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The BronxWorks September 2018 Newsletter

Lifting Lives

BronxWorks runners and walkers triumphant at the finish line of the 4th Annual BronxWorks 5K Run/Walk sponsored by EmblemHealth.

In this Issue:

BronxWorks Center for Achieving Future Education (CAFE) Program Partners with Local Colleges to Empower Students
5K Recap and Funds Announcement
BronxWorks Welcomes Atlas Corps Fellows
Did You Know? Quality and Compliance Initiative at BronxWorks
Photo Essay
Upcoming Events
Oscar Guzman, BronxWorks College Adviser offers peer-to-peer support to students at Bronx Community College.

From toddlers at the BronxWorks Early Childhood Learning Centers to older adults at the Agency's senior centers, BronxWorks provides learning opportunities to our neighbors every day. BronxWorks also helps prepare youth and young adults for higher education. The BronxWorks Center for Achieving Future Education (CAFE) program provides one-on-one guidance regarding the college application process, SAT preparation courses, assistance with financial aid applications, and more.

But getting into college is just the beginning. Studies indicate that more and more students struggle academically, socially, and financially while adjusting to college life, and over a third drop out, according to the Washington Post. Similarly, the percentage of students who graduate from urban community colleges is staggeringly low. Only 22 percent of students earn a degree in three years at the community college associate's degree programs at the City University of New York (CUNY) (https://nycfuture.org/research/degrees-of-difficulty).

In light of these challenges, CAFÉ offers support to students throughout their college careers as part of its dedicated partnerships with Hostos Community College, Bronx Community College, and Fordham University. CAFÉ staff members meet with students on an individual basis to connect them to resources on campus and serve as mentors as they find their footing and advance in school. CAFÉ also provides assistance to college students from other BronxWorks programs, such as the Jill Chaifetz Transfer School.

But even before enrollment decisions are made and the academic year begins, BronxWorks offers an annual summer program called History Makers in partnership with Fordham University. This year, the group included participants from the BronxWorks Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), which provides internship opportunities to youth in the South Bronx, and students from the CAFÉ program. Over five weeks, the twenty-one students had the opportunity to learn about college majors, perform community service projects, and participate in group presentations on various topics, such as preventing violence in Bronx communities.

The program culminated in a week-long stay at Fordham University, where participants took classes with Fordham professors and experienced a taste of life on a college campus. In addition to serving as a helpful introduction to higher education, History Makers also provided mentors for each student and a safe space for personal growth.

"History Makers is a program where you can be yourself and not be judged. My mentors were so helpful and created a welcoming environment," said Kelly Tellez, a participant in the program this year.
As the summer concluded, CAFÉ staff members resumed providing peer-to-peer support at Bronx Community College (BCC). Myosha Smith, College Retention Specialist, and Oscar Guzman, College Adviser, meet with students approximately three days per week at the program’s shared office at BCC. “I text my students on a daily basis, but meeting with them in person adds that extra boost of human connection. This is extremely crucial when creating a rapport and a habit of meeting with me throughout the semester. Being on campus has helped to provide that on-site support to students,” said Oscar. CAFÉ staff members do not yet have an office at Hostos Community College, but they maintain a regular presence there and meet with students in common areas on campus.

Myosha and Oscar connect students to employment opportunities and academic resources (such as tutoring), make referrals to other programs within BronxWorks, and more.

“The CAFÉ staff is always here to listen to you. Because of this program, I was able to acquire a job, they helped me apply for financial aid, and now I’m in college,” said Joyce Achiampong, a freshman at BCC.

CAFÉ also provides assistance to students with challenges they may face as they advance in their college careers. One student at BCC received poor grades while on medical leave, and Oscar and Myosha helped her file an academic appeal so that she could begin the following semester with a fresh start.

“Some of the students do not have a space where they feel comfortable to express themselves and ask for assistance outside of CAFÉ. While we as an organization become advocates for them, the students learn the skill of advocating for themselves. That is the biggest reward,” said Myosha.

A key component of the CAFÉ program’s work is creating a community among its students. Myosha and Oscar regularly host events at BCC and Hostos, as well as for CAFÉ alumni. “We have had students discover that they are in the same major at our mixers,” Myosha said. “After that, they began to work together on projects and support each other. Friends can be another great resource,” she added.

5K Recap and Funds Announcement

After weeks of fundraising, participants of the 4th Annual BronxWorks 5K Run/Walk sponsored by EmblemHealth took their marks on Saturday, September 15 in St. Mary’s Park. Over 30 BronxWorks friends, employees, supporters, and sponsors attended the event. Michael Max Knobbe, Executive Director of BronxNet Television joined after passing by on his morning jog. “It’s great to be with the community, and
This year, BronxWorks was joined by three EmblemHealth representatives, including Juan Burgos, Client Associate (left), Sylvia Gardner, Senior Account Executive (center), and Jolt Mena, Senior Account Executive (right). EmblemHealth is a dedicated supporter of BronxWorks and is this year’s 5K Title Sponsor.

Participants had the opportunity to appreciate St. Mary's Park as they breezed through the three lap 5K course. BronxWorks would like to thank EmblemHealth and all of the 4th Annual BronxWorks 5K Run/Walk sponsors who helped make this year's 5K the most successful ever.

After the race, medals were given to the top finishers. This year's top six are pictured below from left to right: Kate Machan (1st place), Stephanie Wingert (2nd place women), Jose Stevenson (1st place men), Michael Max Knobbe (2nd place men), Omar Sully (3rd place men).

BronxWorks is excited to announce that proceeds from the 4th Annual BronxWorks 5K Run/Walk as well as the funds raised by the BronxWorks Special Raffle will support BronxWorks programs that assist college-bound students.

This project was determined via an online survey that was sent to all participants and donors. Survey recipients chose between three different options: food pantries, programs that benefit seniors, and programs that assist college-bound students.

A well-deserved congratulations to our first place fundraiser, Betty Ann Tamaisar who raised an impressive $2,841, and our second and third place fundraisers, Alexander Soto and Stephanie Wingert.
A special thank you to all of the participants, donors, and sponsors who helped raise over $27,000 and counting!

If you missed the chance to support your favorite runner or team, you can still contribute here:

SUPPORT

Click here for more pictures from the 4th Annual BronxWorks 5K Run/Walk

PICTURES

BronxWorks Welcomes Atlas Corps Fellows

Christine Wachira, Executive Coordinator and Muhammad Abdullah Arshad, Continuous Quality Improvement Specialist.

BronxWorks proudly announces our new partnership with Atlas Corps! Founded in 2006, Atlas Service Corps, Inc. (Atlas Corps) is an international network of social sector leaders and organizations that
Shodunke Joshua Mayowa, Employment Specialist Youth Education & Workforce Programs.

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promotes innovation, cooperation, and global solutions. The Atlas Corps mission is to address critical social issues by developing leaders, strengthening organizations, and promoting innovation through an overseas fellowship of skilled non-profit professionals. Atlas Corps engages leaders committed to the non-profit sector in 12 to 18-month professional fellowships at organizations to learn best practices, build organizational capacity, and return home to create a network of global change makers.

The decision to partner with Atlas was based on the Agency’s desire to expand capacity and learn from global neighbors. “I am excited that BronxWorks has the opportunity to work with Atlas Corps fellows, who will help offer new and diverse perspectives on how we can continue to live our mission,” said Eileen Torres, Executive Director. We are pleased to welcome Christine Wachira, Muhammad Abdullah Arshad, and Shodunke Joshua Mayowa to BronxWorks.

Born in Nairobi, Kenya, Atlas Fellow Christine Wachira joined the BronxWorks staff in August as Executive Coordinator, working directly for Eileen Torres. Christine has a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from Catholic University, East Africa. After working in Information Technology, she decided to shift careers and pursue an Executive Master's degree in Developmental Policies and Procedures from the Graduate Institute of Geneva. Most recently, Christine worked as a Research and Policy Officer for an international organization. When asked why she is participating in the Atlas Program, Christine explained,

"The program provides a terrific opportunity to grow professionally and to give back. After spending a year at an organization that is as diverse as BronxWorks, I hope that I will have a greater sense of where I would like to specialize as I advance my career."

Christine said that she quickly adjusted to the hustle and bustle of New York City because Nairobi is similarly fast-paced. She is taking advantage of her time here and especially enjoyed a boat tour she took recently, which offered memorable views of the Manhattan skyline at night.

Muhammad Abdullah Arshad also joined BronxWorks in August as an Atlas Corps Fellow. He hails from Lahore, Pakistan, where he recently worked for a public-private partnership as part of their executive team. Abdullah has a diverse educational background, having earned a BBA in Finance and Environmental Policy, an MBA in Marketing from the Lahore School of Economics, and a Law Degree from the University of Punjab in Pakistan. Abdullah is a member of the BronxWorks Quality Assurance Team and is thrilled to bring his experience to the Agency, having worked in similar roles in Pakistan. While he appreciates the sights and sounds of five boroughs, Abdullah also enjoys visiting other cities on the East Coast, such as Washington D.C. and Boston, which he described as “calm and peaceful.” He loved the seafood in Boston, and as a self-proclaimed foodie, Abdullah is also excited by all of the culinary opportunities New York City has to offer. "My uncle spent some time in the Northeast, so I am often in touch with him for a great recommendation. So far, artichoke pizza is a big favorite," he said.

Finally, Shodunke Joshua Mayowa joined BronxWorks this month as an Employment Specialist, Youth Education & Workforce Programs. Joshua hails from Nigeria and earned his Bachelor of Science in Economics. He founded BIP Tycoon Consults, a human capital development company that trains youth in career development, business branding, employability and entrepreneurship. Joshua hopes that his experience as an Atlas Fellow will help him to reach his goal to "impact 1 billion people through trainings by working with top organizations and improving my enterprise," he said. Christine, Muhammad, and Shodunke are making the most of their time here at BronxWorks, which will provide invaluable professional experience as they move forward in their careers.
Did You Know?  
Quality and Compliance Initiative at BronxWorks

Amanda Perez, Director of Quality and Compliance.

BronxWorks is committed to quality improvement to help ensure effectiveness within all of the Agency’s programs. This year, BronxWorks launched a Quality Assurance initiative, which has been a long-term goal of the Agency and an integral part of the BronxWorks Strategic Plan. While a focus on Quality Assurance is present in a number of programs, the new efforts span across all of the Agency’s departments, creating a more comprehensive and integrated approach.

Amanda Pérez, Director of Quality and Compliance, works closely with the BronxWorks Quality Assurance Team to develop a system of data collection, data analysis, quality assurance, and quality improvement for BronxWorks programs. The Quality Assurance Team includes individuals with backgrounds in data analysis and program operations. The Team also works with BronxWorks Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) staff members, who ensure that programs are in compliance with contracts and are meeting their department goals.

Amanda and her team are creating action plans to address organizational risks and prepare for positive outcomes. The BronxWorks Board of Directors recently formed a Risk Committee, which provides oversight to their work. Amanda previously worked in compliance at the New York City Mission Society and more recently at BronxWorks as a Program Director at the Jill Chaifetz Transfer School. Mindful of the impact BronxWorks has on community members every day, she is excited to develop the Agency’s Quality Assurance efforts.

"Data is only as important as the stories behind it," Amanda said. "This initiative helps BronxWorks use data to make more informed decisions for our community members, who will benefit in the long run."
BronxWorks Staff Picnic

To celebrate the end of summer, BronxWorks staff and their families gathered at Ridge Road Park in Hartsdale for the annual BronxWorks Picnic on August 24. There was lots of delicious food, games, family activities and simple relaxing.
Boogie on the Boulevard

Boogie on the Boulevard returned to the Grand Concourse this year, and rumor has it was the biggest ever! Families and children enjoyed the annual event and lined up along our block for the "Back to School with BronxWorks" activities and giveaway. BronxWorks created an inclusive and inviting space for children of all ages and abilities and their parents to celebrate the last days of summer. BronxWorks also provided families with resources to confidently return to school prepared for a new year of learning!
Jobs Plus at Second Saturdays

On September 8, the Jobs-Plus at BronxWorks program joined Second Saturdays to celebrate students returning to school with a free book bag and school supply giveaway! 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 BronxWorks Special Raffle Grand Prize Winner!
Congrats to Ashley Martinez, Case Manager at the BronxWorks Family Enrichment Program. Ashley
won the BronxWorks Special Raffle grand prize 2 premium suite tickets to see Ed Sheeran on
September 21 at MetLife Stadium! The BronxWorks Special Raffle raised over $700, which will be
combined with the funds from the 4th Annual BronxWorks 5K Run/Walk. Special thanks to Mutual of
America for donating the tickets!
Poverty Simulation Experience
BronxWorks staff, board, friends and family gathered on September 22 at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center to engage in a poverty simulation experience. The eye-opening event helped participants understand the challenges faced by individuals and families who live at or below the poverty line.

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

SAVE THE DATE!

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
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