On Wednesday, April 29th, more than 250 guests joined Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS) at the Green Building to celebrate and honor the partners and programs that help the agency end homelessness in Brooklyn. Attendees mingled with new and old friends, surrounded by beautiful artwork created by the talented residents of BCHS. During the opening reception, guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and cocktails while the Guest Host, novelist and recording artist Wesley Stace, encouraged bidding for many exciting and unique items that were generously donated for the silent auction.

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We are tremendously grateful to Gala Chairperson Margie Hanssens and the entire 2015 Talented Brooklyn Planning Committee for putting together a wonderfully successful event that raised more than $134,000 to support BCHS’ life-saving programs and services.

More Talented Brooklyn on Page 5.

Above: Barbara Aziz-Lopez, recipient of the first ever BCHS Alumni Achievement Award

Photos by FreedLense Photography
Dear friends,

Archie moved to New York City from Jamaica when he was 22. He met his wife in Brooklyn, where they subsequently raised two children, and he eventually found success selling insurance. Although he was known for his calm outward demeanor, Archie would frequently battle insomnia, anxiety, and impulsivity, and was prone to bouts of depression, even though he was never formally diagnosed.

In 2005, after the children were grown, Archie and his wife decided to buy their first home. Without enough cash in the bank, they fell victim to a predatory lending scheme, and though they purchased a house, the mortgage was not affordable. Then Archie was laid off from his job during the recession and, unaware of his mental illness, had a breakdown. He and his wife lost their house and their marriage ended in divorce. Archie became homeless.

After some time in a shelter Archie was referred to BCHS’ Navy Green SRO. Once there, a supportive case manager helped Archie learn more about coping with his mental illness. While Archie stayed to himself initially – embarrassed about the turn his life had taken – he soon began participating in the Navy Green gardening and art groups, then enrolled in a culinary arts class that staff had arranged for interested residents. The class excited Archie and he began to feel greater confidence and a renewed sense of purpose, and with the support and pride when he received his certification as a short-order cook. Archie used his newfound skills experimenting with recipes and cooking for other residents at events, and though he had once class that staff had arranged for interested residents. The class excited Archie and he began to feel greater confidence and a renewed sense of purpose, and with the support.

At BCHS we believe everyone who comes to us can move from crisis to community, just like Archie. Along these lines, we had a wonderful time celebrating the resilience of our residents and the great work of our staff and Board at this year’s Talented Brooklyn Gala, as you can see in this issue of Community Notes. I am greatly appreciative for all our generous supporters who helped make the evening such a terrific success.

In this issue of Community Notes you will also see photos of the work that was done in May to beautify our landscaping and flowerbeds in the Brooklyn Gardens courtyard, and you will learn about our wonderful partnership with the New York Horticultural Society.

Thank you so much for your support, and thank you for being part of the effort to end homelessness in Brooklyn. I hope you have had a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Jeff Nemetsky
Executive Director
Each year, BCHS provides safe and clean supportive housing for more than 1,000 formerly homeless women, children and men.

We're committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

We help them learn how to live productively and independently, with dignity and with hope.
Volunteers Help Beautify Brooklyn Gardens

On May 17th, a group of volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks spent a picturesque sunny day helping beautify the grounds at Brooklyn Gardens. The volunteers donated their time planting flower beds, mulching and revitalizing the gardens at the BCHS property.

For the ninth year, Goldman Sachs participated in the BCHS Gardening Day, working alongside residents, staff and Board members. BCHS Director of Contracts, Nelson Zuniga, organized the day’s gardening tasks, such as planting new flowers, cleaning up the paths and pruning bushes and trees.

Thanks to everyone who pitched in for this year’s Gardening Day, and special thanks to the dedicated volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks for their ongoing partnership and commitment to keeping the grounds of Brooklyn Gardens looking beautiful.

Therapeutic Horticultural Program Blossoms at the Navy Green SRO

BCHS and the New York Horticultural Society (The Hort) have forged a partnership to provide therapeutic horticultural programming for residents at the Navy Green SRO. Led by “Hort” Greenhouse Instructor Deb Shaw, the group has flourished along with the garden and flower beds they’ve cultivated. The gardeners have landscaped the grounds around the Navy Green SRO building and grow fresh vegetables, which they use for cooking and share with other residents.

Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky observed “our residents feel a powerful sense of accomplishment when they see something they planted emerge from the ground and bloom.”

“BCHS is a wonderful partner,” says New York Horticultural Society Executive Director Sara Hobel, “and we are thrilled to have the chance to both help their formerly homeless residents become more active and engaged as a result of our therapeutic horticulture program, while at the same time, working together to create a beautiful garden that the whole community will benefit from.”

Photos by FreedLense Photography

HONORING
BEN BAXT and BAXT/INGUI ARCHITECTS, PC
Special Alumni Achievement Award
Barbara Aziz-Lopez

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The Brooklyn Gardens community room is getting an artistic makeover thanks to the talents of BCHS residents, volunteers and staff members. Over the course of several months, residents and volunteers have transformed a pencil-sketched landscape by Activities Specialist Ajanae Lewis (pictured left) into a vibrant and colorful mural. When completed, the lush painting will wrap around all of the walls, adding warmth and brightness to the space, which is used to host meetings, support groups and community events.

“I’m excited to see the drawings come to life, and to share that experience with our residents. It’s very gratifying to be able to add some beauty and fun for everyone at Brooklyn Gardens.”
BCHS Celebrates Community at the 2015 Talented Brooklyn Gala

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