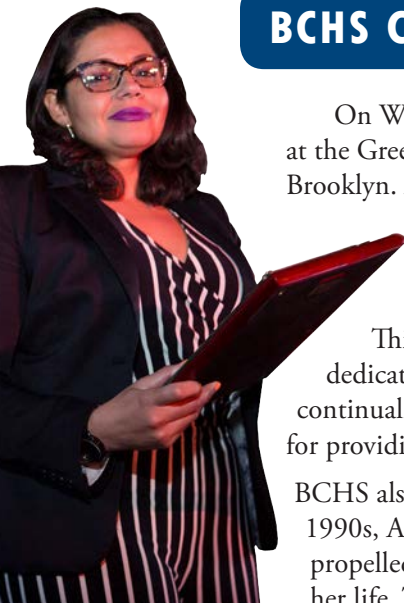


COMMUNITY *notes*

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BCHS Celebrates Community at the 2015 Talented Brooklyn Gala



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

On Wednesday, April 29th, more than 250 guests joined Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCBS) 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 BCBS. 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.

This year BCBS proudly honored renowned Brooklyn-based architect Ben Baxt for 30-plus years of dedicated service, both as a BCBS Board Member and former Board Chair, and for donating his expertise to continually improve the agency's housing. BCBS also honored Baxt's architecture firm, Baxt/Ingui Architects, PC, for providing pro bono services to BCBS and non-profits throughout NYC, and for its rebuilding efforts in Haiti.

BCBS also presented a new Alumni Achievement Award to former resident Barbara Aziz-Lopez. In the mid-1990s, Aziz-Lopez and her son lived at *Arbor Inn* after becoming homeless. With help from BCBS staff, and propelled by her own skill and determination, she got back on her feet and moved on to continual success in her life. Today, she is a lieutenant in charge of EMS training for the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY), and she continues to give back to the mothers and children at *Arbor Inn* by hosting an annual holiday gift drive and celebration with her FDNY colleagues.

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 BCBS' life-saving programs and services. *More Talented Brooklyn on Page 5.*



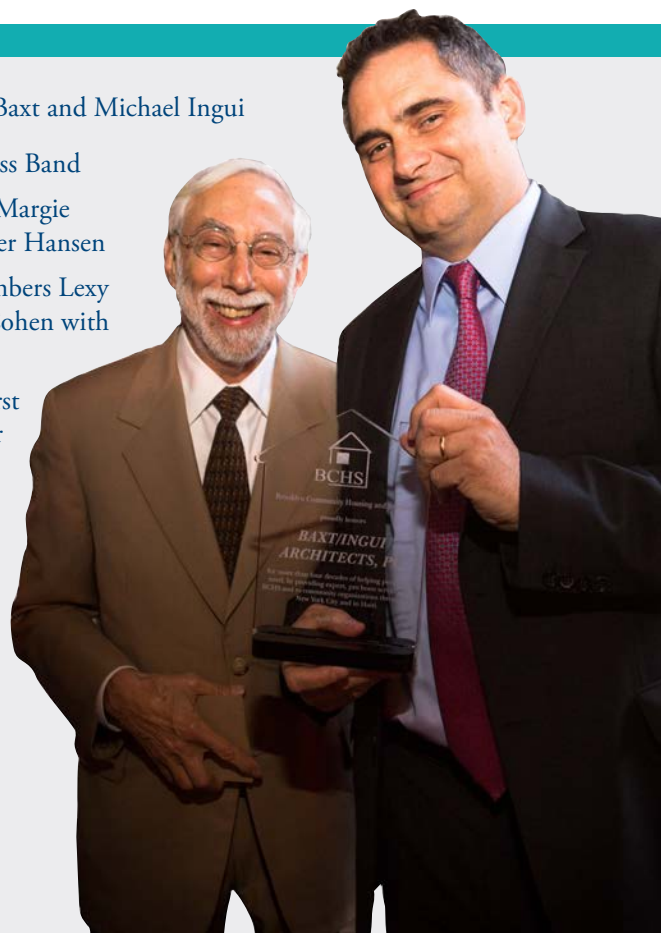
Right: Honorees Ben Baxt and Michael Ingui

Far left: Sugartone Brass Band

Left: Board Members Margie
Hanssens and Jens Peter Hansen

Below left: Board Members Lexy
Mayers and Clifford Cohen with
Leslie Cohen (center)

Below center: Mr. Hurst
K. Groves and Jennifer
Groves





Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

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 he beamed with 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 *Navy Green* events, and though he had once worried he would never be well enough to work again, we are happy to report that Archie has just begun a job search with the encouragement of staff.

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!



A Mural Grows In Brooklyn Gardens

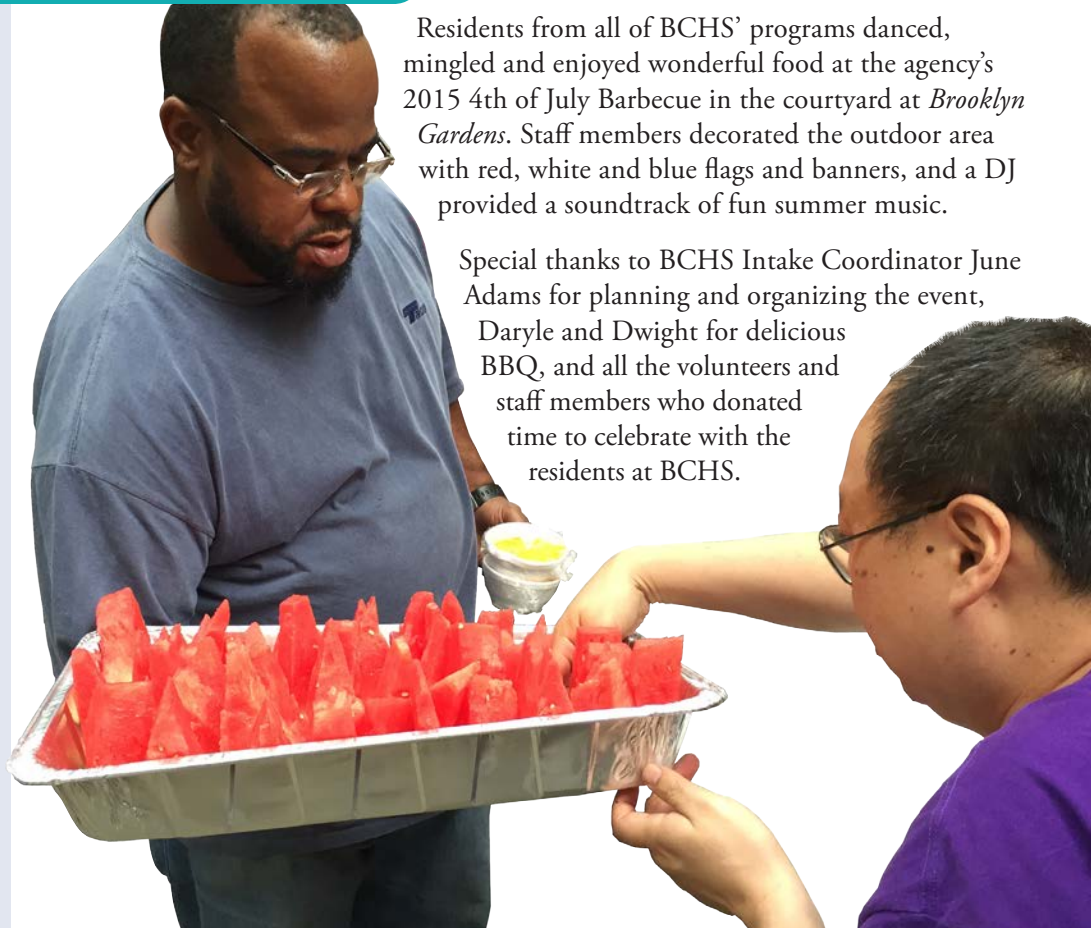
The *Brooklyn Gardens* community room is getting an artistic makeover thanks to the talents of BCHS residents, volunteers and staff members. Over the course of several months, residents and volunteers have transformed a pencil-sketched landscape by Activities Specialist Ajanee Lewis (pictured left) into 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*."

Spring and Summer Activities at BCHS



Top: Residents Murita and Maureen
Above: BCHS staff members June Adams, Kesha McLean, and Kimesha Nelson
Right: BCHS staff member Dorian Muller and resident Song Choe



4th of July Barbecue

Residents from all of BCHS' programs danced, mingled and enjoyed wonderful food at the agency's 2015 4th of July Barbecue in the courtyard at *Brooklyn Gardens*. Staff members decorated the outdoor area with red, white and blue flags and banners, and a DJ provided a soundtrack of fun summer music.

Special thanks to BCHS Intake Coordinator June Adams for planning and organizing the event, Daryle and Dwight for delicious BBQ, and all the volunteers and staff members who donated time to celebrate with the residents at BCHS.

Women's History Month and Father's Day

On March 26th BCHS celebrated Women's History Month with a fun and educational event at the *Navy Green SRO*. Residents and staff treated the audience to a multi-media presentation about the history of prominent women, a dramatic performance about a young girl who came to understand her potential, and a special live rendition of Whitney Houston's song "Every Woman." Attendees also enjoyed dinner, dessert and socializing in the building's community space.

On Father's Day BCHS hosted a brunch in honor of the many dads who reside in the agency's housing. Staff and residents gathered in the community room at *Brooklyn Gardens* to celebrate with buffet-style dining, and free men's haircuts provided by a local barber.

Right: Stanley, a resident at *Ivy House*, gets a free haircut for Father's Day

Below (left to right): BCHS staff members Quana James, Jeff Nemetsky and Rita Jenkins; staff members Myriam Lacrete, Sharon Troutman and Brenda Hamberry; and residents Eleanor and Carmen



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."



Greenhouse Instructor Deb Shaw (orange striped shirt) with gardeners from the Therapeutic Horticultural Program

TALENTED BROOKLYN

2015 GALA



Top: Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

Directly Above (left to right): Marc Fabris, Joe Datema, Sohui Kim, Joey Chemello, Tim Brock and Maggie Hummel

Below (left to right): Guest Host Wesley Stace, Venice James and Tom Potter, Assistant Executive Director Wendy Junious and Alumni Achievement Award Recipient Barbara Aziz-Lopez, Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky and Honoree Ben Baxt

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Special Alumni Achievement Award

Barbara Aziz-Lopez

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

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2015 BCHS Resident Art Show

Photos by FreedLense Photography

This year's *Talented Brooklyn* Gala once again included a selection of beautiful and diverse artwork by BCHS residents. We are grateful to these talented and creative individuals for sharing their works for exhibition at the gala.

2015 RESIDENT ARTISTS:

- Eve Battiste
- Jenny Chan
- Dorian Davis
- Gary Dunn
- Hilde Freedom
- Hee'Ja Kim
- Barry McCrea
- Lindora Slowe



Artwork by Gary Dunn



Artwork by Eve Battiste



Hilde Freedom, Jenny Chan and Dorian Davis with artwork by Jenny Chan