

COMMUNITY notes

We're committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

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2nd Annual Talented Brooklyn Gala Resonates with the Rhythm of Compassion



On Thursday, May 17, Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS) hosted its *2nd Annual Talented Brooklyn Gala* at Galapagos Art Space in DUMBO. More than 150 friends of the agency attended to help celebrate BCHS' life-saving programs for formerly homeless women, children and men. All together, donors, advertisers and auction winners contributed nearly \$100,000 to the event, providing BCHS with vital unrestricted resources to help end homelessness in Brooklyn.

The Gala Committee, led by Co-Chairs Margie Hanssens and Christine Spadaro, treated guests to a festive night of creativity, compassion and community. The room welcomed attendees with vibrant and colorful artwork from the *4th Annual BCHS Resident Art Show*. The Jean Rohe Band warmed the crowd with a selection of melodic multi-cultural music while guests mingled and browsed the selection of exciting auction items, including a trip to Rome, dinner at Raos, weekend getaways, theater tickets, artwork and more. Last but not least, featured performers Maracatu New York brought audience members to their feet with an energetic set of Brazilian-style drumming and dancing.

BCHS' annual galas recognize the many community partners, Board Members and employees who work diligently to help hundreds of adults and children move from crisis and isolation to stability and independence each year. The 2012 event also highlighted the 20th anniversary of *Brooklyn Gardens*, BCHS' supportive housing apartment complex in Fort Greene.

"This year we are thrilled to honor architect Cindy Harden, who designed *Brooklyn Gardens*, and Harden+ Van Arnam Architects," said Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky. "Their expertise and leadership in supportive housing design continues to provide attractive and safe homes for thousands of New Yorkers."

Guests also joined the agency in honoring model, runway coach and TV personality Lu Celia Sierra, who has generously volunteered her time and experience to offer support and inspiration to BCHS clients. Ms. Sierra has also served as the agency's Gala Emcee since 2010. "Lu is a terrific friend to BCHS and our residents," said Nemetsky. "We are extremely grateful that she continues to share her talent, graciousness and insight with us, and we are thrilled to wish her well on her upcoming VH1 television show, *Runway Lu*, which debuts in the Fall."

Thanks to all of the generous sponsors, honorees, Board and Committee Members, donors and friends who helped make the *2nd Annual Talented Brooklyn Gala* a huge success!

See inside for more Talented Brooklyn.



Above:
2012 Honoree
Lu Celia Sierra

Right (left to right): 2012
Honorees Harden+ Van Arnam
Architects, PLLC: Jose Cruz,
Manuel Taveras, Thomas
Pfister, Claudia Goudas,
Cindy Harden, Jan Van Arnam,
and Sandy Chin

Photos by Robert Braunfeld



Dear friends,

Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky



I'd like to tell you about Abby.

Abby had struggled for most of her adult life with mental illness and substance abuse before coming to BCCHS, often living in hospitals or on the street. Clinically obese at the time and suffering from a serious case of diabetes, she was sleeping on a shelter cot in Queens when she was referred to our *Scattered-Site Apartment Program*.

Abby was placed in an apartment with two other BCCHS clients in Downtown Brooklyn. Normally guarded and shy, Abby immediately hit it off with her roommates, making her feel as if she had real friends for the first time in decades. Then, with her confidence growing, Abby became a vocal participant in one of the agency's weekly support groups and eagerly engaged with her case manager. She began exercising regularly and, at the urging of staff, changed her eating habits and lost 30 pounds. Her diabetes abated.

Abby felt so good about herself that her case manager helped her enroll for classes at a local college. Well, it has been two years since then and I am proud to say that Abby just graduated in May with her Associates Degree and a 3.67 G.P.A. Now, at age 50, she is exploring options for pursuing her Bachelors and is seeking certification as an Ultrasound Technician. Please join me in congratulating Abby on her well-deserved success.

At BCCHS we believe that every person who walks through our doors can move from vulnerability to independence – and from crisis to community – just like Abby. And in this issue of Community Notes you will see how we celebrated this mission at our recent *Talented Brooklyn Gala*. A special thank you to our wonderful honorees - Cindy Harden and Harden+Van Arnam Architects, and Lu Celia Sierra - and to all of our extraordinarily generous sponsors, guests and supporters. The evening featured performances by dynamic Brooklyn-based entertainers as well as a gallery of terrific artwork created by talented BCCHS residents.

It was once said that “where flowers bloom, so does hope,” and in this issue you will also see the amazing work that was done this Spring 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 are having a wonderful summer!

BCCHS Welcomes New Board Members

This year, the BCCHS Board of Directors enthusiastically elected two new and dedicated volunteers, Lexy Mayers and Richard Greenspan, to its ranks. Both new Board Members come to BCCHS with diverse expertise and experiences that compliment the many strengths of the established participants, and that will help the Board of Directors continue to lead the agency's success and growth.



LEXY MAYERS is the Chief Development Officer at the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL). Prior to joining BPL she was the Executive Director of Room to Grow, an organization dedicated to enriching the lives of babies born into poverty. She lives in Park Slope with her husband and two children.



RICHARD GREENSPAN is the owner of RG Consulting Services, LLC, specializing in real estate development for affordable and supportive housing. Prior to this he was Vice-President at Forest City Ratner Companies. He lives in Park Slope with his wife and children.

After extensive planning and innovative collaboration, the highly anticipated *Navy Green SRO* opened its doors in March of 2012. The newly constructed single-room occupancy (SRO) facility, located just outside the Brooklyn Navy Yards, offers 59 units of permanent supportive housing for chronically homeless single adults who are living with mental illnesses, and 38 additional units for low-income working adults from the community.

Navy Green SRO represents a multi-faceted partnership between BCHS and Pratt Area Community Council (PACC), which owns and manages the building, along with Dunn Development Corp. and L+M Development Partners. BCHS oversees social services at the facility, including case management, counseling, nursing care, vocational training and recreational activities.

"One resident told me his first night at *Navy Green* was the single BEST night of his life," shares Program Director Curdy Edwards.

"It's wonderful to watch this new community grow. Our goal is to admit new tenants as quickly as possible and provide the services required to ensure a successful stay at *Navy Green*, with full occupancy by the end of November."

Left to right: BCHS Board Members Patrick Fry, Margie Hanssens, Alexandra Bowie, Christine Spadaro, Darryl Hollon and Ben Baxt at the *Navy Green SRO*



BCHS Welcomes the First Residents to the New Navy Green SRO



Jason's Story: A Bright Future Grows at Ivy House

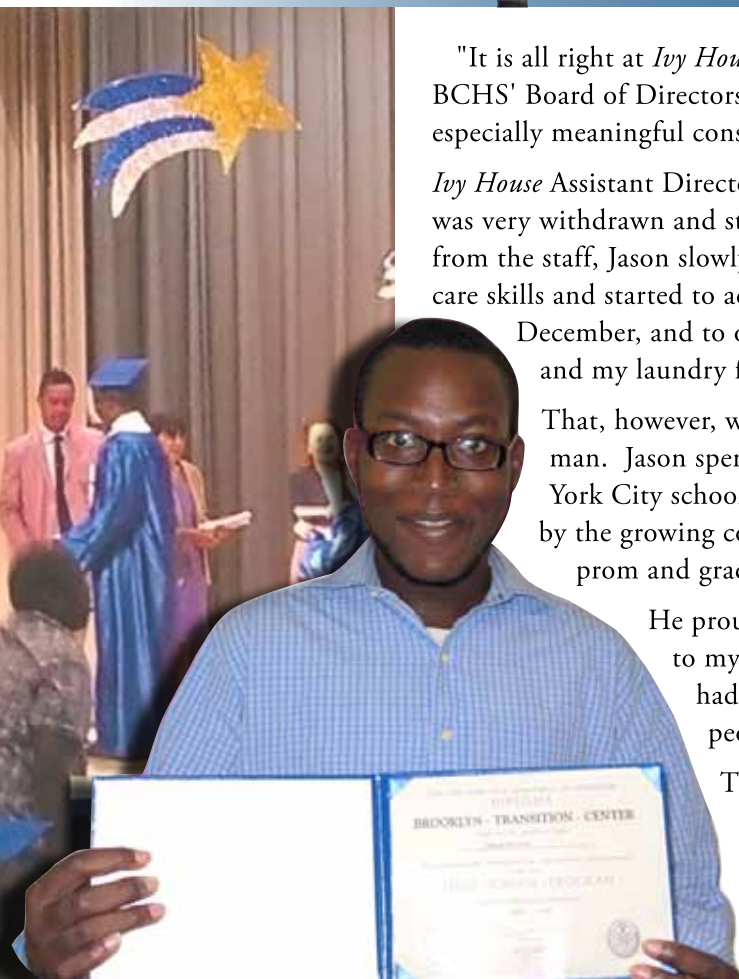
"It is all right at *Ivy House*," states Jason as he addresses attendees at the June 2012 meeting of BCHS' Board of Directors. "It is a safe place and the staff is there to help." This statement is especially meaningful considering how far Jason has progressed from just a year earlier.

Ivy House Assistant Director Debra Paul recalls, "When Jason arrived at BCHS in early 2011 he was very withdrawn and struggling with his mental illness." With encouragement and nurturing from the staff, Jason slowly began to participate in social activities, learned essential personal-care skills and started to advocate for himself. "I went on a trip to the Brooklyn Tabernacle last December, and to other great places," he recounts, "and I learned how to do my chores and my laundry for myself."

That, however, was just the beginning of a remarkable year for the once quiet young man. Jason spent his days attending Brooklyn Transition Center (P.S. 373), a New York City school that provides special services for students with disabilities. Buoyed by the growing confidence and stability he felt at *Ivy House*, Jason attended his school prom and graduated on June 8th.

He proudly shares "Tamara and Miss Loretta (BCHS staff members) took me to my high school graduation. BCHS paid my graduation dues. The staff had a barbecue for me. Every one of the clients said congratulations, even people from other programs."

Thanks to the compassionate support and vital life skills he received at *Ivy House*, Jason has now set his sights on his next big goal. "I had an interview at AHRC to enroll in a job training program," he says with a smile, "and I just found out I got accepted."



Below (from top, left to right):

BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky, Board Chair Ben Baxt, Honorees Lu Celania Sierra and Cindy Harden

Barbara Blechman, Diane Gnagnarelli, Rick Lodewick and Board Member Christine Spadaro

Joyce Klemperer, Board Member Tim Hosking, Debby Leonard and Leah Riley

Kevin McCarthy, Eliot Merrill and Nellie Perera

Photos by Robert Braunfeld



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 Ia Andrews Venice James
 Benjamin Baxt Lexy Mayers
 Thomas Castelnovo Naima Mohamed
 Jens Peter Hansen Arzora O'Neal
 Tim Hosking Sean O'Neal



Left (from top, left to right):
 Kings County District Attorney
 Charles Hynes
 Board Member Margie Hanssens
 and BCHS Artist Jenny Chan
 BCHS Controller Errol Fray and
 Board Member Darryl Hollon
 New York State Senator
 Velmanette Montgomery
 Maracatu New York
 Photos by Robert Braunfeld



The Jean Rohe Band (left to right): Liam Robinson, Aaron Shafer-Haiss, Jean Rohe, Ilusha Tsinadze and Chris Tordini



BCBS
 Resident Artist
 Jenny Chan



BCBS Resident Artist
 Hilde Freedom

The 4th Annual BCBS Resident Art Show at Talented Brooklyn

BCBS' *Annual Resident Art Show* features works by talented clients from our programs for formerly homeless women, children and men. The show highlights the artists' diverse experiences and skills and it celebrates each person's unique visions.

Through our art show, and a comprehensive activities program with regular art sessions, we encourage and nurture the therapeutic benefits that creative expression offers. We thank the artists for allowing us to share their works at *Talented Brooklyn*.

2012 BCBS RESIDENT ARTISTS

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Jenny Chan
<i>Scattered-Site Apts.</i> | Hee'Ja Kim
<i>Scattered-Site Apts.</i> | Lindora Slowe
<i>BHAC Aftercare</i> |
| Hilde Freedom
<i>Scattered-Site Apts.</i> | Barry McCrea
<i>Oak Hall</i> | Ryan Thomas
<i>Scattered-Site Apts.</i> |

Our Journey: Photographs by BCBS Residents

For the *4th Annual Resident Art Show*, BCBS gave disposable cameras to a group of clients and asked them to document aspects of their journeys from homelessness to independence.

Some were recently homeless and newly arrived to BCBS. Their photos reflect their apprehension and determination as they get settled at the agency.

Others were BCBS residents for a number of months when they took their pictures. These photos depict the process of getting back on their feet: working with staff, participating in vocational training, and finding employment.

Finally, some had been with the agency for close to a year. Working steady jobs they secured with help from BCBS staff, and saving enough money, they were about to graduate from the agency. Their images capture the effort and joy of moving into independent housing of their own.

2012 BCBS RESIDENT PHOTOGRAPHERS

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Samuel Billups
<i>Oak Hall</i> | Zhingha Hailey
<i>Arbor Inn</i> | Toribio Lassalle
<i>Scattered-Site Apts.</i> |
| Pertrilla Fisher
<i>Scattered-Site Apts.</i> | Shamika Hough
<i>Arbor Inn</i> | Steven Paul Plourde
<i>Scattered-Site Apts.</i> |
| Janay Frazier
<i>Arbor Inn</i> | Simone Johns
<i>Arbor Inn</i> | |



BCBS Resident
 Photographer
 Janay Frazier

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Janine Shellfo

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Volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks Help Beautify Brooklyn Gardens

On Saturday, May 5, a group of Goldman Sachs employees and their families donated their time and energy for a day of planting and beautifying at *Brooklyn Gardens*, BCHS' apartment complex for formerly homeless women, children and men. The group mulched, weeded, trimmed, and planted shrubs and flowers to brighten the courtyard and flower beds.

This is the sixth year volunteers from *Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks* participated in BCHS' Gardening Day. In true community spirit, they worked alongside several BCHS Board Members, friends, employees and residents who dug in to help with the project.

"The grounds of *Brooklyn Gardens* have always been integral to the social life and relaxation of our residents," shared BCHS Board Chair Ben Baxt. "We're most appreciative to *Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks* for their help in fostering beauty and calm in our public spaces every year."

We're committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

Each year, BCHS provides safe and clean supportive housing for 800 formerly homeless women, children and men.

We help them learn how to live productively and independently, with dignity and with hope.

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



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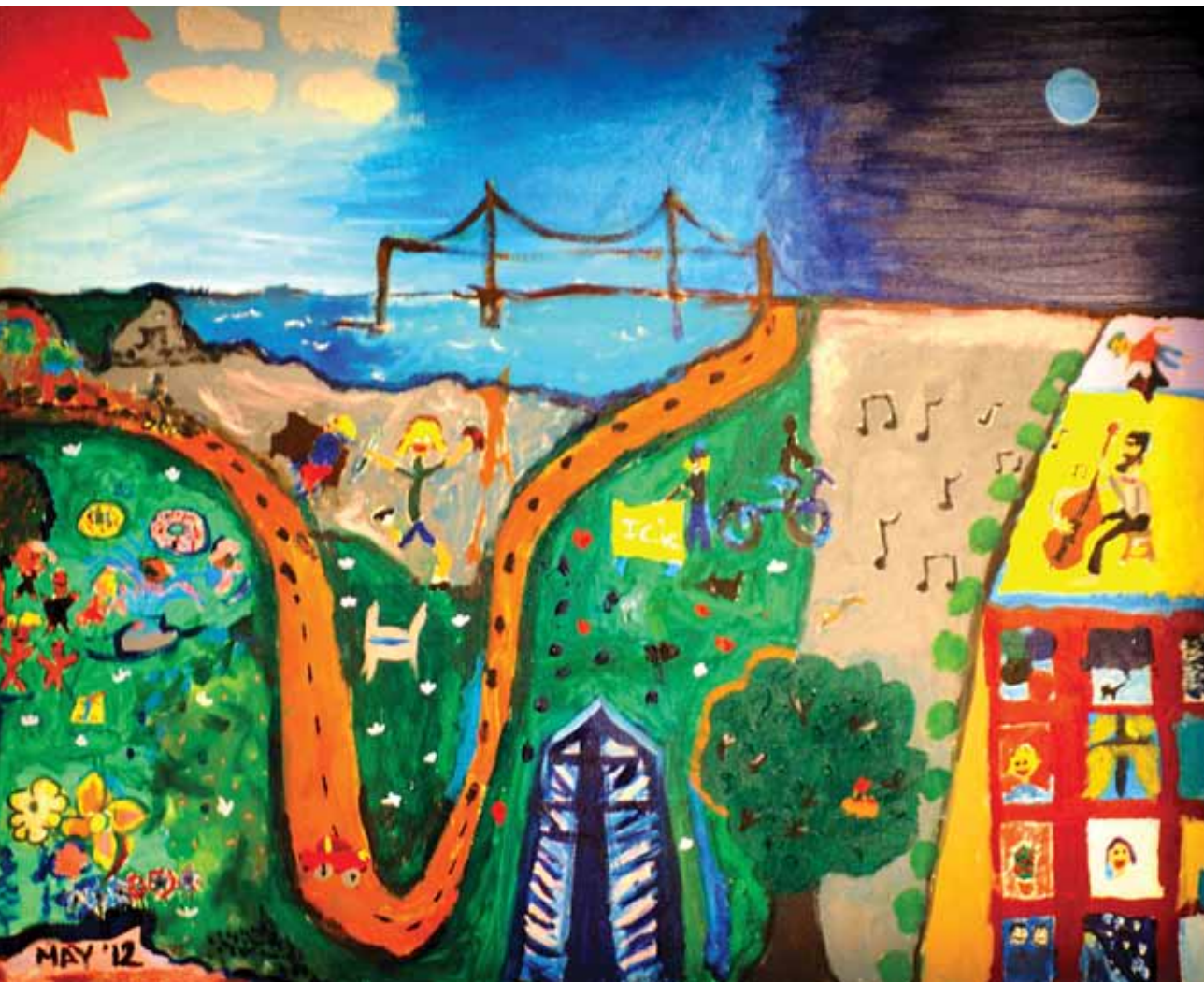
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WE ARE COMMUNITY: A Collaboration Between Saint Ann's School and BCHS

For BCHS' *2nd Annual Talented Brooklyn Gala*, students from the renowned Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn, under the guidance of Community Service Coordinator Diane Gnagnarelli, worked side-by-side with BCHS residents to create a mural that demonstrates what community means to them. We appreciate the time and talent these students and residents contributed to this special project.

Photo by Robert
Braunfeld