Winter Holidays Deliver Joy and Celebration to BCHS Residents

Many compassionate friends offered their hearts, time and gifts to ensure that the women, children and men living at BCHS had a fun and festive holiday season. With help from these dedicated volunteers, donors and community partners, Activities Coordinator Tamara Ramsey offered residents a full schedule of gatherings and events such as tree-trimming and decorating, holiday caroling, a dazzling "Winter Wonderland," Christmas dinner, a multicultural celebration, and even a visit from Santa Claus.

On a cold December night, carolers from New Fountain Church in Brooklyn warmed Brooklyn Gardens with a performance and sing-a-long of holiday favorites. Afterwards, the group visited with residents and staff over cookies and hot drinks in the Community Room.

Several generous individuals and groups (listed below) coordinated toy drives and donated gifts for the boys and girls at Arbor Inn. Volunteers from Living God Ministries delivered their donations to Brooklyn Gardens and stayed to help wrap the gifts. Board Member Patrick Fry and his wife, Andrea, donated gifts as well. Teachers and students from the Community Service Seminar at St. Ann’s School, coordinated by Diane Gnagnarelli, also pitched in to decorate the "Winter Wonderland" and prepare "Santa’s Workshop."

Thanks to all of these wonderful friends, Santa was able to make sure that every child received gifts and had an opportunity to get his or her picture taken with "Ol’ St. Nick."

Special thanks to the many friends who volunteered their time, collected toys and donated gifts for the women, children and men at BCHS.

Patrick and Andrea Fry
The Golden Gents Family Health and Support Center
Lisa Smith and the SUNY Downstate Child Life Program
David Paniagua, Jerysbel Smith and the Living God Ministries
Pastor Carlos Ruiz and Aida Ramos-Ruiz, Monica Deliz, and the Good Seed Church
Employees of:
Pratt Area Community Council (PACC)
Curtis + Ginsberg Architects
Mega Contracting
Architecture in Formation
Dear friends,

One day a few years back I saw a BCHS resident, Barry, sitting in our courtyard, looking intently at something in his hands. What was he looking at? As I stepped a little closer it seemed he was moving his hands around awkwardly but with care. What could Barry – a soft-spoken, formerly homeless man in his late 40s who came to us through our ex-offender initiative – possibly be doing?

When I approached he showed me: out of a tiny piece of white blackboard chalk Barry was carving an amazingly lifelike sculpture of a mother, father and child all holding hands. He used nothing but the tip of a push pin from an office bulletin board, yet his miniature sculpture was breathtaking. And beautiful.

On May 18th you can see Barry’s work on display at our annual gala, titled “Talented Brooklyn.” This exciting evening will feature a gallery of art created by talented BCHS residents like Barry, as well as live performances by local Brooklyn entertainers. In addition, we are thrilled to be honoring three talented individuals who have done so much to help improve the lives of Brooklynites: Martin Dunn, whose stunning and beautifully designed buildings for formerly homeless individuals have made him the industry leader in supportive housing development; Ron Moelis, who has been one of the nation’s most esteemed and innovative developers of affordable and mixed-use housing for over two decades; and Elizabeth DiMichele, who has selflessly provided wise and expert legal counsel on a pro bono basis to BCHS for many years. I hope you will join us to celebrate “Talented Brooklyn” on the 18th!

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated staff, Board Members, and volunteers, whose compassion and efforts made the holidays a warm and special time for our residents. And a very special thank you to everyone who so generously supported our annual appeal. At a time when government resources are being reduced and the level of need is growing, your wonderfully generous support will allow us to maintain and enhance essential services just when these services are needed the most.

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

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**Oak Hall Residents' Council Honors Ruth Mitchell For Assistance to Veterans**

The Oak Hall Residents’ Council/Tenants’ Association presented its 2010 "Outstanding Community Service Award" to BCHS’ Resource Room Coordinator, Ruth Mitchell. The group honored Ruth for her commitment to helping military veterans in Brooklyn, including several who live at Oak Hall, the agency’s single-room-occupancy (SRO) facility.

In 2008, Ruth coordinated a partnership between BCHS and The Outreach and Rehabilitation Center for Homeless Veterans (TORCH), granting their clients access to BCHS’ vocational advancement services. It was the first program of its kind for formerly homeless veterans.

Thanks to this innovative collaboration, several hundred veterans - more than 200 in 2010 - have benefited from the services available from BCHS’ Resource Room. With personal assistance from Ruth, they utilize the program’s library of books and training tools. In addition, they have free access to computers that they can use to prepare resume’s, search for jobs, participate in online courses, and develop important job-related technical skills.

Ruth’s dedication and compassion also extends beyond the Resource Room. Through her service on the Board of Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled (BCID), she helps provide vital support and assistance to many residents throughout the borough.

“I always tell people that I am here to help,” says Ruth. “It’s nice to get this award and know that the clients appreciate that.”

The Residents’ Council/Tenants’ Association is an independent tenant-run group representing the residents of Oak Hall.
Construction Begins on the Navy Green SRO

On September 22, 2010, representatives from BCHS participated in the official Groundbreaking Ceremony for Navy Green, a new multi-faceted project that will include the Navy Green SRO, a 98-unit supportive housing facility for chronically homeless and low-income single adults. BCHS, through an innovative partnership with Pratt Area Community Council (PACC), Dunn Development Corp. and L+M Development Partners, will serve as the social service provider for the Navy Green SRO.

The September groundbreaking marked the start of the first two phases of construction - the 98-unit SRO and an 8-story, 101-unit affordable rental building. When the entire Navy Green development is completed, it will offer approximately 458 residential units, more than 8,000 square feet of commercial and/or community space, and 32,000 square feet of common green space. The project will comprise an unprecedented mix of supportive housing, affordable rental and home-ownership units, and market rate condos and townhouses.

"We are honored and excited to be part of such a vital and ambitious project," says BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsy. "Navy Green will bring new life to the neighborhood surrounding the Navy Yards, and the Navy Green SRO will enable BCHS to end homelessness for many more men and women in Brooklyn."

The Navy Green SRO is scheduled to be completed and ready for occupancy in Spring 2012.

Board Member Profile: Benjamin Baxt

In July 2010, BCHS’ Board of Directors elected Ben Baxt as Chairman. While this is a new role for Ben, it is actually just another chapter in his long and dedicated history with the agency. In fact, you could say that Ben Baxt literally helped build BCHS.

"I began volunteering in 1989 to provide some professional oversight of the construction of Brooklyn Gardens," recalls Ben. An accomplished architect, (and managing partner of Baxt Ingui Architects PC), Ben volunteered his expertise to help BCHS re-develop an abandoned three-building property into an award-winning apartment complex for formerly homeless men, women and children.

During his time consulting with BCHS, Ben met and was inspired by many of the agency’s clients. "Hearing the individual residents’ success stories brings the greatest sense of fulfillment," he confides. Soon, what started as a consultation project blossomed into an ongoing commitment, and in 1990 Ben joined BCHS’ Board of Directors.

In the twenty-plus years Ben has served on the Board, he has helped the agency navigate many significant challenges and accomplishments. Throughout it all, he has remained a stalwart advocate for BCHS and a compassionate friend to our clients.

When asked if there is a specific accomplishment at BCHS for which he feels the greatest sense of personal pride, Ben responds "Each individual success is a key accomplishment."

That same perspective guides him in his new role chairing the Board of Directors. "We must continue to enhance the Board with the next generation of leaders so that we can maintain BCHS on a steady course, not only during the present, but for as many more years as necessary, until we are able to end homelessness in Brooklyn."
BCHS’ 2010 year-end activities schedule kicked into high gear at the end of October, offering residents a Halloween filled with parties, treats and fun surprises. With costume contests, games and a haunted house, this Halloween presented something for everyone.

The festivities started on October 27, when the Scattered-Site Apartment Program hosted its Annual “Halloween Fest.” Residents and staff donned costumes, munched on delicious snacks, and competed in fun activities like a scarecrow-making contest and a mummy race.

“For our residents, who live independently throughout Brooklyn, parties like this are important opportunities for them to socialize and visit with friends,” says Scattered-Site Program Manager Marie Degraff-Myal.

At Oak Hall, Activities Coordinator Tamara Ramsey, with help from several creative residents and employees, converted the building’s basement into a "Haunted Walk," complete with fog, eerie lights, spooky decorations, and creepy characters.

Children and parents at Arbor Inn celebrated Halloween with cupcakes, snacks, games and a movie. Board Vice-Chairman Tim Hosking took part in the festivities and served on the judges panel for the children’s costume contest.

Thanks to everyone who pitched in, the children and adults at BCHS enjoyed an unforgettable Halloween!

**Thanksgiving 2010**

Special thanks to Arieka Westbrooks and Jive Turkey, Inc. for providing food for the Brooklyn Gardens Thanksgiving Dinner, and to the many volunteers servers who helped make it a very wonderful day!

Right (left to right):
Thanksgiving Dinner at Arbor Inn

The Scattered-Site Apartment Program treats residents and staff to home-cooked Thanksgiving favorites.
Board Toasts BCHS and Friends at its Annual Wine Tasting Event

On November 9, Board Vice-Chairman Tim Hosking and his wife, Audrey Sokoloff, welcomed more than 30 friends into their home for the Board of Directors’ 2010 Wine Tasting Event. The Board hosts this annual year-end reception to celebrate BCHS’ accomplishments during the preceding year. The evening also offers new friends an introduction to the agency’s life-saving work, and an opportunity to learn how they can help BCHS end homelessness in Brooklyn.

Many thanks to Tim and Audrey for sharing their beautiful home for the occasion. Thanks also to David Wolin from Old York Cellars for generously donating wine for the event.

Right column, from top (left to right):
Board Members Ben Baxt, Tim Hosking, Kim Bingham, Clifford Cohen, Ia Andrews and Christine Spadaro
Meg McConnell, Audrey Sokoloff and Jeff Nemetsky
Ia Andrews, Christine Spadaro, and Dr. Bill Nye
Below (left to right): Audrey Sokoloff and Tim Hosking, with Jeff Nemetsky and Jessica Ziegler

Below Left (left to right): Oak Hall resident, Anthony, with BCHS employees Tamara Ramsey, Ofnie McDonald, and Tamika Jackson
Below Right (left to right): volunteers Yosra El-Essawy, Laura Sainz, Jen Difiore and Peter Zerneck help serve Thanksgiving dinner
Contributions (July 2010 - February 2011)

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$25,000 - $49,999
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We’re committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.
Each year, BCHS provides safe and clean supportive housing for 700 formerly homeless women, children and men.
We help them learn how to live productively and independently, with dignity and with hope.
$100 - $249 (continued)
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Monica Deliz
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The Golden Gents Family Health and Support Center
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David Paniagua
Pratt Area Community Council (PACC)
Pastor Carlos Ruiz and Aida Ramos-Ruiz
Jerysbel Smith
Lisa Smith and the Child Life Program at
SUNY Downstate

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

Contributions (July 2010 - February 2011)

Tributes

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Elizabeth Bailey
Kenneth Mann
Ben Baxt
Robert Edmonds, Esq.
Linda Feldman
Deborah Morse
Alan P. Grimes
Daniel Green
Tim Hosking
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Ellen Reed-Fox and Tim Fox
Gary and Trudy Sudin
Sean O’Neal
Suzanne and David Ward
Michael Rothenberg
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Christopher Tahbaz

In Memory Of
Dr. T. Castelnuovo
June Castelnuovo
Doris Clark
Marty Cohen and Randy Ellen Sheinberg
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