



Winter 2009

COMMUNITY NOTES



The children of Arbor Inn enjoy playing with the fun and educational toys from Santa. (above) Santa runs the risk of having a lollipop in his beard! (right)



One of the taller residents had the pleasure of 'topping the tree off' with a star at the tree trimming party held for the Apartment Program.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS



The Halloween celebration at Brooklyn Gardens included a costume contest, lots of great food and an elaborate haunted house. The kids (and adults!) had a great time.



Residents gathered for fun, food, and laughter at the Thanksgiving meal held for the Apartment Program. (above) At the tree trimming party at Brooklyn Gardens, finishing touches are put on the beautiful tree. (left)

A playground for the children of Arbor Inn

A small, unused lot attached to the child care center at Arbor Inn had been earmarked to be turned into a playground for many years. Thanks to the support of our donors, BCHS was finally able to make that dream a reality in 2008. Now that the children have a secure playground so close to the residence, they have the chance to get more exercise and fresh air. It also gives the families of Arbor Inn an opportunity to spend more time together, which helps foster the sense of community that is at the heart of the BCHS mission.



Meet BCHS Staff Member Kesha McLean

As a Case Manager for the BCHS Scattered-Site Apartment Program, Kesha McLean is met with many challenges every day, and she tackles these challenges with determination and enthusiasm. For 5 years, Kesha worked at BCHS' Oak Hall SRO (Single Room Occupancy) facility managing the Front Desk. Her energy, experience handling difficult client issues, and excellent writing skills led to Kesha becoming a Case Manager with the Apartment Program about a year ago. Kesha recognized that the new position would keep her very busy, but she was excited by the opportunity for professional growth and the chance to work more directly with residents.

The BCHS Apartment Program places adults with serious mental illnesses in both transitional and permanent private apartments in the community. Kesha works in the transitional program, where services are more intensive, and she helps residents with issues like daily living skills, substance abuse, medical needs, symptom management and medication management - the goal is to get residents to the point where they are stable enough to manage their own affairs, and move on to an independent living situation. Kesha's approach as a Case Manager is to make sure that the client feels comfortable with her before she works with them on their service plan - once this rapport is established, the clients feel confident in her advice because they know they can trust her.

One of Kesha's clients, a woman who BCHS had been working with for over a decade, felt confident enough to move into permanent housing after just one year with Kesha as her Case Manager! Kesha makes sure that the clients feel that they are moving on rather than just moving out, and that they know she really cares about them. In fact, Kesha creates such a strong bond that many of her clients keep in touch with her well after they've moved onto independent housing to let her know that they are doing well. Kesha says "the most rewarding part is to know that I helped the clients get to that level, and that they see me as more than a Case Manager."



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we look back at 2008, all of us at Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS) are proud and amazed that we have entered our 30th year. What started as a small grassroots response by concerned citizens and local clergy to the emerging crisis of homelessness, has grown into a multi-faceted organization that houses nearly 700 women, children and men each year. Despite growth and changes, new programs and new locations, what has remained constant all this time is our core principle of promoting independence through the development of community. And of course our core commitment - working to end homelessness in Brooklyn.

In this issue of Community Notes, you will see some of the results of our recent "Beautify Brooklyn Gardens" initiative: a beautiful new playground for the children of Arbor Inn, new furniture for all of the suites at Oak Hall and Arbor Inn, and a completely renovated lobby at Oak Hall, including new flooring, new furniture and a fresh coat of paint. You will also see photos from some of our terrific holiday celebrations.

On behalf of everyone at BCHS, I want to thank those of you who sent a donation at the end of the year - it is your support that makes the vital work of our staff possible.

I want to wish you all the best for a happy and healthy 2009; thank you for your support, and thank you for being part of the effort to end homelessness in Brooklyn.

7TH ANNUAL FASHION ON FULTON AND FRIENDS

Save the Date - June 2, 2009 at Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM)

for information, call (718) 222-1808 ext 2140 or go to www.bchands.org



Brooklyn Gardens Suites Get a Facelift

Before



The suites at Brooklyn Gardens received beautiful new furniture recently. The residents now have an even more welcoming place to gather.



After



The lobby of Oak Hall was also outfitted with new furniture. In addition, the floor was replaced with beautiful new tile, and the walls were freshly painted. See the results of our efforts to the right.

Farewell Martha!



After 17 wonderful years at BCHS, Martha Mortteh retired in November. The staff gathered to celebrate Martha's incredible work with the Arbor Inn program and wished her all the best for a well-deserved retirement in her home country of Liberia.



Oak Hall Lobby Before



Oak Hall Lobby After

BCHS celebrates 30 years of award-winning work!



Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS) was proud to celebrate their 30th Anniversary with a Wine Tasting on November 12, 2008 at the home of Board Member Clifford Cohen. Friends and supporters gathered to recognize the historic significance of BCCHS' groundbreaking work to end homelessness in Brooklyn. The evening ended with a rousing speech by Borough President Marty Markowitz, as he presented BCCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky with a Proclamation in recognition of the organization's history and its vital work. In the coming months, BCCHS is looking forward to making this milestone year a great one!

Inside this issue of *Community Notes* see photos of our holiday celebrations, read about the wonderful improvements being made to Brooklyn Gardens, and meet staff member Keshia McLean. For questions, or to make a contribution to Brooklyn Community Housing and Services in support of our wonderful programs, please call (718) 222-1808 ext 2140 or send an email to development@bchands.org.



Brooklyn Community Housing and Services

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