programs, BronxWorks has been identified as a resource to NYCHA at a critical time. NYCHA is currently enacting the Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT), a long-term plan to improve public housing using public-private partnerships to repair and manage the developments. NYCHA is also leveraging Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) to shift federal housing funding and address capital needs within public housing. Under PACT/RAD initiatives, development companies are beginning to manage NYCHA housing complexes.
Mayor Bill de Blasio held a press conference at the BronxWorks Betances Cornerstone Community Center to give an update on the RAD initiative. Click here to read more about PACT and RAD.

"As we work with development companies, BronxWorks aims to improve the quality of life for Bronx NYCHA residents," said Betty Ann Tamaisar, Workforce Development Department Director. "We are thrilled to increase the number of sites we serve and expand our scope of work."

BronxWorks recently received a grant to extend its work-readiness services to residents of Twin Parks West, Highbridge, and Franklin Houses; NYCHA housing developments. Twin Parks West, Highbridge, and Franklin are now managed by Gilbane Development.

Many BronxWorks Workforce Development programs are created or modified with input from the community. After polling residents of NYCHA Baychester and Murphy Houses, Workforce will begin providing a variety of social services to those housing developments. BronxWorks was selected as the social services partner for Baychester and Murphy Houses, which will soon be managed by L+M Development Partners and Camber Property Group.

Other programs offered by the Workforce Development Department include the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, which provides employment, education, and training opportunities to recipients of Section 8, a New York City housing voucher program. Intern & Earn (formerly known as the Young Adult Internship Program, or YAIP) is a 14-week program with job training, a paid internship, and 9 months of follow-up services for under-served young adults. Workforce also maintains an office at Bronxchester Houses (managed by L + M Development) for residents and members of the surrounding community. Workforce will continue to offer Free Volunteer Income Tax Programs (VITA) services to community members on a seasonal basis at the Morris Innovative Senior Center. See below.

"Offering more than just job-readiness, Workforce Development strives to place our members at the center of what we do, while upholding the larger vision of BronxWorks...Lifting Lives, Building Futures," said Betty.

Click here for more information about the BronxWorks Workforce Development Department.

Staff Profile: Marie Edwards
Marie Edwards, Program Director, Jobs-Plus began her professional social service career at BronxWorks in 1995. During her tenure, Marie held positions in a variety of BronxWorks programs and departments, including Homelessness Prevention and Senior Services. After working within many of the Agency's programs, Marie appreciates the breadth of social services BronxWorks provides. "Our holistic approach makes us more aware of the participant with a broad range of challenges and needs that interconnect with the services at BronxWorks," Marie said.

Marie has served as Program Director of Jobs-Plus for over three years. In addition to providing program leadership and oversight, Marie makes an effort to speak with the program's members, many of whom she knows on a first name basis.

"I get to know our members and even ask about their families. It speaks volumes and lets them know I care," Marie said. "Moral support goes a long way. Sometimes we are the only support system available to our members," she added.

Marie has witnessed first-hand the impact the program has had for many members moving toward economic self-sufficiency. One particularly memorable Jobs-Plus member for Marie is Tawan. When Tawan joined the program, she held a Bachelor's degree in Accounting but had very little work experience and described herself as "severely lacking motivation." With support from Marie and the Jobs-Plus staff, Tawan excelled in Jobs-Plus. Years later, she is currently working for New York City Department of Homeless Services. Tawan serves as an ambassador of Jobs-Plus and has spoken at many of the program's workshops. She has even addressed a BronxWorks Board of Directors meeting. Click here to hear more about Tawan.

In addition to her employment experience, Marie has a strong academic background. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Community Health Education and Master's degree in Social Work from Hunter College, City University of New York. Marie also holds a Master's degree in Health Administration from Hofstra University. She is frequently invited to speak on panels regarding homelessness prevention and workforce development.

When asked about the success of Jobs-Plus, Marie mentions its diverse partnerships. "Building strong partnerships is a success not only for the program and the Department, but BronxWorks as a whole. We have partnerships with various employers, training institutions, colleges, and financial institutions," she said.

As she builds relationships, Marie keeps Jobs-Plus members in mind.
"I want to make sure the needs of who we serve are truly represented," she said. "BronxWorks continues to be an unwavering voice in our effort to help Bronx residents improve their quality of life."

Success Story: Jeremy P. Improves Parenting and Job-Readiness Skills

Jeremy P. and his youngest son at the BronxWorks Workforce Development Department at 630 Jackson Ave.

BronxWorks offers a variety of social services, and participants often complete multiple programs to become more self-sufficient. Jeremy P., a father of four children living in the South Bronx, struggled to make ends meet. He enrolled in the Workforce Development Department Program Strong Fathers, Stronger Families (SFSF), where he gained invaluable parenting and job-readiness skills. After completing the program, Jeremy was encouraged to enroll in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 30 training, offered by Workforce. The BronxWorks OSHA training course is a pilot program funded by JPMorgan Chase Philanthropy. After he completes the 30-hour course, Jeremy will be certified for construction work in New York City and will be better prepared to support his family.

"These are so much more than job-readiness programs," Jeremy said. "No one else cared or tried to help. I keep coming back and am grateful for the support I am receiving from BronxWorks."

Did You Know?

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance
Tax season is here, and the BronxWorks Workforce Development Department is once again offering free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) for community members. VITA will be based at BronxWorks Morris Innovative Senior Center beginning on January 28, 2019. Individuals who earn $54,000 or less with dependents or $30,000 without dependents can qualify for the service. BronxWorks is providing tax services in collaboration with the Food Bank For New York City and Single Stop, which are both nonprofit organizations aimed at reducing poverty. Last year, 5,500 returns were filed on site at Morris, making it New York City's second largest tax service location in 2018. Services will be offered on Monday and Wednesdays, from 10am-5pm; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12pm-7pm; and on Saturdays, 9am-4pm.

For questions, information on required documents for the services, or to make an appointment, please contact Karla Velasquez, Senior Case Manager at BronxWorks, at (718) 993-5300, ext. 302.
opportunity to apply to open positions at some of the BronxWorks Family Residences. Pictured here from left to right: Clifton Smith, Jobs Plus Member; Herlindo Reyes, Jobs Plus Member; Mario Ortiz, Security Coordinator at Willow Avenue Family Residence; Robert Ealey, Superintendent at the Willow Avenue Family Residence; Elizabeth Suarez, Operations Coordinator at the Jackson Avenue Family Residence; and Roosevelt Jackson, Superintendent at the Jackson Avenue Family Residence.

The Scuderi Family Continues Annual Toy Donation Tradition

Many thanks to the Scuderi family, who generously donated 90 toys to students in the BronxWorks afterschool program at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center at 1130 Grand Concourse. This is the fourth year that the Scuderi Family has given holiday gifts to BronxWorks participants.
Linklaters Staff Volunteers at BronxWorks
Recently, BronxWorks welcomed volunteers from the Linklaters Law Firm. The Linklaters staff generously spent their day assisting the BronxWorks Heights Senior Center with daily activities such as lunch prep and bingo. Special thanks to BronxWorks Board of Directors Member and Linklaters Partner, Doug Tween (center) for introducing his colleagues to BronxWorks.

State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime Volunteer Day
Recently, two generous groups of volunteers from SUNY Maritime College Athletic Department including the Baseball and Lacrosse teams enthusiastically spent their day volunteering at BronxWorks. One group helped 100 Bronx families by distributing food pantry items at the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center Food Pantry at 1130 Grand Concourse (pictured). The second group did a fantastic job assisting the Classic Cornerstone Community Centers staff by painting and participating in some important maintenance work.
BronxWorks Year-End Staff Party

BronxWorks staff celebrated at the 2018 End-of-Year Party. Guests enjoyed music, raffles, and a buffet dinner.

Click here for more pictures.

Food Pantry at Soundview

On December 20, BronxWorks offered its second monthly food pantry for seniors at the Soundview Senior Housing complex near Hunts Point in the Bronx. The pantry was offered with support from the Universal Kindness Foundation and included a variety of food, including apple sauce, canned fish, kidney beans, apple juice, and other items.
BronxNet, BronxWorks, and The Bronx Polar Bears invite you to

The 2018 DIP AGAINST HOMELESSNESS
Saturday, February 9 at Orchard Beach

REGISTER HERE

For more info, contact Allison Gangi at 646-393-4002 or agangi@bronxworks.org
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