The BronxWorks October 2018 Newsletter

Working Together - Community Partnerships

Irene Kaufmann, Executive Director, Bronx Partners for Healthy Communities (BPHC); Eileen Torres, Executive Director, BronxWorks; Dr. Nicole Hollingsworth, Assistant Vice President, Community & Population Health, Montefiore Medical Center; and Mary Morris, Director of Workforce Innovation, BPHC at "Poverty in the Bronx: Simulation and Forum" at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center.

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On October 18, BronxWorks hosted “Poverty in the Bronx: Simulation and Forum” at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center at 1130 Grand Concourse with Bronx Partners for Healthy Communities. Attendees included almost 70 leaders and front-line staff from provider organizations such as hospitals, clinics, and other community service agencies. Along with introductions from Eileen Torres and Irene Kaufmann, Executive Directors of BronxWorks and Bronx Partners for Healthy Communities, respectively, Dr. Nicole Hollingsworth, MCHES described some of the health disparities facing Bronx communities as a result of poverty. Dr. Hollingsworth is Assistant Vice President, Community & Population Health at Montefiore Medical Center.

Dr. Hollingsworth’s presentation provided context for the Community Action Poverty Simulation, which helped participants relate to everyday challenges faced by people in poverty. As part of the simulation, participants were assigned roles with short bios and were tasked with obtaining food stamps, supporting children and elderly family members, maintaining employment, and paying for utilities and other expenses with very limited resources.

Volunteers served in a variety of different roles, such as a case manager, bank teller, teacher, police officer, among others. After four 15-minute “weeks,” participants and volunteers shared observations about the experience. By a show of hands, most participants struggled to make ends meet and felt frustrated or sad about their challenges. Few were able to improve the living situations of themselves and their family members by the end of the simulation. The experience was particularly relevant for participants who work with individuals in poverty on a daily basis.

"The simulation opened my eyes to see that I did not understand the underserved community as much as I thought," said one participant.

"The experience helped my mind to expand and think of all the small changes that should be done to help others," said another.

BronxWorks also hosted the Community Action Poverty Simulation in September for seventy of the Agency’s senior staff and Board Members, which was equally eye-opening. Developed by the Reform Organization of Welfare (ROWEL), the Poverty Simulation was created to help raise awareness about different aspects of poverty and lead to discussion about the potential for change in local communities. Alex Soto, Training Coordinator at BronxWorks, participated in a 2-day orientation and training in Missouri to lead the Poverty Simulation at the Agency.

"The goal of the Simulation is to raise awareness of the disparities that exist among communities," he said. "I think the
Simulations have been really successful. Being in a role the participants aren't used to provides them with a new lens and helps them to understand people in need," Alex added.

In December, BronxWorks will host the simulation again for SBH Health System's staff members. Alex hopes to develop a dedicated group of BronxWorks friends and supporters to volunteer in the simulations on a regular basis. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Alex Soto (asoto@bronxworks.org).

Special thank you to BronxNet for providing coverage of the Poverty Simulation Event.

Meet the BronxWorks TCS New York City Marathon Team

BronxWorks is honored to have dedicated supporters who are willing to fundraise on behalf of the Agency at various events throughout the year. 2018 has been a particularly successful year for BronxWorks community and donor engagement.

In February, participants in the 2018 Annual Dip Against Homelessness waded into the Long Island Sound to raise awareness about the issue of street homelessness. They also raised critical funds to support BronxWorks efforts to assist homeless men and women. In May, #TeamBronxWorks rode through NYC as part of the TD 5 Boro Bike Tour. Most recently, the 4th Annual Run/Walk sponsored by EmblemHealth in September was another exciting event for the BronxWorks community. Over $27,000 was raised for the Agency's programs that support college-bound students.

Next month, BronxWorks will continue a 10-year tradition of serving as a charity partner of the TCS New York City Marathon. On November 4, #TeamBronxWorks will run through the five boroughs in one of the world's most famous marathons. In addition to dedicating time and energy to training, our five runners are fundraising for programs that support BronxWorks children and youth. Keep reading to learn about the members of #TeamBronxWorks.

Annie Abram

Annie Abram, a BronxWorks staff member, is thrilled to serve the Agency in a new way. In her role as Case Manager Supervisor, she helps Bronx residents overcome obstacles that could result in the loss of housing. Annie's father ran the marathon in 1982, and she is running to honor his memory and raise much-needed funds for the children and youth of the Bronx.

"I wanted to make a charitable donation in my father's honor, and after witnessing firsthand the plethora of services BronxWorks provides, I thought this would be an excellent opportunity," Annie said.

Michael Curcio

Michael Curcio is also a staff member at BronxWorks. As a Housing Coordinator for BronxCare Hospital Center, Michael engages clients who frequently visit the hospital, and he provides referrals to BronxWorks programs that provide case management services. A Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV), Michael does not shy away from a challenge and is proud to join #TeamBronxWorks.
"I believe that BronxWorks is a great organization, filled with employees committed to improving the lives of their community members, and I am honored to be running for the team in the TCS New York City Marathon," Michael said.

**Damali Thomas**

Damali Thomas will be running the TCS New York City Marathon as a member of #TeamBronxWorks for the second year in a row. She is also inspired by her father, who passed away a few years ago and ran the New York City Marathon in 1988 and 1989. Damali is committed to challenging herself and participates in duathlons and triathlons. A Bronx native, she is happy to be representing an organization that serves her borough.

"I know this will be an experience that I will treasure forever. And to run with a charity right out of the Bronx makes it that much sweeter," Damali said.

**Joseph Macaluso**

Joseph Macaluso, a new member of #TeamBronxWorks, is passionate about the Bronx and recently visited the after-school program at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC). A graduate of Brooklyn Law School, Joseph has been practicing law in the fields of personal injury and medical malpractice since 1990. Joseph's law firm is in the Bronx and he enjoys giving back to his community. He mentored Bronx high school students on trial advocacy and has helped with Mock Trial competitions in New York City as well as Fordham University. Like many of the families that BronxWorks serves, Joseph's parents were immigrants with limited English proficiency.

"I am a first generation American. My parents were both Italian, so my experience growing up was probably much like many Bronx residents with families from non-English speaking countries. I feel a connection to that. BronxWorks helps those families, and that's one of the fundamental reasons why I wanted to support BronxWorks," said Joseph.

**Jessica Espinosa**

Jessica Espinosa is excited to run in the TCS New York City Marathon, which will be her first. She was introduced to BronxWorks by her cousin, Carolina Espinosa, who works at the Agency as a Nutrition Program Coordinator. A runner for most of her life, Jessica has always aspired to challenge herself while supporting under-served community members.

"Chasing my dream while contributing to a local charity that works to help the community achieve theirs will make for a truly unforgettable experience," Jessica said.
BronxWorks is pleased to continue its tradition of cheering on our runners with signs, banners, and shouts of support on November 4. We hope you will consider joining us on this inspiring day! BronxWorks gathers at 138th Street and the Grand Concourse (right near the 4/5 subway station). For more information, please contact Gianna Dell'Olio, Director of Advancement and Communications at gdellolio@bronxworks.org.

Can't make it? Click below to learn more or support #TeamBronxWorks.

SUPPORT

Staff Profile: Yvette Felicia Thomas

Yvette Felicia Thomas, Program Coordinator at the BronxWorks Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) at the Roberto Clemente Senior Services Office.

Yvette Felicia Thomas ("Felicia") has supported marginalized populations for her entire career. In 2008, she began her current role as Program Coordinator at the BronxWorks Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) at the Roberto Clemente Senior Services Office. According to the New York City Department for the Aging, "A NORC is a multi-age housing development or neighborhood that was not originally built for seniors but that now is home to a significant number of older persons." Many seniors who reside in NORCs need assistance with day-to-day tasks as they grow older in their homes.

As Program Coordinator, Felicia serves as an advocate for her program participants who may need assistance with Medicaid, Medicare, building management issues (most of the participants live in the adjacent housing complexes), banking issues, and more. Felicia meets with the seniors on an individual basis and leads group sessions displayed on a detailed calendar she posts every month. Topics include nutrition, arts and crafts (loomig, crochet, quilt-making), board games, and mindfulness.

The program participants have the opportunity to go on trips once a month. In addition to going shopping for everyday items, the seniors see Broadway plays and visit nearby destinations, such as Atlantic City. "I do my best to keep the seniors mentally stimulated," Felicia said. On any given day, Felicia works with approximately 40-50 seniors, and 168 seniors are on her roster.
Prior to working at BronxWorks, Felicia was a legal secretary at an agency that supported individuals with substance abuse issues. After witnessing firsthand the impact substance abuse had on her community, she decided to learn more and earned a certification at the National Recovery Institute (NRI). After working as a Case Manager at Bronx AIDS Services in the 1990s, Felicia began working at BronxWorks. She helped develop a program for families affected by HIV/AIDS within the Agency's Positive Living Department, which serves people living with chronic illnesses.

More recently, Felicia is especially proud that at age 50, she earned her bachelor's degree in Social Work. She plans to continue her studies and attend Fordham University's Graduate School of Social Service. A self-described "social butterfly," Felicia is grateful for the daily interactions she has with the seniors. With her dedication and the support of the NORC, the seniors can age in place and continue to live in their homes.

"BronxWorks has allowed me to work with populations that have been disenfranchised. I've had the chance to bring my creative juices and ideas to these communities, and to shape a program which encourages people to flourish," Felicia said.

In 2016, Felicia received the 29th Senate District Women of Distinction Award from New York State Senator Jose M. Serrano, recognizing her decades of service in social work.

Felicia lives in Harlem, where she was born and raised. When she's not at BronxWorks, she enjoys reading, singing, and going to church.

Did You Know?
The 2018 BronxWorks #GivingTuesday Event

Valyrie Laedlein, Consultant and BronxWorks supporter; Joan Rosenthal, Treasurer, BronxWorks Board of Directors; and Tashaka Wynter, Assistant Department Director of Children & Youth - Early Childhood and School Aged Programs at the 2017 BronxWorks #GivingTuesday Event.

BronxWorks is delighted to announce our fourth annual #GivingTuesday Event on Tuesday, November 27 at Hard Rock Cafe Yankee Stadium. The BronxWorks #GivingTuesday Networking Event kicks off the year-end giving season and all proceeds will benefit programs that support children, families, and seniors of
the Bronx. We welcome you to join us for an evening of networking, drinks, buffet, live entertainment, and raffles—all for a great cause!

This year, the event will feature the music of John James, a local guitarist and performer. John grew up listening to jazz at the influence of his father, who is also a musician. John studied music and performs at venues in New York City and Westchester.

"Giving Tuesday brings together BronxWorks staff, board, friends, and supporters to celebrate the Agency's work and raise critical funds in support of our mission," said Eileen Torres, Executive Director. "I hope you will join us on November 27!"

Tickets are $75 each, includes 2 drink tickets and buffet. Sponsorship opportunities also available beginning at $150. Please click here to purchase tickets or for more information.

Photo Essay

SUNY Maritime Swim Clinics

The SUNY Maritime College Swim and Dive Teams conducted two special swim clinics for BronxWorks youth participants at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center's (CMCC) indoor pool at 1130 Grand Concourse. The goal of the clinics was to help our participants strengthen their swimming skills.
The Final Second Saturdays of the Season

On October 13, the BronxWorks-led Healthy and Liveable Mott Haven initiative along with the Partnership for Parks celebrated the last Second Saturdays of 2018. Dozens of volunteers participated in bulb planting, tree care and horticulture projects throughout the park. From May to October, the BronxWorks-led Healthy and Livable Mott Haven initiative holds free family activities at St. Mary's Park on every second Saturday of the month.
The East Concourse Senior Center Fashion Show

BronxWorks participants at the East Concourse Senior Center recently held a fashion show. Men wore suits and ties, while women wore colorful dresses, some of which they made themselves. The special theme of the show was 'Lights, Camera, Action!' Seniors enjoyed posing at a photo booth, dressing up in their favorite outfits and sauntering down the red carpet.

College Application Week at BronxWorks
BronxWorks recently celebrated College Application Week agency-wide and the BronxWorks Center for Achieving Future Education (CAFÉ) program encouraged all students, participants, and staff to “think college” by sponsoring a series of activities and themes. Click here for the 2018 College Application Week’s daily themes.

BronxWorks attended a special kick-off event to welcome four IBM team members from the Corporate Service Corps (CSC) Program. In conjunction with our partnership with Atlas Corps, the IBM CSC team will offer insight into some special projects. Pictured here from left to right: Eileen Torres, Executive Director; Gianna Dell'Olio, Director of Advancement and Communications; Muhammad Abdullah Arshad, Atlas Corps/Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist; Amanda Perez, Director of Quality and Compliance; Christine Wachira, Atlas Corps/Executive Coordinator; Prabhuraj Prabhakaran, IBM CSC/Delivery Manager from India; Sharon Shi, IBM CSC/Performance Manager from China; Sateesh Kumar Kolusu, IBM CSC/Software Product Developer from India; and Adel Gamal Mostafa, IBM CSC/Software Developer Engineer from Egypt.

Upcoming Events
For the 10th year in a row, BronxWorks is thrilled to be a charity partner in the TCS New York City Marathon on Sunday, November 4.

Click below to meet the 2018 #TEAMBRONXWORKS charity runners and help them reach their fundraising goals!

HELP OUR RUNNERS
BronxWorks will once again participate in #GivingTuesday on November 27, 2018 at the Hard Rock Cafe Yankee Stadium
6:00pm - 9:00pm

For more information about tickets and sponsorships click below
Join us at NPCC’s inaugural Best Nonprofit Conference on Dec. 6, 2018, the culminating event of The New York Community Trust 2018 Nonprofit Excellence Awards!

NPCC turned their half-day panel into the first full-day conference focused on nonprofit management practices. This conference gives you everyday practices and tools that you can incorporate into your work through panel discussions, templates, tools and takeaways, and deep dives into the "how" of changing organizational behavior and culture. You will leave this conference full of ideas, tools, and strategies that you can use right away to strengthen your nonprofit and yourself. All this, and you have a day to network with your friends, peers, and other experts.

Click here to register today

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