Focus on The Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) of BronxWorks

The BronxWorks Newsletter
March 2017

In this Issue:

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers at BronxWorks
New BronxWorks Office at Soundview Senior Housing
Staff Profile - Issa Asiedo
Did You Know? 2017 Bike Tour Team
Photo Essay
2017 Calendar of Events

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) at BronxWorks

BronxWorks and the Peace Corps share the philosophy that ubiquitous issues like hunger, poverty and education can be solved on a human-to-human level. This philosophy governs both BronxWorks and Peace Corps motives to send trained professionals into developing communities. Perhaps this is why there are currently 15 Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) working at BronxWorks, including our two Assistant Executive Directors John Weed and Scott Auwarter.

Consider BronxWorks staff like Meghan Yetman, who served with Peace Corps' as a primary school teacher in Panama. Today she is a Quality Improvement Coordinator, helping to oversee the Family Enrichment Program for the Bronx community. Meghan credits her Peace Corps experience with fostering many of the traits critical to her day-to-day work, from patience to creativity to managing day-to-day challenges. When asked about her Peace Corps service Meghan says, "I learned how to work with limited resources, across cultures, and always be flexible with my plan."

Another BronxWorks staff member, Sarah Carbone, spent two years as a Natural Resource Adviser in Ghana. She currently works with the Homelessness Outreach team, and Sarah credits her Peace Corps experience with gaining the relevant work experience to make a pivot in her career. "Serving in Ghana allowed me to realize how happy working with people made me and how much I enjoy being able to improve people's lives," says Sarah. Sarah's service left her well-prepared for a role in the non-profit world and she continues to be grateful that the Peace Corps led her to BronxWorks, "BronxWorks has allowed me the opportunity to be part of a team who really cares about the people we serve."

Assistant Executive Director John Weed (Dominican Republic 1985-1987) believes RPCVs are drawn to BronxWorks because of the cultural experience and the sometimes untidy process of community development in under-served areas. "So many of our programs are Community Development focused. Perhaps RPCVs are drawn to BronxWorks because it feels like an extension of the kind of development work they did while working overseas," says John. Assistant Executive Director Scott Auwarter believes that our RPCV staff provides BronxWorks a unique advantage in assisting immigrant communities; "Our RPCVs give us a unique perspective on our immigrant client experiences and a language capacity that I don't believe another not for profit in the city
can match," Scott served as a health and community development volunteer in Sierra Leone from 1984-1986.

Over the next months we look forward to highlighting more of our RPCV staff members and sharing their stories here and on BronxWorks social media.

**RPCVs Currently at BronxWorks:**

- Auwarter, Scott, Asst. Executive Director (RPCV Sierre Leone)
- Carbone, Sarah, Quality Assurance for Adult Homelessness Service Programs (RPCV Ghana)
- Hahn, Evan, Digital and Content Manager (RPCV Lesotho)
- Kash, Julie, Family Support Specialist (RPCV Guinea)
- Kunze, Cash, Homebase Case Manager (RPCV Sierre Leone)
- Lloyd, Rene, Homebase Case Manager (RPCV Senegal)
- Nathanson, Anna, Homebase Case Manager (RPCV Cameroon)
- Pernier, Melissa, Foster Care Prevention Case Manager (RPCV Guinea)
- Plesh, Ryan, Homebase Case Manager (RPCV Guinea/Nambia)
- Saint, Michelle, Homebase Case Manager (RPCV Cameroon)
- Seng, Sarah, Community Health Literacy Program Coordinator (RPCV Cameroon)
- Smith, Alexander Winston, Homebase Case Manager (RPCV Panama)
- Stanley, Andrew, Homebase Case Manager (RPCV Madagascar)
- Weed, John, Asst. Executive Director (RPCV Dominican Republic)
- Yetman, Meghan, Intake and Quality Improvement Coordinator (RPCV Panama)

### BronxWorks Opens New Office at Soundview Senior Housing

On Thursday, March 23, 2017, BronxWorks, together with The Lemle and Wolff Companies hosted a community open house at the new BronxWorks Senior Resident Services office at Soundview Senior Houses. The event was attended by senior residents, BronxWorks staff, community members and partners, and representatives from Lemle and Wolff and the 43rd Precinct.

BronxWorks Senior Services Offices will provide an array of services to the residents of the 86 units, including Benefits Screenings, assistance with SNAP applications and Medicare-related questions, as well as activities and workshops for seniors and their families. While BronxWorks provides services throughout the borough, the organization is new to the neighborhood. "This is our first footing in the Soundview area," says BronxWorks Executive Director Eileen Torres. "We are celebrating our 45th Anniversary this year. This office represents another milestone..."
for BronxWorks as it is our 36th location and a further testament to our mission."

Soundview Senior Housing is a multi-phase project developed by Lemle and Wolff and its partners; Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), L&M Development Partners, and the New York City Housing Partnership Development Corporation. Lemle and Wolff and BronxWorks worked together to create a vision for senior services in the Soundview neighborhood of the Bronx. "It's a partnership that goes beyond the bricks and mortar," says Lemle and Wolff Principal Michael Sturmer.

Open House Celebration of the new Senior Resident Services at Soundview Senior Housing

Staff Profile

Issa Asiedo is a Housing Specialist who works in the BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department. Every year, Issa works with his colleagues to help our most vulnerable neighbors find stable and affordable housing. As a housing specialist, one of Issa's main responsibilities is to connects clients directly with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). On a day-to-day basis, Issa visits clients, sets up interviews, finds immediate housing and builds relationships with housing providers for future placements. "Working at BronxWorks really opened my eyes to what's going on in my community; when I first started, I didn't know how homeless people survive or how people were helping the homeless population."

Issa has a BA in Business from Dowling College but started his career unsure of his path. Issa found BronxWorks eleven years ago through a friend who recognized that Issa's dedication and determination would make him the ideal fit for a homelessness outreach case manager. Now, over a decade later, Issa couldn't imagine working in any other profession. "The clients that I work with keep me grounded. When I'm able to see a person at their most vulnerable state with a smile on their face, it's priceless. There's no better feeling than doing what I do" Issa says.

Issa understands that working with the homeless population requires humility and patience. "Homelessness can happen to anyone... I could be in the same situation... I've seen people my same age, classmates from my high school, my neighbors and family, nobody is exempt from becoming homeless, stuff like that keeps me grounded," Issa says. His years of
experience has helped Issa develop a unique rapport with the clients he sees every day. "The things I explain to (my clients) are the things I would want somebody to explain to me."

Photo Essay

The current cohort during class at the Bank Street College of Education "Quality for All" teacher education program. This program takes place onsite at BronxWorks and allows aspiring early childhood educators to get their masters degree while working full time. The program is open to individuals working at early childhood education facilities in Bronx non-profits.

BronxWorks staff celebrate the Open House of the Soundview Senior Services Office. Pictured from left to right: Marisol Rosa-Saltares - Assistant Department Director, Access to Benefits; Shani Hernandez - Program Coordinator, Soundview Senior Services; and Julie Spitzer - Department Director, Homelessness Prevention and Access to Benefits
Executive Director Eileen Torres was honored by Councilwoman Vanessa L. Gibson at her Annual Celebration of Women’s HerStory Month with UnitedHealthcare. Eileen was one of four dynamic women recognized; Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark, NYPD Inspector Martine Materasso, Citywide Coordinator of Anti Violence Programs for the Center for Court Innovation, and Sharon Ife Charles.

The Betances Star Nation Dance Team performing at the Annual BronxWorks Betances Community Center March Madness Basketball Tournament.
Did You Know? The 2017 Team
BronxWorks Bike Team

Did you know that two BronxWorks staff members are participating in this year’s TD Five Boro Bike Tour?

Frederick Stokes is an Accountant at BronxWorks, and this will be his first time participating in a charity event. Frederick feels privileged to have the opportunity to support children's programs within the Bronx Community. "I want to let (the children) know they have our support...and we're behind them all the way," he says.

Yusef Graves is the Director of Social Services at the BronxWorks Jackson Avenue Family Residence. Yusef is passionate about helping the cause to support our most vulnerable neighbors, "I feel a connection to the homeless population, I've walked in their shoes, and it's a humbling experience."

Support #TeamBronxWorks and dedicated riders like Frederick and Yusef by following the link below.

BronxWorks is once again a charity partner in the TD Five Boro Bike Tour, America’s largest cycling event. On Sunday, May 7th, 32,000 people will ride over 40 miles of car-free streets through all five boroughs in New York City.

Money raised will support BronxWorks children's programming at our shelters for homeless families.

I want to donate to support the team!

Click BRONXWORKS 2017 FIVE BORO BIKE TOUR to see our team's fundraising page and select which rider to support or click DONATE NOW to make a general donation to the whole team.
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Upcoming Events

The BronxWorks CMCC Pool Grand Re-Opening and 90th Anniversary Reception

On Friday, April 28 BronxWorks will host a luncheon reception to commemorate the Grand Re-Opening and Ribbon Cutting of the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center Pool. The event will also provide an opportunity for all to reflect on the 90th Anniversary of this iconic building.

There is still time for you to share a memory from 1130 Grand Concourse. If you are an alumni of any of the past organizations that called this building home, BronxWorks wants to hear from you!

Please contact Gianna Dell'Olio, BronxWorks Director of Advancement and Communications at gdellolio@bronxworks.org or (646) 393-4007.

Frederick Stokes, BronxWorks Accountant, will be riding for Team BronxWorks in the 2017 TD Five Boro Bike Tour

1130 Grand Concourse in the '80s
This year, BronxWorks celebrates our 45th Anniversary as well as the contributions of a distinguished group of honorees. The BronxWorks 2017 Sapphire Gala Honorees include Mutual of America, The Lemle and Wolff Companies and Paul Lipson of Barretto Bay Strategies.

Laura Behnke, ABC7 Eyewitness News Weekend Sports Anchor, will join the gala again as the Mistress of Ceremonies.

Invitation to follow

For more information contact Gianna Dell'Olio by email gdelloio@bronxworks.org or call (646) 393-4007

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