

COMMUNITY *notes*

We're committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

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FRIENDS, FESTIVITIES, AND HOLIDAY FUN AT BCHS

As December's chill settled across Brooklyn, holiday activities and good cheer delivered an abundance of warmth to the formerly homeless women, children, and men served by BCHS. Residents, staff, and volunteers celebrated the season with tree trimming and decorating parties, spirited caroling, delicious holiday dinners, a Multicultural Festival celebrating the culturally diverse holidays of the season, and a special visit from Santa Claus bringing gifts for the children and mothers of *Arbor Inn*. Thanks to our activities team, Tamara Ramsey and Ajanae Lewis, and the many volunteers, donors and friends who helped ensure the holiday spirit thrived at BCHS this December.

Left: Case Manager Kyle Corbett adds welcoming holiday decorations to the office of the *Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center (BHAC)*.

Barbara Lopez, an EMT with the FDNY Bureau of Training, returned with her colleagues to deliver gifts to the children and mothers at *Arbor Inn*. Ms. Lopez, a former resident at the shelter, coordinates an annual toy drive to show her gratitude for the help she and her daughter received at *Arbor Inn*. "I've never forgotten where I come from."

Many thanks to Phi Beta-Sigma Fraternity, The Golden Gents, Dennis Cook, Michael and Tess Lewis, and all who generously donated toys and gifts for our residents.

Former BCHS resident Barbara Lopez (far right) with her EMT colleagues from the FDNY.



Case Manager Tianna Dixon (far left) helps Santa Claus distribute gifts at *Arbor Inn*.



Residents at *Brooklyn Gardens* enjoyed a fun Tree Trimming Party, during which they added holiday sparkle to the community room and courtyard shared by all three of the site's housing programs. With trees trimmed and shining, BCHS staff treated all to hot cocoa and caroling.

Arbor Inn Program Director Sharon Troutman leads BCHS residents and staff in a holiday carol sing-a-long at *Brooklyn Gardens*.





Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

Dear friends,

Eddie was raised in a middle class family on the Upper West Side, his father a teacher and his mother a concert pianist. When he was in college Eddie developed a love for computers and secured a job as an I.T. technician upon graduation. As a hobby he enjoyed classic automobiles and could take apart and re-assemble cars quickly, and expertly.

In his twenties Eddie had a serious relationship that lasted a few years, but when his girlfriend broke up with him it triggered a deep depression and psychotic break. He began hearing voices and struggled with anxiety, and he thought about suicide. No matter how hard Eddie tried he could not maintain a residence of his own, and he withdrew from his family and friends. Eddie became homeless.

Fortunately, a worker at the shelter where Eddie ended up thought he would be a good fit for BCHS' *Scattered-Site Apartment Program* and made a referral. Once he was accepted Eddie moved into a private apartment building with two other BCHS clients; all three quickly became friends. A sympathetic case manager started meeting with Eddie three times a week, helping him better understand his mental illness and what he needed to do to take care of himself.

Over time Eddie learned how to keep track of his medications and how to talk about his feelings instead of keeping them bottled up. He actively participated in many BCHS recreational activities, and with the help of staff, returned to the workforce through a few different internships. He regained his sense of humor and, with his anxiety under control, began to focus once more on learning about the latest computer technology.

It has been seven years since Eddie came to BCHS and he is now doing better than ever. He has moved up to BCHS' most independent level of housing and has developed a wide network of friends; his mental health has remained stable; and, fulfilling one of his dreams, he has been working for a large office electronics store, providing customers with on-site consultation and advice about their computer needs.

At BCHS we believe that all of our clients can successfully move from crisis to community, just like Eddie. Nowhere is this more evident than during our holiday activities, and you can see many of our wonderful events in this issue of *Community Notes*. **I am also happy to announce that this year's *Talented Brooklyn* gala is set for April 30th, at the beautiful Green Building in Gowanus.** The gala will feature home-grown Brooklyn entertainers, along with a vibrant display of wonderful artwork created by talented BCHS residents. I hope you will be able to come.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who so generously and thoughtfully contributed to our Annual Appeal – your support is what makes our work possible. I hope you have a wonderful Spring and thank you for your commitment to ending homelessness in Brooklyn!

PRESENTATION SHOWCASES BCHS HOUSING TEAM'S SUCCESS NYC Department of Homeless Services Invites BCHS to Share Best Practices

On October 22nd, members of the BCHS housing team at *Arbor Inn* gave a presentation to NYC's shelter providers as part of a meeting with the city's Department of Homeless Services (DHS). *Arbor Inn* Program Director Sharon Troutman, Housing Coordinator Dafina Wong-Chong, and Housing Specialist LaRon Green discussed the process and best practices BCHS case workers use to move clients from shelter to permanent housing.

DHS invited the team to speak because of *Arbor Inn's* high rate of placement for formerly homeless families into permanent housing. In 2013, *Arbor Inn* placed 100% of the housing-ready families who had been referred from DHS into permanent housing.

The team talked about the importance of helping clients develop a manageable budget that includes saving money, the benefits of clients relocating to more affordable areas like New Jersey or Staten Island, and the advantages of aftercare services — such as those offered by BCHS' *Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center (BHAC)* — to ensure clients' successful transition to new communities and independence.



Left to right: *Arbor Inn* staff members Sharon Troutman, LaRon Green, and Dafina Wong-Chong.

NAVY GREEN RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY BCHS Joins Partners in Celebrating Development Milestone

On October 31st, representatives from BCHS participated in a special ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the completion of the initial phases of development at *Navy Green*, an innovative multi-use complex offering mixed-income, market rate, and supportive housing in Brooklyn's burgeoning Wallabout neighborhood. The event highlighted the successful completion of the first residential properties at *Navy Green*, which include two mixed-income apartment buildings and a 97-unit single-room-occupancy (SRO) supportive housing residence.

The *Navy Green SRO* is a cornerstone of the community-conscious project, offering 97 studio apartments for formerly homeless and low-income individuals. BCHS provides social services at the facility in partnership with Pratt Area Community Council (PACC), which owns and manages the building. As social service provider, BCHS maintains a full-time staff of on-site case managers and counselors who coordinate mental health services, support groups, community referrals, and activities for tenants, many of whom are living with mental illness and/or issues related to trauma, substance abuse, incarceration, or long-term hospitalization. On-site nursing and vocational training services are provided as well.

Navy Green resident Andrea Summers was one of the featured speakers at the event. "I've come a long way," she stated as she related her journey from homelessness and addiction to sobriety and stability at *Navy Green*. "BCHS helped me get back on my feet and the *Navy Green SRO* gave me a home where I can rest them."



Left to right, back to front: BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky, NY State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, and *Navy Green SRO* staff members Elba Rosado, Roger George, Guerline Blaise, Curdy Edwards, Christie White, and Jacqueline Gaynor.



NY State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, JPMorgan Chase Head of Community Development Banking Priscilla Almodovar, *Navy Green SRO* resident Andrea Summers, and BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky.



Supportive Housing Network of NY Executive Director Ted Houghton, JPMorgan Chase Head of Community Development Banking Priscilla Almodovar, and BCHS Board Member Richard Greenspan.



Navy Green SRO resident Andrea Summers and Case Manager Elba Rosado.

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We're committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

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

To donate, or to learn how you can help, visit www.BCHandS.org or contact our Development Department at (718) 852-9322 ext. 2140.

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FALL ACTIVITIES AT BCHS

BCHS residents enjoyed a host of Autumn events including pumpkin picking and decorating, Halloween parties, a haunted house, and Thanksgiving dinners.

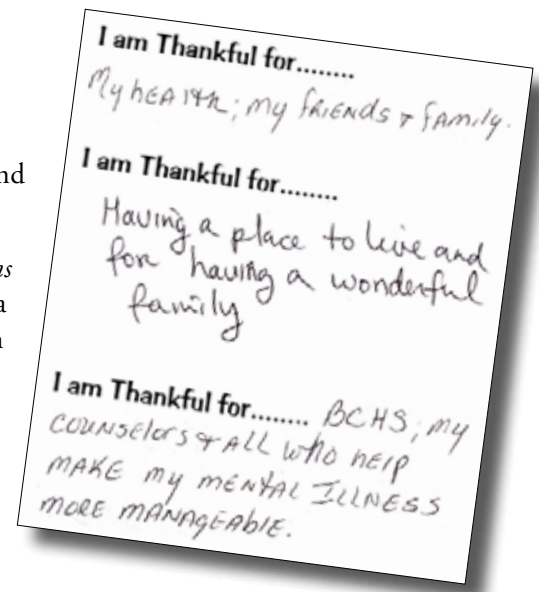
Children at *Arbor Inn* had fun picking pumpkins in the courtyard at *Brooklyn Gardens* and decorating them to be displayed throughout the building. The fun continued with a full schedule of Halloween activities for everyone at BCHS, including a pre-Halloween costume party for women and men living in the *Scattered-Site Apartments*. On October 31st, *Brooklyn Gardens* became the BCHS Halloween headquarters, with a costume contest for the kids of *Arbor Inn*, a spooky haunted house at *Oak Hall*, and treats for all.

November included a Veteran's Day luncheon that honored men and women who have served in the military. BCHS is home to many proud veterans, and this annual luncheon is a special way for the agency to show appreciation for their service.

The theme of appreciation and gratitude continued with multiple Thanksgiving events for all of the women, children, and men at BCHS. *Arbor Inn*, the *Navy Green SRO*, and the *Scattered-Site Apartment Program* had pre-Thanksgiving gatherings for their residents, leading up to the annual agency-wide Thanksgiving dinner at *Brooklyn Gardens* on November 28th.

Friends, volunteers, community partners, and BCHS staff members all helped provide a very special Thanksgiving for our residents. Golden Gents, Mr. Linden Morris and Park Avenue Foods, and the *Apartment Program* staff provided turkeys, hams, and home-cooked dishes. Students from St. Ann's School in Brooklyn helped serve dinner at the *Navy Green SRO*. Servers at *Brooklyn Gardens* included father and daughter Michael and Faith Lewis, community volunteers David Banks (aka D.J. Disciple) and Eric Blackwell, and members of the Phi Beta-Sigma Fraternity.

Members of the BCHS Board also contributed to the celebrations. Lexy Mayers donated chocolate turkeys for the children at *Arbor Inn* and Alexandra Bowie helped serve meals at the *Apartment Program's* pre-Thanksgiving dinner. "Helping out at Thanksgiving and other holiday celebrations is a great way to spend some time with residents and staff," said Bowie. "In the long run it makes me much more effective as a Board Member. And when I'm there, it's fun."



Right (left to right):

A mother and her baby at the *Arbor Inn* Pumpkin Picking.
BCHS Intake Coordinator June Adams and Board Member Alexandra Bowie at the *Scattered-Site Apartment Program's* Thanksgiving dinner.

Below (left to right):

Father and daughter volunteers Faith and Michael Lewis.
Jakyrh at *Arbor Inn* shows off her pumpkin decorating skills.
Student volunteers from Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn help serve Thanksgiving dinner at the *Navy Green SRO*.





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