

## Message from the Executive Director

*As 2011 winds down and 2012 looms on the horizon, it is important to reflect and remain energized. Much has been accomplished over the last 12 months, but there remains a great deal to be done.*

*We have witnessed calls for change across the globe, from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan. All levels of government struggle to balance budgets, while the private sector grapples with business and job creation.*

*These developments are a backdrop to what takes place daily in neighborhoods BronxWorks serves. We see firsthand the throngs of people waiting outside of Bronx Housing Court. Similar lines are formed outside of our Heights and Morris Senior Centers when their pantries distribute food. Likewise, when a local elected official like State Senator Gustavo Rivera organizes a job fair, hundreds line up to meet with recruiters.*

*These indeed are tough times, but not without hope. What we see each day at BronxWorks offers inspiration.*

*We see seniors developing a market. We see previously disconnected youth creating debate teams. We see immigrant families organizing multicultural feasts. We see once absent fathers reconnecting with their children.*

*These and other actions of those we serve keep us motivated. It is why we are grateful for what we have learned in 2011 and the promise that lies with 2012.*

Best Regards,



Carolyn McLaughlin

## JAMEL MELENDEZ RUNS FOR BRONXWORKS



*Jamel Melendez with supervisor and YAIP director Keisha Roberts*

Jamel Melendez wanted to give back. That's why the South Bronx native and staff member with our Young Adult Internship Program (YAIP) ran on behalf of BronxWorks in the 2011 ING New York City Marathon. Jamel, 24, first came to BronxWorks in 2009 as a YAIP intern. Once enrolled into YAIP, the staff showed Jamel the importance of higher education and professionalism. He says, "They taught me that things like a degree and a polished resume were exactly what I needed to get ahead." Taking that advice, Jamel has enrolled into the College of New Rochelle.

Backed by the support of his colleagues, friends, and family, Jamel ran 26.2 miles to help grant the same opportunities he received to other youth. Funds raised will go to support the BronxWorks-administered **Darian Q. Armfield Scholarship**, named in honor of YAIP's late staff member who passed away in July. The scholarship will support YAIP participants who show exceptional promise in meeting their academic and career goals. Jamel says, "I really enjoy helping others and running the marathon seemed like a perfect opportunity to do so. Given how dedicated he was to his students, I know Darian would be proud."

# The Faces of Success And Those Who Helped Them

**FOR** those, like BronxWorks staffers, who serve the public good, it was an affirmation of what doing their jobs means in human, not abstract, terms. For those, like the 100 formerly homeless people who came to be honored, it was a night to celebrate their triumphs, remember their struggles, and see old friends.

Both groups came together at Fordham University in August for a Faces of Success dinner. The “faces” were some of the 300 men and women that BronxWorks and its partners have placed in permanent housing since 2005. These faces could be seen in person, in an exhibition of photographs and in a moving video where they talked about what change has meant to them.

In this case, the statistics were also something to cheer: Since 2005, street homelessness in the Bronx has declined 80 percent, a rate double the citywide decline. “Whereas the Bronx once had over 100 persons in a 10-block area, there are now fewer than 100 street homeless persons in the entire borough,” said George Nashak, deputy commissioner for the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), in his remarks. About 70 other guests joined the honorees to mark their achievements.

Former boxing champion Iran Barkley took to the podium to reminisce. “You don’t think becoming homeless can happen to you, but it can happen to anybody,” he said. He praised BronxWorks for helping him find a home and overcome other challenges. He was upbeat and stressed how much the organization had meant to him.

Marvin Sheppard, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, spoke in similar terms. “I didn’t want help,” he said, recalling the days he contended with drug and alcohol abuse. “However, the people at BronxWorks were persistent. I’m glad because they saved my life.”



*A face of success, Lisa Egelson shows off her magazine spread in her apartment*

Several times during the evening, the audience cheered BronxWorks staffers, providing the kind of positive feedback most professionals never hear from their clients. The dinner was a testimony to the city’s “Street to Home” strategy instituted by a partnership of government agencies, human services organizations, and health care institutions.

David Archer, who went from the streets to the BronxWorks Living Room drop-in center before obtaining his own apartment, called seeing his friends “like a class reunion.” The camaraderie was inspiring, as honorees embraced one another, happy at how much they had achieved. They chatted as they admired the 21 photographs (taken by International Center of Photography graduate student Adrian Fussell) documenting their lives and homes. They exchanged approving glances as the speakers talked about their own lives.

There was a similar response when the Faces of Success video, created by the independent filmmaker Karim Lopez, was played. Donald Renz, featured in the video proudly displaying the keys to his home, led others at the event as they jingled their keys in unison.

# A SURVIVOR IN A STORY OF THE STREETS

Sometimes, doing *wrong* just seems *right*. Willie Vaughn exhibited that philosophy for years.

Growing up in Brooklyn, he was the self-described “bad one” of his family. Fighting, drinking—that was his way of life. By age 16, he was a high school dropout in a group home. He was good at basketball, but that drowned in alcohol. He kept fighting: authority, his foes, insecurity. Many chapters, many cliffhangers, were to come.

For Willie, the first chapter of adulthood began in 1985 when he started selling crack. Eventually, he began “smoking the product.” That was against the rules, so the boss sent thugs to make sure Willie got the message. Their fists delivered a lesson, but not the one intended. Willie spent two months in a body cast and decided to get clean. Three months in rehab

strengthened his determination. In the next chapter of his life, Willie found a good union job in a Red Hook shipyard foundry. He poured hot metal into molds: “It was a real job, a dangerous job, a challenge for me. I like a challenge.” Willie subsequently worked as a security guard, patrolling construction sites and school buildings. Called a “toy cop” by guys in the ‘hood, he left and got jobs



*No longer on the street, Willie Vaughn holds keys to his permanent home*

mixing paint colors and, later, pizza. However, Willie couldn’t stay on the right track.

The details are vague about how Willie, now 52, started drinking again. He prefers to forget those seven or eight years of streets and soup kitchens. His current chapter begins in a park where the Homeless Outreach Team asked if Willie and his companions needed help. Willie and one friend said yes. Now, four years later, they have their own apartments.

Willie’s Bronx apartment is modest, dim and comforting. Willie opens the window guard on the fire escape and looks out onto the leafy street. The air wafts in; the sun shines a muted spotlight into the darkened room. Peace. “When I first came, I literally kissed the ground and cried,” he says. Now, doing right seems right for Willie Vaughn.

## Street to Home Strategy Produces Results

According to the 2011 **Homeless Outreach Population Estimate** count, the Bronx had 115 homeless persons on its streets, down 80% from 587 in 2005. This compares quite favorably to cities across the country.

San Francisco has than three-fifths the Bronx’s population, but 24 times more street homeless

persons (2,709). Seattle has less than half of our borough’s population, but 15 times more street homeless persons (1,753). Los Angeles has 2.7 times as many people as the Bronx, but 137 times more street homeless persons (15,770).

Thanks to the **Street to Home** strategy developed by the New

York City Department of Homeless Services in partnership with other institutions, BronxWorks has played a decisive role in achieving these results. Hundreds who once called Bronx streets home are now in permanent housing. Our success—and the collaborative model it engenders—may serve as a model for cities across the country.

## The White House Comes to BronxWorks



Frank DiGiammarino with Chief Recovery Officer Michelle Light (left) and Heights Senior Center Director Rosie Luongo

This past summer, seniors at BronxWorks' Heights Senior Center received a visit from the Obama administration as part of the White House Recovery Tour. The tour,

led by Frank DiGiammarino, Senior Advisor to the Vice President in the White House Recovery Implementation Office, focused on a tally of economic progress made across New York City under the aid of the national stimulus package, formally known as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The Heights Senior Center was awarded stimulus funds for a program that enabled the seniors to receive free, nutritious meals.

Seniors at the center got the opportunity to participate in a roundtable discussion with the White House rep, who was joined by city officials from the New York City Office of Management and Budget, to offer feedback on the positive impact the meal program has made on their lives. The center was the only one of its kind throughout the five boroughs to be selected for participation in the tour.

## HIPPY Turns 20

This marks the 20th year of service for BronxWorks Home Instruction to Parents of Pre-school Youngsters (HIPPY) program. Developed in Israel in 1969 and subsequently replicated worldwide, the program was first introduced to BronxWorks



Recent HIPPY graduates

in 1992 by the New York Section of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). HIPPY, which features a home-based learning curriculum, is designed to help parents bolster their children's academic performance by providing them with tools necessary to become their first teachers. Since implementation, the BronxWorks HIPPY program has enabled over 1,500 low-income children to successfully transition to kindergarten or the first grade.

## BronxWorks Youth Celebrate Kwanzaa

Mott Haven residents were treated to a Kwanzaa celebration at BronxWorks' Betances Community Center on Friday, December 16th. Youth presented a showcase highlighting the seven principles of Kwanzaa—Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba, and Imani—which focus on unity, responsibility, and faith. Using song, dance, and poetry the youngsters performed pieces demonstrating each principle. Nearly 200 guests attended, including DYCD Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav and Bronx Chamber of Commerce President Lenny Caro. Adding to the fun was the donation of 400 toys by the Bronx Chamber of Commerce and Bronx Toys.

## Supporting Japan in the Bronx

photo courtesy of Leslie Stoner



Paper cranes

When youngsters in our teen program heard about Japan's earthquake and tsunami this past spring, they decided to take community service a step further by

going global. Working together with DoSomething.org and Students Rebuild, the youth took part in a paper crane project to help raise funds for Japan's relief efforts. Participants created 1,000 cranes over a three-week period, raising a total of \$2,000 in donations from Students Rebuild and the Bezos Family Foundation. The cranes, which represent hope, will be included in an art installation at one of Japan's newly rebuilt schools.

# Funder Profile: The New York Community Trust

BronxWorks and the New York Community Trust have partnered many times through the years. Says BronxWorks executive director Carolyn McLaughlin, “The Trust cares deeply about issues that affect those we serve.”

In 1992, the Trust helped BronxWorks launch the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), which helps parents become effective first teachers. It has enrolled over 1,600 families since then.

BronxWorks undertook Trust-supported outreach efforts in 2000 and 2010 to raise awareness of the importance of an accurate census count. “Trust support helped us target neighborhoods that traditionally have been undercounted,” says McLaughlin. “That could translate into millions of dollars in federal funds in upcoming years.”

The Trust supported our Safe Passage teen program from 2006 to 2010. In that time, 270 teens were enrolled, with 94% getting promoted in school and 100% avoiding gang membership.

The Trust presently supports the BronxWorks Healthy Communities Through Healthy Food project. It works with seniors to help them develop leadership skills and to undertake activities that will help improve healthy food access in a southwest Bronx neighborhood.

The Trust also currently supports our Career Pathways program, which helps individuals with limited English proficiency receive job training. A 2010 report reveals its performance compared favorably to similar citywide programs, including BEGIN and CUNY COPE.

“We’re excited about working with the Trust in 2012,” says McLaughlin. “We have a long history of effective collaborations.”

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

- Early Childhood Education
- After-School
- The Betances Community Center
- Summer Day Camp
- Adolescent Development
- Dropout Prevention
- College Advisory Services
- The Community School for Social Justice
- Jill Chaifetz Transfer School

## FAMILY SERVICES

- Walk-in Information & Referral
- Family Childcare Network
- Homelessness Prevention
- Foster Care Prevention
- Single Stop
- Health Insurance Outreach
- Food Stamp Outreach
- Family Literacy

## SERVICES FOR SENIORS

- Senior Centers
- Housing Assistance & Minor Repairs
- Elder Abuse
- Mental Health

## HOMELESS CARE

- Homeless Outreach
- Drop-in Center
- Family Residencies
- Relocation Assistance
- Permanent Supportive Housing

## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Job Readiness Training
- Skills Training
- Job Placement

## POSITIVE LIVING/HIV AIDS

- Case Management and Housing Assistance
- Family Support Programs
- Nutritional Assistance
- Prevention Education

## IMMIGRATION

- Legal Assistance
- ESL and Citizenship Classes

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## MANHATTAN KEEPS ON LOVING THE BRONX

Eric Hill and his band sang their hearts out for the people of the Bronx. On Wednesday, November 16th, the Eric Hill Band threw a benefit concert— “Manhattan Loves the Bronx” at the Roger Smith Hotel to raise funds for BronxWorks programs. The concert, which the band also performed in 2010, featured the band’s signature bluesy rock sound led by Hill’s passionate vocals and lyrics.



*Eric Hill belts out a tune*

A strong supporter of BronxWorks, Hill (who is also ran on behalf of the agency in the 2010 and 2011 NYC Marathon) and his band mates Brian Beck, Justin Hill, and Oscar Rodriguez were able to repeat last year’s success

by raising nearly \$10,000 in donor support. Says Hill of the opportunity, “In my life, I have been fortunate in every respect. I consider it an honor and a privilege to be able to apply the messages of my songs to the efforts of BronxWorks in the key role they play for so many families right here in New York.”

In addition to the band’s performance, guests were treated to food, drinks, and a free copy of the group’s latest CD *From the Kingdom*. All proceeds from the performance benefit BronxWorks’ mission in improving the lives of low-income Bronxites.

## PEOPLE WHO MAKE BRONXWORKS GREAT: JOHN WEED

Sometimes it’s hard to believe that John Weed has been with BronxWorks since 1989. John has an MSW from Hunter College and was previously a Peace Corps volunteer, which assigned him to work in the Dominican



Republic from 1985 to 1987.

Working in a Spanish-speaking country was a big help when John came to BronxWorks, then the Citizens Advice Bureau. He helped establish the Avenue St. John office and worked with homeless families. He also wrote BronxWorks’ first HIV/AIDS COBRA services proposal during that time.

John assumed building management responsibility for the Main Community Center in 1995. When he became an assistant executive director in 2000, his duties ex-

panded further. He now oversees activities at nearly a dozen locations that serve thousands of individuals or families annually, including two childcare centers, four walk-in offices, and one of the largest Food Stamp outreach programs in the city. It’s a long way from his days of selling hot dogs at Shea Stadium during Jet games.

“John is one of the most valuable persons on our leadership team,” says executive director Carolyn McLaughlin. “He is a team player and always willing to accept new challenges.”