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Jumping into February
The BronxWorks Newsletter
February 2018

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Focus on Fitness at BronxWorks

BronxWorks is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of our neighbors and community members of the Bronx. While the numbers are trending in a positive curve, the Bronx continues to have the poorest health outcomes of all the counties in New York State. Bronx residents disproportionally suffer from heart disease, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and other chronic conditions. BronxWorks takes a holistic approach to promoting healthy lifestyles. In addition to increasing access to preventative care and healthier food, BronxWorks offers an expanding variety of physical fitness activities to community members of all ages. These include fitness programs at various sites throughout the Bronx as well as outdoor events. Beginning in May, BronxWorks and our Healthy and Livable Mott Haven community partners will resume Second Saturdays. Second Saturdays feature family-friendly, fun activities at St. Mary's Park such as biking, yoga, salsa lessons, and more.

Here’s a look at some other exercise and fitness programs offered at BronxWorks sites:

**Hip Hop Workshops at the Pyramid Cornerstone Community Center**
Late last year, the Pyramid launched a series of Hip Hop workshops for men and women. Twice a week, about a dozen participants dance to steps led by Keith Irving, Activity Specialist. These evening classes have become a big hit with community members. In addition to building friendships, the classes lead to improved self-esteem, noted Shantriya James, Program Coordinator of the Pyramid Community Service Program. "The classes are a great confidence booster, whether you’re a terrific dancer and you’re helping someone else, or you’re a beginner and someone is helping you out," Shantriya added.

**Yoga at the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center**
Every Wednesday, a free yoga class is offered through a partnership with Mindful Movement Bronx at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC) gym at 1130 Grand Concourse. The classes are part of a BronxWorks women’s health and wellness initiative that takes a holistic approach to providing low-income Bronx women with health education workshops and physical fitness classes. Community members are encouraged to attend these Vinyasa-style classes, which are suitable for all yoga levels.

**Exercise Classes at Betances**
High intensity work-outs and classes are now offered Monday through Saturday at the Betances Cornerstone Community Center. From cardio to weight lifting and even glute/core/arms classes there is something for every fitness interest and level. Participants include teenagers who participate in other Betances programming as well as adults. Some utilize the classes as a way to warm up before playing basketball in the center’s indoor basketball court. Others are trying to get in shape before the warmer weather and prom season.

*Suzette Walker, Site Director at Betances stated, "the exercise
A Tai Chi class at the newly renovated gym at the BronxWorks Heights Senior Center.

In addition, Betances offers Salsa classes led by a volunteer on Tuesdays and Thursday evenings.

**Exercise Classes for Seniors**
The BronxWorks network of senior centers are dedicated to meeting seniors' social, recreational and health needs. The centers offer a variety of both low and high energy exercise classes to keep seniors active and engaged. Some classes incorporate discussions on diet and nutrition. Currently, a very popular option is line dancing, led by Solomon Smart, Program Director at East Concourse Center. One of the most loyal line dancers will be 100 in May!

Seniors may also participate in Aerobics, Zumba, Tai Chi, and low impact classes, such as Chair Exercises. In addition to improving their physical health, participating in exercises classes adds structure to the seniors' schedules. Many plan their days around certain exercise classes, stated Solomon Smart, Program Director at East Concourse Center. "Having a regular schedule does something to help people stay alive and well-physically, mentally, and emotionally. And you get to meet people. It creates a social network," he says.

**Update: The BronxWorks Pool at the CMCC**

The inaugural swim class at the newly renovated BronxWorks indoor pool.

After a year of renovations, the indoor pool at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC) at 1130 Grand Concourse is resuming operations! Children in the elementary-age after-school program at CMCC are currently back on deck and enjoying swimming lessons. Classes for the community will be offered in late March.

The pool, which dates back to the 1950s, now has new diving blocks, a new liner, restored lighting, new tiles, and more. About 1,000 community members are expected to swim in the pool this year, which is now brighter and safer.

**Save the Date! Pool Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on Thursday, April 12! More information to follow!**
On Saturday, February 17, BronxWorks partnered with BronxNet for the fourth consecutive year at the 2018 Bronx Polar Bears Dip Against Homelessness. Participants waded into the frigid waters at Orchard Beach to promote awareness about the issue of street homelessness. The event raised over $5,000 to support BronxWorks efforts to assist homeless men and women of the Bronx. In addition to raising vital funds for the BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department, many donated socks, gloves, hats, blankets and other warm winter items for the homeless.

The Dip Against Homelessness kicked off with hot chocolate and soup for all. Participants enjoyed upbeat music from the Bronx-born DJ, Collective Uptown Vinyl Supreme. The group gathered at the iconic Orchard Beach pavilion while Michael Max Knobbe, BronxNet Executive Director, and Eileen Torres, BronxWorks Executive Director, took a few moments to thank everyone for attending.

"For the fourth consecutive year, we're here to take a dip and show support for our most vulnerable neighbors. We are thrilled to partner with BronxNet and the Bronx Polar Bears as we continue this fun and worthwhile event," said Eileen.

To warm up for the big dip, participants did jumping jacks, high knees, and push-ups. Some wore athletic gear and others wore swim suits, despite the weather. First-time BronxWorks dippers Sara Seng, Program Coordinator, Community Health Literacy, and Carolina Espinosa, Nutrition Program Coordinator, joined their colleagues and veteran dippers, like Shauna Berry, Program Director, Bronx Community Health Home and John Weed, Assistant Executive Director. With a count of three and blow of a conch shell, the dippers ran into the Long Island Sound, laughing and shrieking. Some stopped when the water met their ankles, but many continued for several yards. The Bronx Polar Bears lingered in the water and clasped hands, seemingly unfazed by the cold.

Participants were met afterwards by family members and friends with warm towels on the beach. Later on, a group gathered for lunch and refreshments at Brewski’s Bar and Grill. Staff members from BronxWorks and BronxNet as well as the Bronx Polar Bears are already looking forward to next year, which will be the fifth anniversary of the event.

For more photos, click here!
As the Activity Specialist at the BronxWorks Living Room / Safe Haven, Alfred Charles coordinates and leads activities for homeless program participants. Both recreational and educational, activities include arts and crafts, cooking, and workshops on topics like building self-esteem, resume writing, money management, and more. Alfred also leads trips to local museums, community gardens, sporting events, and movie theaters.

The BronxWorks Living Room / Safe Haven is the only 24-hour drop-in center in the Bronx for street homeless adults. Participants are welcome to come in for shelter, use the laundry and showers, eat a hot meal, and meet with a case manager. Many of the individuals at the Living Room were initially engaged by the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), which helps street homeless people receive appropriate services and move to safer environments.

Alfred is dedicated to providing an experience for the participants that is enriching, enjoyable, and productive.

"I enjoy teaching people how to obtain resources to advance their lives," he says.

In addition to leading activities, Alfred helps participants find programs to help them address substance abuse issues, quit smoking, and prepare themselves for the workforce.

Born in Grenada, Alfred studied veterinary science and traveled to Cuba to start his career as a vet. But he immediately began volunteering in the school system and with community organizations, and he discovered a passion for helping others.

Alfred moved to New York City and began working for the Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center, where he helped individuals who were formerly on welfare prepare for the workforce. Alfred then decided he wanted to work with the homeless population.

In 2002, Alfred came to BronxWorks as a case manager for the Jackson Avenue Family Residence and later on worked at the Nelson Avenue Family Residence and with the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). In 2012, he obtained his Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy with a concentration in Mental Health at Mercy College in the Bronx, which prepared Alfred for his current role.

Alfred appreciates the agency's breadth of services. "BronxWorks works with the continuum of life, from children to seniors. It's a great opportunity to work with a diverse group of people," he says. Alfred also appreciates the challenges of his role. "I always have to think outside of the box," he says.
Did you know that you can have your taxes completed for free at BronxWorks? BronxWorks is hosting a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site at the Morris Innovative Senior Center located at 80 E. 181 St., Bronx, NY 10453. This service is made possible by The Food Bank of New York City. Participants can receive tax assistance from experts Monday - Thursday 10:00am - 7:00pm and Saturdays from 9:00am - 4:00pm. Individuals who make $54,000 or less with dependents or $30,000 or less without dependents qualify for the Food Bank’s free income tax services. Filing taxes is especially important for low income working individuals, who can earn back refunds and credits.

LEARN MORE

Coming Soon: Report to the Community

Extra! Extra! The BronxWorks Report to the Community will soon be available! The 2016-2017 Report to the Community highlights the agency’s recent financials, accomplishments and events. The Report will be available as a PDF and in print. More to follow!

Photo Essay
On Tuesday, February 13 the BronxWorks Heights Neighborhood Senior Center celebrated Valentine’s Day with their Annual Dance Party. Participants enjoyed a special meal, took a chance on some raffles and danced to the sounds of a professional DJ.

On Thursday, February 15, BronxWorks After-school Program Participants at PS 42 celebrated Black History Month!
Huge thanks to Assist NYC! Assist NYC returned to BronxWorks earlier this month and hosted their 4th annual basketball clinic for BronxWorks Middle School Program Participants.

The BronxWorks Betances Cornerstone Community Center hosted a family Valentine's Day Dance on Friday, February 9th!
It's time for America's largest cycling event!

The TD Five Boro Bike Tour takes place on Sunday, May 6, 2018

BronxWorks is honored to be a charity partner again for the TD Five Boro Bike Tour.

The money raised will support children's programs at our shelters for homeless families. Join #TeamBronxWorks

I want to ride for BronxWorks to help support children's programs at our shelter's for homeless families

REGISTER

I want to donate to support the team!

DONATE

If you have any questions or would like more information, feel free to call 646-393-4002 or email agangi@bronxworks.org
Save the Date
The BronxWorks 2018 Gala
June 11, 2018
583 PARK AVENUE
New York, New York

More details to follow

DONATE

STAY CONNECTED:

www.bronxworks.org

If you have any questions or would like more info about BronxWorks, please contact Allison Gangi at agangi@bronxworks.org or 646-393-4002.

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