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Below: BCBS employee Myriam Lacrete (front right) with residents from *Arbor Inn*



Happy Holidays at BCBS

Many dedicated Board Members, donors, volunteers and employees shared their time, hearts and gifts in 2011 to bring holiday joy to the women, children and men of BCBS. Special thanks to:

- Jean Alexander and the American Caribbean Center
- Ia Andrews and Eliot Merrill
- David Banks (aka D.J. Disciple) and Eric Blackwell
- Ben and Susan Baxt
- Donna Carey
- Tom and Carolyn Castelnuovo
- Golden Gents Family Health and Support Center
- Tim Hosking and Audrey Sokoloff
- The New Fountain Church (Brooklyn) Choir
- Aricka Westbrooks and Jive Turkey, Inc.

Below (left to right): BCBS Employees Aurora Evans, June Adams and Danielle Carter

Bottom right: Residents and staff of the *Scattered-Site Apartment Program* celebrate the New Year

Bottom left: Police Officer Jerry Zender (Santa) and BCBS employee Tianna Dixon with a young resident from *Arbor Inn*

Each December, EMT Barbara Lopez coordinates a very special holiday celebration for the children and moms at *Arbor Inn*. She and her colleagues collect and purchase gifts, wrap presents and even bring Santa Claus along to distribute them to all of the girls and boys. Ms. Lopez explains:

"I used to be a resident at *Arbor Inn*. The staff and services there helped me get through a rough time in my life. They provided me with childcare which allowed me to continue my education and become a NYS certified Emergency Medical Technician with the FDNY. Today, I am a Paramedic Instructor at the Bureau of Training. I have never forgotten where I come from and will do what I can to put a smile on the children's faces at BCBS."

Ms. Lopez acknowledges that several "Santa's helpers" assisted her with this year's holiday donation and celebration. "Without my boss, Chief Ann Fitton, it couldn't have happened. Also, my daughter, EMT Sharon Aziz; EMTs Onofrio Troisi, Steve Negron, Kelly Santos, and Janice Garcia; Police Officer Jerry Zender (Santa); Paramedic Andrea Zender; and the staff at the FDNY EMS Bureau of Training all pitched in."

To the women at *Arbor Inn*, she offers, "Hold your head up high and know that better times will come. You control your destiny. I live by a saying from Robert Frost: 'The single best way out is always through.'"



Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky



Dear friends,

Christine is an army veteran with a sharp sense of humor and a quick, hearty laugh. She also has a mental illness...and had been struggling in a homeless shelter when she was referred to our *Brooklyn Gardens* housing program.

Once she was here Christine loved to sit in our courtyard with her roommates, playing chess and cards. She would meet with her BCHS counselor regularly and, proud of her military service, became active in a support group with other veterans. After a few years Christine did so well that she found a full-time job and began saving as much as she could.

One day on the way home from work, a beautiful new building in Downtown Brooklyn caught Christine's eye. Confident in the progress she had made while at BCHS and feeling ready to live on her own, Christine took a studio apartment in the new building, and moved out of *Brooklyn Gardens*.

I bumped into Christine this Fall at our annual Thanksgiving Luncheon. "I love my new place, but is it okay that I come back to visit?" she asked me. "This is where I can see people. Have a little conversation. It's still my community, know what I mean?"

Brooklyn Gardens has been a warm, nurturing community for thousands of formerly homeless individuals just like Christine since it opened in 1991. In fact, this May 17th we will be celebrating the award-winning housing program's 20th anniversary at our "Talented Brooklyn" gala, to be held at Galapagos Art Center in DUMBO. We are thrilled to be honoring the visionary architects of *Brooklyn Gardens*, Cindy Harden and Harden Van Arnam Architects, along with the groundbreaking fashion icon, Lu Celania Sierra. I hope you will be able to join us at this terrific and fun event!

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated staff, Board Members, and volunteers, whose compassion and efforts made the recent holiday season a special time for our residents. And a very special thank you to everyone who so generously supported our annual appeal – your wonderful and thoughtful support will allow us to maintain and enhance essential services, just when these services are needed the most.

Thank you all again, and thank you for being part of the effort to end homelessness in Brooklyn.

Final Preparations Are Underway for the Opening of the Navy Green SRO

Construction and resident intake are on schedule in advance of the March 2012 opening of the new *Navy Green SRO*. The highly anticipated single room occupancy (SRO) facility will offer safe and affordable housing for 97 formerly homeless and low-income single adults.

Thanks to an innovative partnership with Pratt Area Community Council (PACC), Dunn Development Corp. and L+M Development Partners, BCHS will serve as the social service provider at the facility, bringing the agency's unique and award-winning approach to the residents of the SRO.

The facility is part of a larger redevelopment in Brooklyn's Wallabout neighborhood, converting the former site of the Navy Brig into a vibrant community of residential, commercial, and green space. When completed, the full *Navy Green* development will offer more than 450 residential units, including supportive housing, affordable rental and co-op apartments, and market-rate condos and townhouses.

Below, the *Navy Green SRO* planning team (clockwise from front): Wendy Junious (BCHS), Jeff Nemetsky (BCHS), Tammy Dobrez (PACC), Stephanie Blue (PACC), Curdy Edwards (BCHS), Guerline Blaise (BCHS), LaToya Campbell (PACC) and Darryl Cummings (PACC)



Thanksgiving 2011 at BCHS

Special thanks to Aricka Westbrooks and Jive Turkey, Inc. for providing delicious food for the *Brooklyn Gardens* Thanksgiving Dinner; the staff of the *Scattered-Site Apartment Program* for preparing and serving a home-cooked meal for the program's residents; and to the volunteers who helped serve up a warm and wonderful holiday for the women, children and men living at BCHS.

Top right: Volunteers serve Thanksgiving Dinner at *Brooklyn Gardens*

Far right: Volunteers from Phi Beta-Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Right: BCHS employee Juan Lamus serves dinner to residents of the *Scattered-Site Apartment Program*

Below (right and left): *Scattered-Site Apartment Program* residents celebrate Thanksgiving



Local Puppet Troupe Brings Show to Kids at Arbor Inn

In mid-November, Brooklyn's Rabbit Hole Ensemble returned to *Arbor Inn* to entertain the boys and girls with a unique and fun puppet show. The special performance was part of the troupe's *Theatre for Communities* outreach program, whose tours work with social service organizations and other historically underserved Brooklyn communities free of charge.

BCHS Program Director Marie Degraff-Myal extended her thanks to the troupe, saying "Thank you for giving us such a wonderful treat. We truly appreciate your hard work bringing laughter to our community. We definitely cannot wait to see more."

For more information, visit www.rabbitholeensemble.com



Halloween at BCHS

A full schedule of Halloween activities appealed to the child in everyone, young and not-so-young, at BCHS. Residents, Board Members and employees all joined in the fun this past October and showed their Halloween spirit.

Children from *Arbor Inn* picked pumpkins at *Brooklyn Gardens* and decorated their jack-o-lanterns for display in the courtyard. Board Vice-Chairman Tim Hosking also pitched in by serving on the judges' panel for the *Arbor Inn Kids' Costume Contest*.

Residents and staff at *Arbor Inn*, *Ivy House* and *Oak Hall* dressed up, held a friendly competition to see which program could come up with the "spookiest" decorations, and celebrated at the annual *Brooklyn Gardens Haunted Walk*.



Clients and employees from the *Scattered-Site Apartment Program* also donned costumes for an afternoon of Halloween games, activities and treats.

Board Member Alexandra Bowie visited the program's offices in Downtown Brooklyn to celebrate with residents at the Annual *Scattered-Site Program's Halloween Fest*.

"It was a treat to spend time with residents as they relaxed, made costumes, ate pizza, and played games," recalls Ms. Bowie. "I was impressed with the care the staff took in organizing the party, decorating the room, and responding to the clients."

Thanks to everyone who helped make Halloween 2011 at BCHS a "real treat" for all involved.



Right and above left:
Pumpkin Picking at *Arbor Inn*

Above center:
Case Manager Tamika Jackson
(far right) and *Oak Hall* residents
showing off their contest-winning
decorations

Above right (left to right):
Ivy House employees Theresa Curtis,
Loretta Prince, Debra Paul, Sandra
Haynes, Roxanne Donaldson and
Sharon Jefferson

Board Members and Friends Toast BCHS' Accomplishments in 2011

On November 10, Board Member Christine Spadaro and her husband, Rick Lodewick, graciously hosted the 2011 BCBS Board Wine Tasting Reception. More than 35 guests gathered in the couple's beautiful Brooklyn Heights brownstone to celebrate BCBS' successes during the past year, and to give new friends a glimpse of the agency's work to end homelessness in Brooklyn.

Special thanks to Christine and Rick for sharing their lovely home, and to all of the BCBS Board Members for their advocacy and leadership.



left column (from top, left to right):

Christine Spadaro, Venice James and Mark Foushee

Rick Lodewick, Barbara Blechman

Right column (from top, left to right):

Board Members Darryl Hollon, Tom Castelnuovo, Ben Baxt,
Alexandra Bowie, Ia Andrews, Christine Spadaro, Margie Hanssens,
Tim Hosking

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



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