

# Their job's to help

## Program in projects for unemployed

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NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

THREE housing projects in the Bronx with an alarming unemployment rate are getting help from a new employment services program with a "well-rounded" approach.

Of the 1,701 working-age adults living in the Dr. Ramon Emeterio Betances, E.R. Moore, and the E. 152nd St.-Courtlandt Ave. Houses, 875 of them are not working, according to New York City Housing Authority statistics.

With help from the federal Social Innovation Fund and a \$500,000 grant from Morgan Stanley, BronxWorks teamed up with NYCHA to bring Jobs-Plus to the rescue. It is a pilot program that is expected help 600 people annually in the Bronx over the next five years.

Rachea Chaplin, 34, a single father from the Betances Houses, was let go from his job as a baker two years ago. He has been going to the center on E. 149th St. near The Hub four days a week for GED classes to get his high school diploma.

"I have a 4-year-old — I need to set an example for her," he said. "She sees me reading and she'll pick up her book and read, too."

Chaplin plans to take the exam mid-December.

"I want to open my own restaurant and I know I need an education for that," he said. "I want to make a better life for me and my daughter."

Since opening their doors on Aug. 29, nearly 400 people have inquired about jobs, financial



Single dad Rachea Chaplin goes to the BronxWorks offices to get help with employment services, under a pilot program that is expected help 600 people annually in the Bronx over the next five years. Photo by Richard Harbus

counseling, résumé writing and overall job readiness, in a community where 57% of people within the three housing complexes are living in poverty.

"Historically, we've seen there's a tremendous need for employment in the area," said Jessica Nathan, director of special projects for BronxWorks.

"We are addressing employment needs more broadly and holistically," she said. "It's not just about earning income, but it's managing that income that will lead to successful outcomes."

A bulletin board in one classroom holds a host of information

on job openings. Computers, where members can apply for jobs on the Internet, line the walls.

A manager from a nearby kid's clothing store recently stopped in for a round of group interviews looking for a sales associate.

Quameisha Moreno, 21, who lives in the Courtlandt Ave. Houses, was there looking for a second part-time gig and landed the job on the spot.

"I'm trying to save my money because I'm starting college in January," she said about her enrollment at the Borough of Manhattan Community College where she plans on studying the-

ater and education to become a preschool teacher.

The center has helped Moreno fill out crucial financial aid applications for school, and is helping her manage debt accrued in her teenage years.

Plans are in the works for at least five more centers in housing projects throughout the city.

"I feel like it's going to help because when people my age see me leaving my building and ask me where I'm going and I say I'm going to work, they ask me how they could get a job," Moreno said. "It's already been having that effect and I think it could really make a difference."