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## BronxWorks "Faces of Success" Celebrates Transition to Permanent Housing

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BronxWorks staff with Faces of Success honorees.

BronxWorks hosted its "Faces of Success" event on August 17th celebrating the successful transition of nearly 100 formerly homeless persons to permanent housing. Over 170 persons turned out for the first of its kind gathering, which featured a photo display, a video and testimonials by several individual who had once lived on the streets, including former boxing champion Iran Barkley.

The event, which was held at the McGinley Center of Fordham University, also served as a testimony to the effectiveness of the Street to Home strategy, which was devised by a partnership that included government agencies, human service organizations, and health care institutions. George Nashak, Deputy Commissioner for the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), was one of several government representatives on hand. He praised BronxWorks for playing a major role in the 80% reduction in street homelessness in the Bronx since 2005, double the citywide rate of decline in the same period.

"Whereas the Bronx once had over 100 street homeless persons in a 10 block area, there are now fewer than 100 street homeless persons in the entire borough," said Deputy Commissioner Nashak. He praised BronxWorks and the other Street to Home partners for their vision and commitment.



Retired boxer Iran Barkley with another event participant.

Iran Barkley spoke eloquently about his experiences as a homeless person. "You don't think becoming homeless can happen to you, but it can happen to anybody," he observed. He praised BronxWorks for helping him and others obtain permanent housing, as well as overcome other challenges.

Marvin Sheppard, a US Marine Corps veteran, spoke in similar terms. "I didn't want help," he said, recalling his days on the street when he had to contend alcohol and drug abuse. "However, the people at BronxWorks were persistent. I'm glad they were because they saved my life."

Other honorees were quick to thank the BronxWorks as well. Irving Valentin said it was "the perseverance and hard work" of BronxWorks staff members that enabled him to make a successful transition. "They stayed with me every step of the way," he said.

The event included a photo exhibit by Mr. Adrian Fussell of New York University that showcased 21 previously homeless persons. Along with a video created by the independent filmmaker Karim Lopez, it helped set the tone for the evening.

"This is like a class reunion," remarked David Archer, who went from being on the streets to the BronxWorks Living Room drop-in center before obtaining his own apartment. The camaraderie between the nearly 100 honorees was inspiring, as men and women who were once homeless embraced one another, celebrating their successful transitions into permanent housing.

One of the highlights of the evening occurred when Donald Renz proudly displayed his keys in the video. Renz and others in the audience for the celebration spontaneously jingled their keys in unison after that scene. All the honorees received a standing ovation prior to the event's end.

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