



BROOKLYN COMMUNITY  
HOUSING AND SERVICES

# Community Notes

From pumpkin picking to Kwanzaa, celebrating holidays is an important part of the experience for the residents of BCHS.



Halloween festivities are fun and safe for the children of Arbor Inn and for all the residents of Brooklyn Gardens. The annual Halloween Party provides everyone a chance to put on a costume and tap into their creative side.



*These are some of the children who participated at the BCHS Halloween Party. These activities bring the residents together in a setting where they can enjoy the holiday spirit.*

Veterans residing at Brooklyn Gardens had their own day in November, where the agency had a chance to thank them for their service to our country.



Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and Three Kings Day are all celebrated in our programs. One project was to trim the Christmas Tree with lights and ornaments, and when it was done, everyone joined in a chorus of Christmas Carols. This activity affords the residents an opportunity to spend time with friends and neighbors and prepare for the upcoming holiday and celebrations.



The children await Santa's arrival, and he is enthusiastically greeted by those gathered in the courtyard.

As Christmas Eve drew near, the residents and families gathered for Santa's arrival. The children anxiously waited, and Santa Claus did not disappoint, as he brought presents for all who attended.



Thank you Santa!

As the holiday season concluded, everyone had a great time and were able to reflect on the year that passed and give thanks for being part of a caring community.

# Celebrations

# MAKING A HOME



Every Saturday, Jenny Chan fills her sketchbook with simple-yet colorful-drawings of flowers and happy scenes. But just several years ago, her life had few moments of happiness. The daughter of first-generation immigrants from China, Jenny was an undergraduate at NYU when she began to hear voices. Despite being briefly hospitalized, she managed to complete her degree, but coping with everyday life became overwhelming. After a difficult stay in a nursing home, Jenny entered the Scattered-Site Apartment Program at Brooklyn Community Housing and Services. In her three years as a BCHS resident, she has been able to conquer many of her fears and find new avenues for her creative talents. In addition to taking classes, Jenny has been volunteering as an editor at *City Voices*, a Peer Journal for Mental Health Advocacy. She greatly enjoys being involved in all aspects of putting together the publication.

Jenny credits Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky and Employment Specialist Ruth Mitchell for helping her find this position: "They understand how having a job can help make you feel like you are doing something important, something to help." She is a regular user of the employment materials available in the Working

Community Career Resource Center.

Accepting her mental illness was not easy, but in her regular meetings with her Case Manager, Jenny has been able to come to terms with it, and set positive goals for the future. It has been a helpful process for her family as well, since one of Jenny's sisters also is mentally ill.

When we sat down with Jenny, she was starting to get ready for the New Year. "I am proud of my heritage. I like to go to Chinatown for Chinese New Year. I see all my family, my brothers and sisters. All but one of us have names that start with J because that is good luck in Chinese culture."

Jenny has had a very good experience in the Apartment Program, where she shares a three-bedroom apartment with two roommates. She says that "getting along is not always easy," but it helps that Jenny has the support of her Case Manager. She says, "It is nice to know there's someone I can call." And because her apartment is literally steps away from the other programs at Brooklyn Gardens, it is easy for her to join in the many activities that are held there. "I know that BCHS goes to a lot of trouble to provide these kinds of activities like the barbecues. I would really recommend this program to others."



## MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



With a thrilling Super Bowl victory and many wonderful holiday events behind us, Spring is almost here. But before we leave the Fall and Winter for good, you'll be able to see snapshots from some of the great holiday activities (see Page 1) that took place at BCHS in this issue of *Community Notes*. From our Halloween Party to our night of Tree Trimming and Caroling, it has been a very festive few months for the agency. I am also happy to point out that 2007 concluded on a very positive note, with a December 31st story in the Daily News about a formerly homeless client who BCHS helped to find a job and permanent housing after she transferred to us from a facility in the Bronx.

BCHS could not perform the work it does without the goodwill of our government leaders, and we have been extraordinarily fortunate to have the support of such renowned and innovative officials as Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes, and New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery (see page 4).

I am also thrilled to announce that this year's Sixth Annual Fashion on Fulton and Friends gala will be held on June 9th at the historic Brooklyn Academy of Music, and we are fortunate to have the opportunity to honor and recognize the extraordinary work of Mr. Nicholas Lembo, President of Monadnock Construction and the Capsys Corporation, who has created thousands of units of nationally recognized low-income and special needs housing for New Yorkers throughout the city. We also have the pleasure of honoring former BCHS board members Ms. Marolyn Davenport, Senior Vice President of the Real Estate Board of New York, and Ms. Maria T. Jones, Partner at Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP. Both Marolyn and Maria have made great contributions to leadership of the agency during a critical time in its history.

You'll find much more information in this issue, including terrific profiles of one of our residents, Jenny Chan, and one of our dedicated staff members, Igor Zhitomirskiy. A special thank you to everyone who generously contributed to BCHS' recent Annual Appeal - we had over 100 donors, and the good wishes and support we receive continues to astound me. Thank you so much for being a friend of BCHS, and for joining us in our efforts to bring an end to homelessness in Brooklyn.

## FROM RUSSIA WITH HEART

When Igor Zhitomirskiy sits down each week with residents of BCHS' Scattered-Site Apartment Programs, he likes to shake hands and have a conversation. Igor is a Financial Counselor and he answers questions about Food Stamps, household budgeting, and many things that go beyond his role, and he answers every question with patience and respect. Igor's responsibilities include managing and distributing the personal allowance checks made to residents each week and helping each person work towards independent living by setting achievable financial goals. Igor is also part of the Finance Department and he prepares numerous fiscal and management reports.

On June 24, 1994 Igor, his parents and sister arrived in New York City from Moscow. They were sponsored by relatives here in the U.S. and looked forward to the freedoms provided in America. Igor began attending college soon after arriving, and received his B.S. degree in Accounting from Brooklyn College in 1999. He began his career with BCHS on April 10, 2000. Igor fully appreciates the opportunities he has had here, and says there were few opportunities for advancement where he came from, even for college graduates. His family's beginning steps to immigrate to the U.S. were not auspicious. The day his family was to be interviewed at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, a "constitutional" revolution was taking place in the streets of Moscow. President Yeltsin suspended Parliament, which provoked violent protests in the streets. The revolt soon ended, but the interview process and atmosphere turned out to be quite tense. In the end, the interviews were successful, and Igor is very proud to have become a U.S. Citizen.

While Brighton Beach provides a bit of home away from home, Igor advised that some aspects of American life were unexpected, particularly the



supermarkets. He says, "The variety of foods and items for sale in stores, without having to wait several hours to make purchases, was a welcome surprise!" The availability of fresh meats, fruits and vegetables, along with many different kinds of fish was a great change. Igor is also continually amazed at the general availability of air-conditioning, as well as at the variety of cultures and nationalities that are represented in New York City.

Igor makes every effort to help residents with their financial circumstances and concerns, and feels his assistance will allow them to improve their individual situations. A few years ago, one successful Wall Street employee encountered a difficult stretch and resided in BCHS Supported Housing for 4 years. Igor helped her regularly. She now lives on her own and has been able to return to work in the financial industry. He says, "She was such a nice lady. I was so glad to see BCHS was able to help her get back on her feet."

### DAILY NEWS

The *New York Daily News* on December 31, 2007 featured the uplifting story of Mildred Deckard, a former resident of Arbor Inn. The article described how BCHS was able to assist her and her young daughter. Now living in their own apartment, Mildred told the reporter: "My life has turned around. I feel so grateful and blessed." (See the whole article at: <http://www.bchands.org/Daily%20News.html>)

## PLEASE JOIN US AT BCHS' ANNUAL EVENT! *FASHION ON FULTON & FRIENDS*

**MONDAY JUNE 9TH  
BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC**

**HONORING MR. NICHOLAS LEMBO,  
MS. MAROLYN DAVENPORT, AND  
MS. MARIA T. JONES**

**VISIT [WWW.BCHANDS.ORG](http://WWW.BCHANDS.ORG) FOR MORE INFORMATION**



# GOOD FRIENDS



State Senator Velmanette Montgomery has been one of the leading voices seeking support for people returning to the community from incarceration. BCHS was thrilled to have Senator Montgomery come for an in-depth visit to the Model SRO Program in Oak Hall, one of BCHS' permanent housing programs. Featuring specialized services for ex-offenders and those over 50 years old, Oak Hall has been recognized for its innovative program design for two of the most rapidly growing populations of formerly homeless men and women.

BCHS is so fortunate to have the continuing support of our elected officials. King's County District Attorney, Charles J. Hynes, one of the nation's most respected leaders in the criminal justice field and one of the honorees at last year's BCHS Benefit, recently joined the Board of Directors at an informational evening at the beautiful home of Tim Hosking and Audrey Sokoloff.



**BROOKLYN COMMUNITY HOUSING & SERVICES**

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