Many Friends, Much Joy for the Holidays at BCHS

Thanks to a wonderful community of compassionate volunteers, generous donators and dedicated employees, December was filled with many fun and festive celebrations for the formerly homeless residents at BCHS. Trees were trimmed, carols were sung, toys were delivered, parties were had, Santa visited - so did Spiderman - and there was even a magic show!

Gifts and holiday items were generously donated by Michael and Tess Lewis, and the groups “Men Taking Action/United Transit Employees, Inc.” and “Girlfriends: Pathways 2 Empowerment.” BCHS was blessed again this year to have Barbara Aziz-Lopez, a former resident, plan a very special holiday celebration for the mothers and children at Arbor Inn. She and her colleagues at the FDNY EMS Bureau of Training purchased and wrapped gifts for the residents and even arranged to have Santa deliver them.

The children’s happiness and excitement at the sight of Santa and his gifts inspired an abundance of holiday cheer. Some of the gifts he brought included Hot Wheels sets, baby dolls, and toy helicopters.

Thanks to our activities team, Tamara Ramsey and Ajanae Lewis, and the many friends who delivered the holiday spirit at BCHS this winter.

BCHS Serves Up Thanksgiving for Residents

In November, BCHS residents were treated to a week full of Thanksgiving events. Arbor Inn and the Navy Green SRO each held dinners for the women, children and men who live in their buildings. In Downtown Brooklyn, staff of the Scattered-Site Apartment Program prepared and served a traditional Thanksgiving meal for their residents, who live in BCHS apartments throughout Brooklyn. Finally, on Thanksgiving Day, residents from all of BCHS’ programs were welcomed to Brooklyn Gardens for an agency-wide feast and celebration. Thanks to the wonderful volunteers and staff members who gave their time to help make Thanksgiving extra-special for our formerly homeless residents.
On February 3rd, BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky was part of a team of New York City officials and representatives who traveled to Albany to lobby for additional funding to augment programs that provide critical supportive housing and homelessness prevention services. The group’s busy and productive day included 38 meetings with legislators and staff, including Senator Velmanette Montgomery of the 25th New York State Senate District in Brooklyn, the home district of BCHS.

Unfortunately Katrina’s mother and father both passed away in 1994 and Katrina was shattered. Unable to cope without their guidance, she turned to alcohol and drugs, and spent most of the next two decades cycling between the street, shelters, jail, and the hospital.

Then, in 2012, Katrina was referred by a local shelter to BCHS’ Navy Green SRO. At first Katrina appeared angry all the time, lashing out at staff and her fellow residents. Not used to living with others, everyday issues – no matter how small – made Katrina agitated and distressed, and she often threatened fist-fights with her peers to solve small disputes. However, about a year ago, BCHS began a partnership with the New York Horticultural Society and things began to change. “The Hort” sent a horticultural therapist once a week to work with BCHS residents – they used containers for planting indoors, then moved outside and began beautiful new plantings in the flower-beds in front of the Navy Green building.

Katrina fell in love with gardening. With the guidance and support of BCHS’ staff, Katrina was able to engage in a nurturing activity for the first time in her life. And she felt a powerful sense of accomplishment and self-worth when she saw something she had planted emerge from the ground and bloom.

Katrina’s whole demeanor transformed. She became compliant with treatment and began to volunteer her time to help with building-wide events; she became warm, funny and engaging with her peers; and best of all, for the first time in her adult life, she felt like she had real friends.

At BCHS we feel that everyone who comes through our doors can move from crisis to community just like Katrina. 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 29th, at the beautiful Green Building in Gowanus. Home grown Brooklyn acts will perform for us, while the gala will also feature wonderful art work 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!

BCHS Travels to Albany to Meet with NY State Legislators
BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky Among Leaders of “Lobby Day” Team

On February 3rd, BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky was part of a team of New York City officials and representatives who traveled to Albany to lobby for additional funding to augment programs that provide critical supportive housing and homelessness prevention services. The group’s busy and productive day included 38 meetings with legislators and staff, including Senator Velmanette Montgomery of the 25th New York State Senate District in Brooklyn, the home district of BCHS.

Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

Dear friends,

Katrina was born in 1955 and raised in New York City by two loving parents. When she was in her 20’s a serious mental illness surfaced, but Katrina was in denial about her condition and did not receive any treatment. With her parents’ consistent involvement she was able to function and hold a steady job as a medical secretary for 17 years.

Unfortunately Katrina’s mother and father both passed away in 1994 and Katrina was shattered. Unable to cope without their guidance, she turned to alcohol and drugs, and spent most of the next two decades cycling between the street, shelters, jail, and the hospital.

Then, in 2012, Katrina was referred by a local shelter to BCHS’ Navy Green SRO. At first Katrina appeared angry all the time, lashing out at staff and her fellow residents. Not used to living with others, everyday issues – no matter how small – made Katrina agitated and distressed, and she often threatened fist-fights with her peers to solve small disputes. However, about a year ago, BCHS began a partnership with the New York Horticultural Society and things began to change. “The Hort” sent a horticultural therapist once a week to work with BCHS residents – they used containers for planting indoors, then moved outside and began beautiful new plantings in the flower-beds in front of the Navy Green building.

Katrina fell in love with gardening. With the guidance and support of BCHS’ staff, Katrina was able to engage in a nurturing activity for the first time in her life. And she felt a powerful sense of accomplishment and self-worth when she saw something she had planted emerge from the ground and bloom.

Katrina’s whole demeanor transformed. She became compliant with treatment and began to volunteer her time to help with building-wide events; she became warm, funny and engaging with her peers; and best of all, for the first time in her adult life, she felt like she had real friends.

At BCHS we feel that everyone who comes through our doors can move from crisis to community just like Katrina. 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 29th, at the beautiful Green Building in Gowanus. Home grown Brooklyn acts will perform for us, while the gala will also feature wonderful art work 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!

Katrina was born in 1955 and raised in New York City by two loving parents. When she was in her 20’s a serious mental illness surfaced, but Katrina was in denial about her condition and did not receive any treatment. With her parents’ consistent involvement she was able to function and hold a steady job as a medical secretary for 17 years.

Unfortunately Katrina’s mother and father both passed away in 1994 and Katrina was shattered. Unable to cope without their guidance, she turned to alcohol and drugs, and spent most of the next two decades cycling between the street, shelters, jail, and the hospital.

Then, in 2012, Katrina was referred by a local shelter to BCHS’ Navy Green SRO. At first Katrina appeared angry all the time, lashing out at staff and her fellow residents. Not used to living with others, everyday issues – no matter how small – made Katrina agitated and distressed, and she often threatened fist-fights with her peers to solve small disputes. However, about a year ago, BCHS began a partnership with the New York Horticultural Society and things began to change. “The Hort” sent a horticultural therapist once a week to work with BCHS residents – they used containers for planting indoors, then moved outside and began beautiful new plantings in the flower-beds in front of the Navy Green building.

Katrina fell in love with gardening. With the guidance and support of BCHS’ staff, Katrina was able to engage in a nurturing activity for the first time in her life. And she felt a powerful sense of accomplishment and self-worth when she saw something she had planted emerge from the ground and bloom.

Katrina’s whole demeanor transformed. She became compliant with treatment and began to volunteer her time to help with building-wide events; she became warm, funny and engaging with her peers; and best of all, for the first time in her adult life, she felt like she had real friends.

At BCHS we feel that everyone who comes through our doors can move from crisis to community just like Katrina. 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 29th, at the beautiful Green Building in Gowanus. Home grown Brooklyn acts will perform for us, while the gala will also feature wonderful art work 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!
On January 29th, Ambriel and Hawes Bostic, along with the BCHS Board of Directors, welcomed guests for an evening of wine tasting and hors d’oeuvres to celebrate the agency’s extraordinary work on behalf of its formerly homeless residents. Board Members mingled with supporters and friends, sharing their enthusiasm for BCHS’ work and encouraging those interested to become more involved with the organization.

The Wine Tasting also served as a kick-off event for a new initiative Ms. Bostic has launched to provide free books for the children and mothers at Arbor Inn, both while they live at BCHS and once they move out to independent housing. The book drive includes a collaboration with Greenlight Bookstore, an independent bookseller in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. The store has established an online registry - greenlightbookstore.com/BCHS - where people can purchase books to donate to BCHS. Look for more information about the book drive on our website and in future newsletters.

Many thanks to Ambriel and Hawes for welcoming everybody into their beautiful home for the 2015 Wine Tasting. Thanks also to Paradis to Go Catering for the night’s delicious food.

On Saturday, February 7th, Board Member Sean O’Neal and his wife, Ambereen Sleemi, hosted a festive Mardi Gras party at their beautiful home in Windsor Terrace, Brooklyn. Guests were treated to a delicious array of New Orleans inspired cuisine and cocktails, as well as a rousing performance by Brooklyn’s own Sugartone Brass Band.*

Before the evening kicked off, Mr. O’Neal took a moment to tell his guests about BCHS and encourage them to support the agency. Thanks to his advocacy and enthusiasm, his guests and invitees contributed more than $2,000 to help BCHS end homelessness in Brooklyn.

*The Sugartone Brass Band will be the musical performers at this year’s Talented Brooklyn Gala, on April 29, 2015.
Contributions July 1, 2014 - January 31, 2015

$25,000 to $49,999
Mary J. Hutchins Foundation, Inc.

$10,000 to $24,999
Ben and Susan Baxt
Sean O’Neal and Ambereen Sleemi

$5,000 to $9,999
Anonymous (2)
Clifford and Leslie Cohen
The Dammann Fund, Inc.

$2,000 to $4,999
Anonymous (1)
Hawes and Ambriel Bostic
Jens Peter Hansen and Elena Feliciano
Tim and Stephanie Ingrassia
The John A. Hartford Foundation
Discretionary Grants Program
Lexy Mayers and David Lesser
Laura Schnell and Mitch Pacelle

$1,000 to $1,999 (continued)
Stephen and Jeanne McGrath
Stephen McGrath, Jr. and Janine Shelffo
Sheryl Parker and James Grayer
Nellie Perera/Joan H. Perera Charitable
Lead Annuity Trust
SMR Craftworks, Inc./Andrew Fishman
Ward & Company Works of Art
Stark and Michael Ward

$500 - $999
Anonymous (2)
Carol Berkvist
Thomas and Carolyn Castelnuovo
Ellen and Casey Cogut
Barry Cohen
Mary Cox Golden
David Greene and Roberta Robbins
Robert and Kathleen Helenius
Sandy Krieger and Andrew Dash
Starr Security Services
Robrt Stephens
Laura and Anthony Trani
Elizabeth and Michael Mayers
Vivien and Michael Shelanski
Cindy and Simona Peterson
Susan Sommer and Stephen A. Warnke
Stanton Public Relations and Marketing

$250 - $499
Anonymous (3)
Bill and Mary Baker
Ida Barak and Thomas Sauermilch
Kim Bingham
Jennie and Jake Blair
Emily Bravo and Billy Clareman
Anne Clark and Tom Hyland
Steve Coe
Bill and Barbara Everdell
Joseph Finnerty, III
Thomas P. Gallagher, Inc.
Marilyn Gelber
Joan Glatman
Alan Goldberg and Karen Backus
Janice Goodman
Sally Greenspan
Interior Alterations, Inc.
Eoin and Farah Killeen/Kleen Construction LLC
Joseph C. Maffucci
The Honorable Marty Markowitz and
Jamie Markowitz
Elizabeth and Michael Mayers
Matthew Mayers and Bryce Jacobs
Lauren McCarthy
Newt and Polly Merrill
Walter and Mary Theresa Nelson
Krista Olson and Tom Middleton

Special thanks to the many wonderful friends who gave in-kind donations of gifts, toys, food and entertainment for BCHS residents this holiday season.

Eric Blackwell, David Banks (aka DJ Disciple) and DJs Against Hunger
Girlfriends: Pathways 2 Empowerment
Michael and Tess Lewis
Barbara Lopez and the Staff of the FDNY EMS Bureau of Training
Men Taking Action/United Transit Employees, Inc.
Nadja Pinnavaia

Volunteers from Men Taking Action/United Transit Employees, Inc. collected and donated toys for the kids at Arbor Inn.

Arbor Inn staff with the volunteers and staff from Girlfriends: Pathways 2 Empowerment, who donated toys and gifts for the children and mothers at BCHS.

The Staff of the FDNY EMS Bureau of Training brought Santa, Spider Man and a magician. Among the group was the family of former FDNY firefighter Walter Nelson, who passed away in May of 2014. His wife, pictured in a green and red hat, and son, carry on Mr. Nelson’s tradition of going to shelters with toys and a magic show during the holidays.
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 Office at (718) 852-9322 ext. 2140
PLEASE JOIN US

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

Brooklyn Community Housing and Services
Annual Benefit & Gala Celebration
The Green Building | 452 Union Street | Brooklyn, NY