



Community Notes

FALL 2022

BCHS' *Feels Like Home* Gala Returns in Person

After a Gala cancellation in 2020 and our first virtual Gala in 2021, our BCBS community reunited in person at BAM Café to raise funds and awareness for our life saving work.



Thank you to all of our *Feels Like Home* 2022 Gala supporters! After more than two years away, to be with so many of our friends in person was beyond words.

Together we were able to toast the amazing efforts of our staff, Board, and supporters, for their above and beyond commitment to helping our vulnerable residents move from crisis to community. Thanks to our generous supporters, we were able to raise nearly \$400k to further our work.

As in prior years, our *Feels Like Home* Gala featured artwork created by our residents and a wonderful silent auction. This year's auction included donations from renowned artists Rey and Jose Parla, MaryLai, and items from the New York Knicks and Rangers, The McKittrick Hotel's *Sleep No More* theater experience, and more.

Guests were greeted with a beautiful performance from violinist Joya Bravo when they entered BAM, and then leading the festivities was TV personality and entertainer Kimberley Locke. Kimberley took our attendees through the lovely evening as we recognized Corey Heller and The Alera Group, our 2022 Corporate Excellence Honorees.

Closing out the night, eight-time Grammy nominee Bobby Sanabria took the stage with his Multiverse Big Band, playing an array of Jazz compositions along with lively singing accompaniment.

Thank you for your continued support, and thank you for being part of the effort to end homelessness in Brooklyn!



Top Photo: Guests mingle before the start of the Gala.

Bottom Photo: BCBS Staff pose together at BAM Café

Meet Steven

Steven James struggled with mental illness his entire life, and by age 51 he was living with his parents because he could not maintain an apartment on his own, or care for himself.

Unfortunately, as Steven's parents aged they were no longer able to support him. After a long struggle seeking appropriate help, his parents finally found BCHS, and they were able to get Steven admitted to our Scattered-Site Apartment Program.

Steven moved into a 3-bedroom apartment in Crown Heights. At first he was reserved and nervous, but he soon became friendly with his roommates, finding they had much in common as they shared hobbies and life experiences. Thanks to his BCHS Case Manager (CM) and a psychiatrist, he was able to find the right medication to help with his mental illness, and his CM began working to teach Steven "life skills" - how to shop, prepare meals, and make a budget.

Steven soon gained confidence, and with support from his CM, identified additional goals including finishing his GED and getting a job.

After further vocational training and coaching, Steven saw an ad about being a school bus driver, and though hesitant, he mustered up the courage to call. Steven went on a number of successful interviews with the company and was subsequently hired as a trainee - we are happy to report that Steven eventually got his certification, and since 2018, he has picked up his school bus at 7am each M-F, and driven children throughout Queens to school with the help of his trusted bus matron.

Steven continues to maintain a strong relationship with his family, and visits his mother every other week.

His Case Manager explains:

"During his time at BCHS, Steven has grown more confident, assertive, and responsible. It is wonderful to see!"



Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

Dear friends,

I hope you had a happy, healthy and safe summer. Thank you to all who attended our *Feels Like Home Gala*, the event was a great success and a wonderful celebration of the agency's work, especially everyone's extraordinary efforts throughout the pandemic.

The coming years are looking bright for BCHS, with three fresh projects that are steadily evolving, and which together will bring over 850 new and urgently needed supportive and affordable housing units to Brooklyn. In this issue of *Community Notes* you can read about one of these projects, the Brownsville Arts Center and Apartments (BACA), which will bring a vibrant, cutting-edge cultural center along with attractive housing to the residents of central Brooklyn.

BCHS is also excited to share that we are participating in the filming of a national documentary called *Beyond The Bridge*, by A Bigger Vision Films production company. This important work will explore innovative approaches to ending homelessness, and we are privileged to be one of a small group of New York City organizations that may be featured. Check our social media sites for updates!

I know these are challenging times, historically so. But I was moved by the amazing poet Amanda Gorman's recent words: "We must triumph, or try. May we not just ache, but act." And at BCHS, when we see the most vulnerable among us in pain and under threat, it is our time to act - to offer safety and stability, to promote justice and healing, and to work towards ending homelessness, once and for all.

Together, we will continue the fight against homelessness. Thank you for your goodwill and generous support, and thank you for standing with BCHS - I am grateful.

With appreciation,

Jeff Nemetsky
Executive Director



COVID-19 Update

Since March of 2020 BCHS' dedicated team has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic with 24/7 compassion and care, ensuring the safety and well-being of our vulnerable residents.

Thanks to our team's efforts, fewer than 3% of our residents have tested positive for the virus since the start of the pandemic, well below the Citywide and national infection rates.

And our efforts continue to evolve as the nature of the crisis shifts. A multi-faceted campaign resulted in all of our staff and the majority of our supportive housing residents receiving their Covid-19 vaccines; rapid testing kits are regularly distributed, as are high quality KN95 masks; and as many activities and services as possible are delivered outdoors, or in large rooms with good ventilation and plenty of space.

We have also incorporated lessons learned – virtual service options and remote programming now complement our in-person operations, and we have automated many more of our administrative functions, achieving greater efficiency.

We are happy to say that this summer also has felt a little closer to normal – we regularly held our in-person therapeutic art and horticultural groups, along with having trips, movie and pizza nights, and periodic summer BBQs. These activities not only represented a fun respite but also provided opportunities for our formerly homeless residents to further develop their socialization skills and deepen important relationships with their peers.

BCHS will remain diligent and flexible, pivoting as necessary no matter what the next phase of the pandemic brings, committed as always to ensuring that our residents remain healthy and thrive.



Program Highlight: Scattered-Site



BCHS opened one of the first scattered-site apartment programs in the country in the early 1980s. Through this model, BCHS rents apartment units in private residential buildings in the community – BCHS holds the lease, and places individuals with mental health diagnoses who may have been homeless into these apartments.

The scattered-site model is an integral part of the supportive housing continuum, as it offers the ability to make safe and attractive housing units available for formerly homeless individuals, without having to wait many years for a new supportive housing building to be constructed.

Residents of BCHS' Scattered-Site Apartment Program receive individualized care from Case Managers, including home visits, and attend support groups and activities that help them socialize and communicate effectively with each other. Learning to live with roommates, building healthy conflict resolution capabilities, and developing daily living skills like cleaning, cooking, and medication management, helps our residents gain the independence they need.

Our Scattered-Site program offers both permanent and transitional housing, and each year more than 95% of our residents successfully maintain their housing with BCHS or move on to even greater independence in the community.

Staff Spotlight: Albertha Roderick



Ms. Albertha Roderick started working for BCHS in 1984, only 6 years after the agency was founded. Ms. Roderick helped make it possible for one of our first clients to move from our scattered-site housing program into permanent housing in the community.

“One of my favorite memories which I'll never forget is my first move out. That was one of my most pleasant, most rewarding experiences. I helped her move to an affordable housing property specifically for seniors,” she said.

Ms. Roderick has served in a number of important capacities for BCHS, most recently as our Medicaid Specialist. Read more about Ms. Roderick and her time at BCHS on the BCHS Blog on our website.

BCHS Welcomes New Board Members



BCHS is thrilled to announce the addition of two wonderful new members to our Board of Directors: Dr. Raabea Malik and Mr. Davon Peters (L to R above.)

Dr. Malik is an internist with a background in education and strategic planning. She is passionate about innovation, process improvement, fostering a positive patient experience, and team-building.

During her time at the Mount Sinai Health System, Dr. Malik worked with many unhoused patients, which made her passionate about supportive housing and the kinds of services that BCBS offers.

Davon Peters serves as Director at M.C. O'Brien, Inc., the oldest commercial real estate firm in Brooklyn. In his role Mr. Peters has supported BCBS' efforts in the past and feels that BCBS' innovative approach is exactly what's needed "to help effect change in my community."

We are excited to have Dr. Malik and Mr. Peters bring their substantial expertise, leadership and counsel to BCBS.

A warm welcome to both!

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The Brownsville Arts Center and Apartments (BACA)

BCHS is excited to announce its involvement with The Brownsville Arts Center and Apartments development (BACA.)

The Brownsville Arts Center and Apartments will provide 291 units of urgently needed affordable and supportive housing for residents of Brownsville and Central Brooklyn, while hosting a cutting-edge Cultural Arts Center for the community on the building's ground floor.

The BACA project is being developed by the Blue Sea Development Company and the Gilbane Development Company, along with Artspace Projects. BCHS is privileged to be providing social services at the BACA site, and will help residents maximize their well-being and independence while offering additional support to the community.



This ambitious and cutting edge development is slated to break ground in 2023. Stay tuned!

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