

# COMMUNITY notes

We're committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

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## 2013 Gala Shines Spotlight on Talented BCBS Residents and Friends

On May 15th, Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCBS) hosted its Third Annual *Talented Brooklyn* Gala at the elegant Green Building in Brooklyn. Sponsors and friends contributed generously to the event, which raised vital unrestricted funds to help BCBS end homelessness in Brooklyn.

Nearly 200 guests joined us in celebrating our honorees: Patrick Fry, former BCBS Board Member and Senior Vice-President for the NHP Foundation, and Diane Gnagnarelli, Community Service Coordinator at Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn. Borough President Marty Markowitz stopped by to present proclamations to the honorees and BCBS.

Guests were treated to a beautiful display of artwork by BCBS residents, and a special exhibit of photographs by Brooklyn-based filmmaker and photographer Liz Giamatti. During the opening reception attendees bid on an exceptional selection of auction items including a trip to Rome; dinner at Raos; autographed Brooklyn Nets memorabilia; framed prints from Getty Archives; tastings at New York Distilling Co. and Old York Cellars; classes at Brooklyn Wine Exchange; History Channel collectibles; fitness training at Physiologic and Crossfit South Brooklyn; beauty products from McBride, Sephora and more; a MoMA tour and membership; artwork and hand-blown glass pieces; jewelry; designer clothes; event tickets and more.

Special guest emcee, novelist, songwriter and performer Wesley Stace (aka John Wesley Harding), kept the evening lively and fun, as did a rollicking performance by local jazz and blues ensemble Jessy Carolina & the Hot Mess.

BCBS extends a great big "thank you" to *everyone* who supported and attended this year's *Talented Brooklyn* Gala, and especially to our fantastic Gala Committee led by Co-Chairs Margie Hanssens and Christine Spadaro.



Photos by FreedLense Photography

Right: Special Guest Emcee Wesley Stace

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Laura and Anthony Trani



Left:  
Brooklyn  
Borough  
President  
Marty  
Markowitz



Above, left to right: Honorees Patrick Fry and Diane Gnagnarelli;  
Gala Co-Chairs Margie Hanssens and Christine Spadaro



Above: Jessy Carolina & the Hot Mess featuring Satori  
Ohashi, Jerron Paxton, Jessy Maggio and Jay Sanford



# Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

*Dear friends,*

Larry grew up in a middle class neighborhood in Queens as part of a tight-knit family – his father an engineer and his mother a homemaker. But as Larry approached his early teens his father had to travel frequently for work and Larry started to feel very lonely. As a result, he began hanging out with a gang from a nearby area and was pressured to use drugs and alcohol. He became an addict at a very young age.

As an adult Larry held a professional job for a number of years until he could no longer cope with his addiction. Unemployed, he could not pay his rent and bartered his last belongings on drugs and alcohol. Larry – unsure of how things spiraled out of control so rapidly and too ashamed to ask his family for help – found himself homeless, living on the street and in shelters.

Larry was eventually referred to *Oak Hall*, BCHS’ permanent housing Single Room Occupancy (SRO) facility. All on site, he was able to work with the *Oak Hall* Substance Abuse Counselor, attend A.A. and N.A. meetings regularly, and enroll in computer skills training. He shared a living suite with six other men, and began to play cards and dominoes, and discuss sports and politics late into the night. *Oak Hall* quickly became Larry’s community – exactly what he had been craving since his teenage years – and he truly began to thrive.

Larry has been clean and sober for more than seven years now. He is respected among the other *Oak Hall* residents, often organizing events and community activities; he has a successful and mature long-term relationship; and he has been commuting to a full-time job in Manhattan, recently earning a promotion. Please join me in congratulating Larry on his hard-won success.

At BCHS we know that for individuals like Larry, moving from homelessness to independence takes a community, and we recently celebrated this spirit at our *Talented Brooklyn* gala. The event featured heartfelt artwork created by our residents, including an innovative collaboration with the Saint Ann’s School, and a moving photo exhibit by acclaimed Brooklyn filmmaker Elizabeth Giamatti. We greatly appreciate all our generous supporters who helped make the evening such a terrific success.

The author Robert Louis Stevenson once said “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds that you plant”... and by this standard, BCHS had a marvelous Spring. In this issue of Community Notes you will see photos of the work that was done in May to beautify our landscaping and flowerbeds in the *Brooklyn Gardens* courtyard. Many thanks to our selfless volunteers, including everyone from *Goldman Sachs’ Community TeamWorks*, who helped make this area so lovely and brought smiles to our residents’ faces.

Thank you so much for your support, and thank you for being part of the effort to end homelessness in Brooklyn. I hope you have had a wonderful summer!

## BCHS Welcomes Three New Board Members

The BCHS Board of Directors recently elected Jonathan Jones, Laura Schnell and Anthony Trani to its ranks. These three dedicated volunteers offer vital expertise and insight that enhance the many strengths of the agency’s Board of Directors. We are thrilled to welcome Jonathan, Laura and Anthony to the BCHS family!



JONATHAN JONES  
Architect  
Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)



LAURA SCHNELL  
Partner  
Eisenberg and Schnell, LLP



ANTHONY TRANI  
Vice President, Marketing  
Topps Company

### We’re committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

Each year, BCHS provides safe and clean supportive housing for 1,000 formerly homeless women, children and men. We help them learn how to live productively and independently, with dignity and with hope.



## THE FIFTH ANNUAL BCHS RESIDENT ART SHOW

### 2013 *Talented Brooklyn Gala* Features Remarkable Works by BCHS Artists and Community Partners

In 2009 BCHS hosted its First Annual Resident Art Show to showcase artistic works by talented residents from our programs for formerly homeless women, children and men. Each year the show highlights the rich vision, skill and talent of each artist, as well as the remarkable beauty that is created through collaboration.

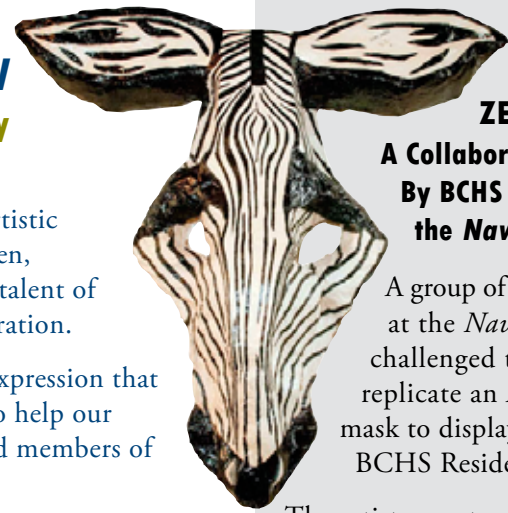
BCHS continues to encourage and nurture the therapeutic value and self-expression that art provides. Through group projects and community partnerships, we also help our residents foster understanding, respect and cooperation with each other and members of the community at-large.

We thank the following BCHS residents for sharing their wonderful art in our 2013 show:

Eve Battiste • Jason Bolen • Jenny Chan • Dorian Davis • Dante Encarnation  
Hilde Freedom • Destiny James • Hee'Ja Kim • Barry McCrea • Lindora Slowe



Photos by FreedLense Photography



### AFRICAN ZEBRA MASK: A Collaborative Project By BCHS Residents at the *Navy Green SRO*

A group of four residents at the *Navy Green SRO* challenged themselves to replicate an African zebra mask to display in the 2013 BCHS Resident Art Show.

The artists constructed the piece using simple tools and supplies like white flour, cardboard, tape and newspaper. The artists put in six months of hard work and dedication to finish the mask, starting with a simple cardboard sketch and following up with weekly papier-mache building.

Once finished, the group looked back proudly at the project ... and have already started planning their next collaboration!

Left to right:  
Hee'Ja Kim,  
Dorian Davis,  
Liz Giamatti,  
Hilde Freedom  
and Jenny Chan

## PHOTOGRAPHS BY LIZ GIAMATTI

These photographs are the result of a series of conversations about the role that art plays in the lives of many of the residents at BCHS.

We wanted to find a way to express some detail about daily life in BCHS programs, and thought it would be interesting to see what came about if we tried to document the process of residents making art.

The photographs in this exhibit mostly come out of one session the residents had during an art class at *Navy Green*, though some were taken during a mural project with kids from the Saint Ann's School.

A few of the residents have some formal training in art, and some have come to it solely through the programs at BCHS. For each of the residents represented here, regardless of their backgrounds, there is a common power and intensity that comes from their connection to the process.

- Liz Giamatti, 2013





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## Volunteers from *Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks* Return for Spring Gardening Day at BCHS

Goldman Sachs

On May 25th, a group of Goldman Sachs employees and their families weathered a rainy Saturday to donate their time and energy for a day of gardening and beautification at BCHS' *Brooklyn Gardens*. The group planted shrubs and flowers, and mulched, trimmed and weeded the flower beds and the courtyard at BCHS' housing complex for formerly homeless women, children and men.

"This is the seventh year volunteers from *Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks* have generously participated in our Gardening Day," acknowledged BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky. "In true community spirit, they donned their rain gear, rolled up their sleeves and dug in to help brighten the public green spaces where our residents socialize and gather together at *Brooklyn Gardens*."

Thanks to all of the *Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks* volunteers for their hard work, dedication and team spirit. We are grateful for their continued generosity and partnership in helping our residents move from crisis and isolation to stability and community.



## Ivy House Residents Enjoy a May Excursion to Manhattan

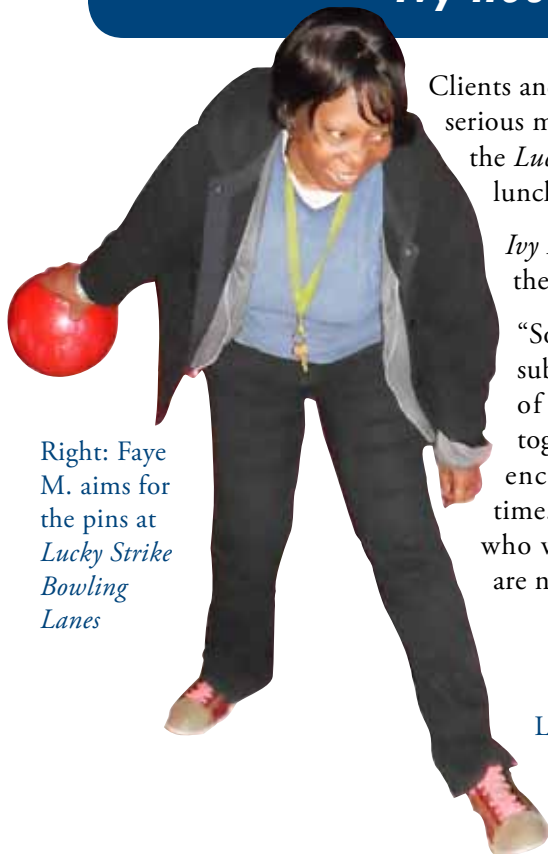
Clients and staff from *Ivy House*, BCHS' transitional housing program for individuals with a serious mental illness, travelled to Manhattan for a day of fun in the city. Their first stop was the *Lucky Strike Bowling Lanes* for a friendly frame of "ten-pin." Afterwards, they grabbed lunch in Times Square before exploring many of the nearby sights and stores.

*Ivy House* Assistant Director Debra Paul explains that the trip was recreational and therapeutic for residents, many of whom bravely stepped outside their comfort zones.

"Some clients hadn't been on the subway in years, and others had *never* been on the subway in their lives. Still others were anxious about the crowds, noise and faster pace of Manhattan. They all stuck together, though, gave each other encouragement, and had a great time. In fact, some of the residents who were most fearful about going are now eager to go back!"

Right (left to right):  
Theresa Curtis (BCHS staff),  
Leroy A., Maguy S., and Jason B.  
at *Ripley's Believe it Not!*

Right: Faye M. aims for the pins at *Lucky Strike Bowling Lanes*





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**“WHAT HAPPENS IN BROOKLYN”**  
**A Collaboration Between Saint Ann’s School and BCHS**

For BCHS’ 2013 *Talented Brooklyn* Gala, students from the renowned Saint Ann’s School in Brooklyn Heights, under the guidance of Community Service Coordinator Diane Gnagnarelli, and BCHS residents worked side-by-side to create a mural depicting their views of Brooklyn. The finished product is a fun and colorful representation of the Borough.

Thanks to the generosity of Guadalupe and Chris Concannon, the mural will be displayed prominently at BCHS for all to see.

Special thanks to Diane Gnagnarelli, Saint Ann’s student artists, Tamara Ramsey and Ajanac Lewis from BCHS’ Activities Department, and of course our BCHS resident artists.

