



Community Notes

FALL 2018

Building Community in Brooklyn

Attendees of the 2018 *Building Community in Brooklyn* gala were treated to a celebration of the work of Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS) and our community this past May.



Honoree Benjamin Warnke of Alembic Community Development and New York State Attorney General Letitia James at the BCHS Gala

More than 220 guests joined BCHS at the elegant and historic Heights Casino to recognize and honor the partners and programs that help the agency work towards ending homelessness in Brooklyn.

The celebration had something for everyone... an exciting silent auction raising money for BCHS' programs, a beautiful display of artwork by BCHS residents, and live music from dazzling pianist Jonathan F. Cooper. BBC World News Anchor Laura Trevelyan returned to graciously host the evening. Guests did not leave hungry thanks to a delicious array of canapés and cocktails, courtesy of Executive Chef Florimond Smoor and the catering team at Heights Casino.

Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky welcomed guests and briefly shared remarks before showing a new video that highlighted BCHS' robust activities program, also called "Building Community in Brooklyn." After the video, Mr. Nemetsky and Board Chairperson Jens Peter Hansen recognized 2018 BCHS Honoree Benjamin Warnke and his firm, Alembic Community Development, and 2018 BCHS Business Partner Awardee William P. O'Brien and his firm M.C. O'Brien, Inc.

We are so appreciative of our 2018 Gala Co-Chairs Alexandra Bowie and Jens Peter Hansen, who were to thank for this magnificent evening, along with our Host Committee Members, Board Members, staff and volunteers. This wonderfully successful event raised more than \$225,000 to support BCHS' life-saving programs and services. Thank you all!

Meet Harry Samuels



Harry Samuels is a 63-year-old Army Veteran who was born in Brooklyn. Soon after he left the service as a young man he suffered from undiagnosed bi-polar disorder, and turned to drugs and alcohol to ease the pain. He became homeless.

In 1992 the V.A. referred Harry to BCHS' then recently opened Oak Hall SRO. Once there, with the help of staff, Harry became sober and got his mental health treated. Over the next 24 years, he focused on being a responsible tenant and succeeding at his full-time job. When difficulties arose, Harry was comforted by the knowledge that BCHS staff were there if he needed them, and he regularly participated in agency activities, particularly those focused on Veterans.

In 2016 Harry retired and wondered about the next steps in his life's journey. Fortunately, he was able to participate in BCHS' 'Moving On' program – an initiative funded through CSH and the Robin Hood Foundation – where BCHS staff help the agency's most stable residents find affordable housing of their own in the community, and help them become comfortable with the transition to complete independence. Thanks to 'Moving On,' today Harry is living successfully on his own in Coney Island and comes back to Oak Hall to visit his friends regularly, serving as a role model for other older Veterans.



Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

Dear friends,

This past May we had a fabulous evening celebrating our 2018 *Building Community in Brooklyn* gala, as you can read about in this issue of Community Notes. The evening featured wonderful food, amazing partners, and a room full of good friends, and I am so appreciative for all of our generous supporters who helped ensure the night was a great success.

You will also read about BCHS' exciting 40th Anniversary plans. In 1978 a group of local clergy and concerned citizens saw more and more people living on our streets. There was no supportive housing at that time and very few places for these vulnerable individuals to turn to for help. What emerged was a commitment to provide safe and clean housing along with compassionate support; and a focus on helping people who had been homeless develop the skills they need to live as part of a community.

During the last 40 years this visionary approach has helped save thousands of lives, and we will be celebrating our anniversary all year long, culminating with a Spring Gala on May 15th and a performance by the amazing Grammy award winning artist **Norah Jones!**

Thank you so much for all your support, as together we continue the fight to end homelessness in Brooklyn.

I wish everyone a wonderful holiday season!

Jeff Nemetsky
Executive Director

“A commitment to provide safe and clean housing”



Fun Activities & Helping Hands

The BCHS Activities Team offers a robust schedule of events for our residents, meant to advance socialization skills and create supportive friendships with their peers and neighbors. Over the past year, staff organized celebrations for all the major holidays and oversaw special activities including therapeutic horticulture, art therapy, and a weekly crochet group. We were so happy to introduce a new **therapeutic drama group** this year as well, led by Drama Educator and BCHS Board member Nellie Perrera.

BCHS is also fortunate for our warm circle of neighbors who regularly devote their time and talent to the agency. For instance, BCHS is grateful to be linked with three Packer Institute Girl Scout Troops, and last year the Girl Scouts went above and beyond in every way. They helped arrange for the wonderful Brooklyn-based organization, GLAM4Good, to offer the young mothers at our short-term housing program, Arbor Inn, brand new clothes, jewelry and makeup, along with stylists to provide on-site help and “pampering.” The Girl Scouts and their families also helped with additional donations (including a highly successful walkathon), and book, toy and clothing drives throughout the year. We are so appreciative for the generosity of all the children, parents and neighbors in our Brooklyn community!

Tennis Anyone!

BCHS will be partnering with the Kings County Tennis League (KCTL) in the Winter of 2019 to launch a brand new tennis program, called **Aces: BCHS' Winter Tennis Program**, for the mothers and children of Arbor Inn (BCHS' short-term housing program for homeless mothers with children). The 12 week program will focus on teaching the basics of the game, developing hand-eye coordination and ensuring the children are getting weekly physical exercise. KCTL staff and volunteers will be using the USTA's Net Generation curriculum as a platform to teach the essentials of tennis in a fun and interactive manner.

KCTL's E.D. Dave Webley says “We are thrilled and excited to partner with BCHS for the upcoming Winter Tennis Program. Our goal is to introduce the sport in a fun and positive environment with the hope the children and families want to continue learning and developing their skills. KCTL will be running our free tennis and life skills programming at 6 sites next summer and we are looking forward to seeing lots of BCHS children register once they have discovered the game!”



Our New Website is Here!

BCHS has launched its new website at www.BCHandS.org. Populated with great photos depicting the agency's work and wonderful staff, Board and residents, the site also includes up-to-date information about agency events, news and activities. If you want to see our latest videos, learn how you can volunteer or donate, and find out more about BCHS' groundbreaking work and impact, please visit us at www.BCHandS.org.

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Top: Business Award Recipient William P. O'Brien of M.C. O'Brien, Inc. and his wife, Ann Marie O'Brien
 Upper Middle: BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky and Brooklyn D.A. Eric Gonzalez
 Lower Middle: BCHS Board Members Ambriel Floyd Bostic and Riva Horwitz with Sarah Barrett and Carrie Lamb
 Bottom: Victor Hypolite and Davon Peters of M.C. O'Brien, Inc.

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Thank you for your support!



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BCHS Celebrates 40th Anniversary!

40 years ago, a group of concerned citizens and local clergy from Downtown Brooklyn saw the emerging crisis of homelessness and felt called to action. They formed what would become Brooklyn Community Housing and Services, and committed themselves to bringing people from crisis to community, and to working towards the end of homelessness in our Borough.

BCHS is celebrating this milestone with our 40th Anniversary campaign. The campaign will highlight BCBS' historic role in the development of the supportive housing field, the groundbreaking work that the agency is currently performing, and innovative new initiatives that are underway. We will culminate our celebration with a **May Gala featuring a performance by Grammy award winning artist Norah Jones!** *Stay tuned for more details in the coming weeks.*

Please join us in recognizing the extraordinary Board members, staff, supporters and friends who have made BCBS' efforts possible, who have dedicated themselves to helping the Borough's neediest, and who have helped thousands of people who used to be vulnerable find safe, permanent homes. **And I hope you will join us on May 15, 2019 as we rock the night away with Norah Jones!**



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