



## BronxWorks cuts ribbon on homeless facility's new wing

By Daniel Roberts

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The Living Room, a homeless shelter in Hunts Point operated by BronxWorks, just got a whole lot roomier.

On Wednesday, September 15 BronxWorks, with help from city officials and local residents that support the cause, cut the ribbon on Safe Haven, also called Danny's Place, a clean, comfortable 50-bed unit for Bronx street-dwellers. The facility is at 800 Barretto Street.

Living Room is the only 24-hour drop-in center in the Bronx, and for years has given area homeless people a safe, warm place to go at night. But it never had sleeping quarters until now.

"It was a long struggle for all the folks who made this place," said Paul Lipson, chief of staff to Congressman Jose Serrano. "You have to measure your success as a community by how everyone thrives and survives. This facility reminds us that even though we may see highly visible points of success in Hunts Point, it's not just about property values. There are many people left behind and we cannot forget them."

BronxWorks staff played a video for everyone at the ribbon-cutting: a news clip from the PBS program "Now," when they featured a segment on Edward "Footie" Doyle, who had been homeless for 10 years until he found the Living Room and was helped to his feet by its staff.

The video illustrated what Carolyn McLaughlin, executive director of BronxWorks, called the "street to home method."

At the close of the news piece, Footie said, while standing in the new apartment BronxWorks found him, "I don't have to deal with anybody out on the streets anymore. I live happily ever after."

Seth Diamond, commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services, said that the BronxWorks facility is the "most successful model for getting people off the street and into homes."

"If you remember back to what the Bronx streets looked like before we had groups like BronxWorks," he continued, "the difference is really night and day."

Assemblyman Marcos Crespo was also on hand, and had a strong reaction to the PBS video.

"We have a lot of work left to do," he said in his remarks. "We're going to keep moving this community forward until the day we can finally say there is no homelessness in the borough of the Bronx."

The most special guest of all, however, was Marvin Sheppard, who himself was a Living Room participant and was homeless for seven years total. "Three years ago, I was homeless and addicted to crack," he told the enthralled audience. "I was a mess. BronxWorks tried unsuccessfully to get me off the streets. I was reluctant. But they broke me down; they did it." With the help of the Living Room, Sheppard got clean, got a job, and in June of 2009, he moved into his own apartment. "Facilities like this do work," he said. "You all saved my life, and I thank you."

At the Living Room, BronxWorks does street outreach, which involves staff getting to know who is on the street and where they come from, and they also offer social services, health management, and food.

Safe Haven, which is christened Danny's Place in honor of Danny Kronenfeld, who created the Henry Street homeless settlement in Manhattan, consists of two long hallways, men on one side and women on the other.

The space has 50 rooms total. Each room has a bed, shelves, and a window, and could be home to what BronxWorks classifies as a "chronic homeless person" for weeks or months as they seek long-term residence.

Marc Kemeny, architect of BronxWorks, noted in his remarks that places like the Living Room and Safe Haven, which are still unique and rare across the country, "should be the norm in our society. Not the other way around."