



# Community Notes

FALL 2019

## BCHS' 40th Anniversary *Feels Like Home* Gala

BCHS celebrated 40 years of service to the community with our *Feels Like Home* Gala on May 15th at Bklyn Studios in Downtown Brooklyn's City Point.



Guest performer Norah Jones at the BCBS Gala  
Photo by FreedLense Photography & Imaging

The event raised more than \$500,000 to support BCBS' life-saving programs, and more than 400 attendees were treated to an intimate guest performance by Grammy award winner Norah Jones. Performing a range of music both new and classic, including her latest hit "Begin Again" and longtime favorite "Don't Know Why," Ms. Jones touched and captivated the capacity crowd.

The evening was a vibrant celebration of 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. BCBS Founders Rev. Dr. Skip Vilas, Dr. Mary Cox Golden, and Dr. William Nye were recognized, as well as our 2019 Honoree Lamb Insurance Services and CEO/Founder Joshua Lamberg, along with Lamb Account Executive Liam Kemmerley.

BBC World News Anchor Laura Trevelyan graciously hosted the evening, which featured remarks by Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky and Board Chair Peter Hansen, while guests sampled a variety of delicious Brooklyn artisanal foods. A robust silent auction raising money for BCBS' programs, a beautiful display of artwork by BCBS residents, and a trendy photo booth added to the excitement.

The evening was a terrific success and memorable celebration. A heartfelt thank you – on behalf of the Board, staff and clients of BCBS – to all our generous guests, supporters, sponsors, Honorees, Host Committee members and friends!

## Meet Madeleine

Madeleine had a business degree and nearly ten years of experience as a successful financial manager. Unfortunately, in her early thirties Madeleine began to struggle with undiagnosed depression. She started to drink heavily as a way to cope, and her depression only got worse. Overwhelmed, Madeleine's behavior became erratic and she eventually lost her job. She soon became homeless.

While living in a women's shelter Madeleine was referred to BCHS' transitional scattered-site apartment program, where she had daily contact with a case manager, help with medication and symptom management, community integration, and independent living skills.

"It was just the stability I needed," Madeleine said.

Madeleine made steady progress. After many months she began to feel surer of herself; she worked on her employment skills through computer classes offered at BCHS' vocational training initiative, and she met with BCHS counselors to polish her resume and refine her interviewing techniques.

Finally, Madeleine had the confidence to begin a job search and found a position with a large financial company. Thanks to the support of staff Madeleine did well at her job and saved money, and eventually felt ready to leave BCHS altogether. We are happy to say that she has been living successfully on her own and in the community ever since – please join us in congratulating Madeleine on her well-deserved independence!



## Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

### Dear friends,

This past May we had a wonderful evening at our 2019 *Feels Like Home* Gala, as you can read about in this issue of Community Notes. Celebrating our 40th Anniversary, the evening featured the beautiful music of our guest performer, the incomparable Norah Jones.

Most of all, the night was an opportunity to recognize the extraordinary leaders, staff, supporters and friends who have made BCHS' efforts possible, who have dedicated themselves to helping the Borough's neediest, and who have helped thousands of people who used to be vulnerable and isolated find a safe place that "Feels Like Home."

**I am so appreciative for all of our generous supporters who helped ensure this year's gala was our most successful event ever.**

Our 40th Anniversary year has been a special time for the agency, and has allowed us to focus on the vision of our founders, one that I believe resonates as powerfully today as it did four decades ago: we all need community, in any walk of life, to help us maximize our well-being, to help us get through difficult times, and celebrate good times.

**Thank you for all of your support because without you, BCHS could not accomplish all that we do as we work towards ending homelessness in Brooklyn.**



Jeff Nemetsky  
Executive Director

**"We all need community, in any walk of life..."**







## NY Times Best-Selling Author Visits Navy Green

NY Times best-selling author and Pulitzer prize nominee Pete Earley is a national advocate for mental health issues and a Board member of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). Mr. Earley recently visited BCHS' Navy Green housing program – here is some of what he had to say (excerpted from an article he wrote about his visit):

*“How can we help individuals with serious mental illnesses who are chronically homeless, have co-occurring drug and alcohol problems and have been involved in our criminal justice system?”*

***We have programs that work, we simply need more of them.***

*Navy Green, part of Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS), provides permanent supportive housing to 97 men and women who have Axis One diagnoses – people with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and persistent and debilitating depression.*

*These are reportedly the most difficult to house and keep housed. Yet, ninety-seven percent of individuals living in Navy Green in 2018 either maintained their housing or moved on to greater independence. You read that right. A 97% yearly success rate.*

*Navy Green is an example of what can be. The question for us and our leaders is why are we not funding more Navy Greens?”*

Access the full article at [www.bchands.org](http://www.bchands.org), or at [www.petearley.com](http://www.petearley.com).

## New Housing for Families



BCHS is part of a team that is working to create new housing in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn, along with Love Fellowship Church and Alembic Community Development. This new development will include approximately 243 units of affordable housing, with 73 units set aside for formerly homeless families where the head of household has a mental illness. The building is tentatively set to open in 2022.

BCHS will be the service provider at the site, offering case management, mental health counseling, vocational training and employment support, services for domestic violence survivors, clinically appropriate recreational activities, and more. There is currently very little permanent supportive housing in New York City for families coping with mental illness, and BCHS is excited to expand the services and options available for this population.



## Brooklyn Gardens Turns 100!

Originally built as private tenement housing in 1919, abandoned in the 1970s, and rehabilitated by BCHS in 1991, Brooklyn Gardens was one of the first supportive housing buildings of its kind in the country, housing a diverse mix of at-risk families and single adults.

BCHS is planning the substantial renovation of this historic facility at 105 Carlton Avenue, which is turning 100 this year. It is anticipated that renovation work will begin in 2021. Most residents will remain in the complex during the renovation, which will make maximum energy efficiency and “green” building technologies a priority. Stay tuned!

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*Pictured from top, left to right:*

*2019 Gala MC and BBC World News America  
Anchor Laura Trevelyan*

*Alison Brock McGill and Raymond McGill, Jr.*

*BCHS Board Member and Gala Co-Chair  
Nadja Pinnavaia with Jessica Brennan*

*Honorees Liam Kemmerley and Joshua Lamberg  
of Lamb Insurance Services*

*Photos by FreedLense Photography & Imaging*



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## A Fresh Start for Moms!

BCHS' Arbor Inn – the agency's program for homeless mothers with children – has seen a significant increase in the number of homeless moms struggling with mental illness in recent years.

To address these circumstances BCHS is excited to announce that it has been awarded a 3-year grant of \$225,000 from The van Ameringen Foundation to develop its Fresh Start initiative, a unique effort that is designed to maximize the well-being, stability, and independence of the homeless families we serve.

Through Fresh Start, BCHS will hire an expert Family Clinician to work on the Arbor Inn team. The Family Clinician will provide therapy with mothers coping with mental illness and with their children, establish support groups for domestic violence survivors, and provide trainings and guidance to the Arbor Inn staff regarding mental health issues.

BCHS believes that homeless mothers who have a mental illness face acute challenges as they try and get back on their feet. In response Fresh Start will offer expert support in a compassionate and comforting way, just when it is needed the most.



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