

COMMUNITY notes*We're committed to ending homelessness in Brooklyn.*105 Carlton Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11205 • Phone: (718) 625-4545 • Fax: (718) 625-0635 • www.BCHandS.org*talented*

— BROOKLYN —

2016 GALA

Annette Taylor, recipient of the 2016 BCHS Resident Achievement Award, gave her thanks by way of a powerful rendition of Celine Dion's "Because You Loved Me."

Photo by Freedlense Photography

On Thursday, May 12th, more than 200 guests joined Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS) at 501 Union to recognize and honor the partners and programs that help the agency end homelessness in Brooklyn. Attendees were treated to a celebration of talent on our doorstep through food, music and art, featuring artisanal Brooklyn delicacies, performances by Brooklyn entertainers, and artwork created by BCHS residents, many of whom are formerly homeless.

During the opening reception, guests browsed an exciting and diverse selection of silent auction items, perused beautiful artwork by BCHS residents, and dined on an array of delicious Foodie Brooklyn canapés and cocktails, courtesy of Brooklyn Wine Exchange, Dish Food & Events, Oaxaca Taquería, Red Hook Lobster Pound, and Stinky Bklyn. Novelist and songwriter Wesley Stace once again served as Gala Emcee, using his wit and talent to encourage bidding on auction items and guide the night along.

Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky welcomed guests and spoke briefly before introducing New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery and then premiering a new video about the agency, called "Finding the Way Home." After the video, Mr. Nemetsky and Board Vice-Chairperson Jens Peter Hansen presented awards to honorees Elizabeth Giamatti and Stark and Michael Ward, and to Resident Achievement Awardee Annette Taylor. Sugartone Brass Band rounded out the evening with a festive set of New Orleans-style music, which had attendees dancing while enjoying ice cream from Brooklyn's own Ample Hills Creamery.

We are tremendously grateful to Co-Chairpersons Leslie Feder and Nadja Pinnavaia, the 2016 Gala Planning Committee, and all of the Board Members, staff and volunteers who helped put together a wonderfully successful event that raised more than \$140,000 to support BCHS' life-saving programs and services. Thank you all.

More Talented Brooklyn inside.



Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky

Dear friends,

Madeline has a degree in business and held a full time job in the financial service sector until her untreated depression began to overwhelm her. She began missing work more frequently and started drinking alcohol at lunch to help her get through the day. Once vibrant and witty, Madeline became quiet and withdrawn.

Eventually, Madeline lost her job and her drinking and depression became worse. She exhausted her savings and fell behind on her rent. With few friends or relatives willing to help, Madeline was evicted. She became homeless.

After staying in a women’s shelter for more than a year, Madeline was referred to BCHS’ *Scattered-Site Apartment Program*. She moved into a comfortable suite with roommates, and her case manager arranged for counseling and identified a local A.A. group for Madeline to attend. The case manager also made sure that Madeline saw a local psychiatrist, who was able to find suitable medication that helped alleviate Madeline’s feelings of sadness and depression. And because Madeline’s self-esteem had become so diminished, the case manager encouraged Madeline to attend a number of BCHS’ holiday celebrations and activities, like the agency wide Halloween party, so that she could make new friends and begin creating a community of peers for herself.

Madeline made steady progress and over time regained her confidence. She began telling jokes again and realized how much she had missed laughing. Determined to re-enter the workforce, the staff helped Madeline polish her resume and she eventually found stable full-time employment. Then, with her job going well and months of savings in the bank, Madeline graduated from BCHS and moved to her own completely independent apartment in the Bronx. Please join us in congratulating Madeline on her success.

At BCHS we believe everyone who comes to us can move from crisis to community, just like Madeline. We had a wonderful time celebrating our amazing residents, and the terrific work of our staff and Board, at this year’s *Talented Brooklyn* gala, as you can see in this newsletter. I am greatly appreciative for all our generous supporters who helped make the evening such a notable success.

In this issue of Community Notes you will also read about recent media coverage involving BCHS, including an article in *The Atlantic* magazine that featured BCHS’ unique approach as a model for “How To End Homelessness in New York City.”

Thank you so much for your support, and thank you for being part of the effort to end homelessness in Brooklyn. I hope you have had a wonderful summer!

Volunteers Dig in to Help at the 2016 BCHS Gardening Day

For the tenth consecutive year volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks (CTW) donated their time and energy to help beautify the grounds at BCHS’ *Brooklyn Gardens*. On May 14th the CTW group joined BCHS Board Members, staff, and community volunteers to revitalize the greenspace at the Fort Greene residence, which is home to approximately 180 formerly homeless women, children, and men, as well as the agency’s main offices.

Together they planted flowers, put down fresh mulch, pruned bushes and trees, pulled weeds, and cleared the exterior walkways at *Brooklyn Gardens*. Many of the residents also came outside to join in and help spruce up the grounds around their home.

Thanks to everyone who pitched in for this year’s Gardening Day, and special thanks to the dedicated volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks for their ongoing partnership and commitment to keeping the grounds of *Brooklyn Gardens* looking beautiful.

Right: Volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks with BCHS staff members and residents.



New Initiatives Offer Increased Opportunities for BCHS Residents and Veterans

“NEW YORK CITY MOVING ON”

Last December, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) announced the selection of five subgrantees under its “New York City Moving On” initiative, an effort funded through the generosity of the Robin Hood Foundation. Grants to BCHS and four other community groups are designed to enable tenants who have achieved stability in supportive housing transition to other affordable housing in the community.

“Brooklyn Community Housing and Services is very pleased to be a part of the Moving On initiative,” said Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky. “BCHS has always been dedicated to helping its residents achieve maximum independence and well-being. Moving On will give us the tools we need to help even more people do so.”

The idea behind Moving On is straightforward. After years with BCHS some residents do so well that they no longer need the intensive services that supportive housing provides. However, most cannot afford rents in New York City, need assistance finding apartments, and may need help becoming comfortable with the idea of living in an apartment building that doesn't have on-site social services.

Through Moving On, BCHS will offer short-term case management and follow-up to help participants locate new housing and make a successful transition, and will also cover some of the costs related to moving. In addition, Section 8 vouchers will be provided to program participants to insure that rents are affordable.

BCHS will transition 25 of its residents into completely independent housing through this initiative. “This comes at a great time,” said Supervisor Kisha Kettles. “We have a number of long-term residents who are really ready to live on their own, but may just need a little extra assistance in order to get there.”



ENHANCED SERVICES FOR VETERANS

BCHS has worked with Veterans for over three decades through our housing and employment programs. Drawing upon this experience, and in order to meet a clear and growing need, BCHS is now expanding and enhancing its services for Veterans who live in the agency's housing, or who seek assistance through the Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center (BHAC) or Working Community vocational program.



Thanks to generous funding from the van Ameringen Foundation, Inc., BCHS is hiring a new Veterans Services Coordinator to specifically address common challenges many former military personnel face. Together with a supervising Program Director and the BCHS Employment Specialist, the Coordinator will conduct a needs assessment and create a personalized service plan for each individual they assist.

BCHS plans to serve more than 100 Veterans annually through this initiative, helping them with issues such as benefits and entitlements eligibility, job preparedness, housing stability, substance abuse, socialization, and mental health care. The Veterans Services Coordinator will also establish support groups focusing on topics like reintegrating into the community, healing from and coping with PTSD, and talking about military experience with family, friends and employers.

In addition, the Veterans Services Coordinator will work closely with the BCHS Activities Specialist to organize Veteran-specific educational and recreational activities, and with the agency's Employment Specialist to develop a robust job search and vocational training curriculum.

"As an Army Veteran myself," said Wendy Junious, BCHS Assistant Executive Director for Program Services, "I can tell you that the Veterans we work with are very happy to have the extra support."



BCHS in the Media

Amidst growing concern over the rise in homelessness, in January the nationally renowned magazine The Atlantic published a piece titled “How to End Homelessness in New York City.” The article prominently featured BCHS’ unique program model and Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky, while profiling resident Barry McCrae.

In addition, this Spring, BCHS produced a new video, called “Finding the Way Home,” which highlights a number of BCHS residents speaking eloquently about their experiences overcoming homelessness. You can view the Atlantic article and our new video online at www.BCHandS.org.

2016 BCHS WINE TASTING

On February 25th, Board Member Sean O'Neal and his wife Ambereen Sleemi hosted the 2016 BCHS Board Wine Tasting event in their beautiful home in Windsor Terrace. The annual Wine Tasting offers an opportunity for current Board Members to visit with new and old friends of BCHS, and for them to introduce prospective Board Members to the agency's programs, new initiatives, and accomplishments.

This year, more than 40 guests joined together to enjoy good company, a selection of wines curated by Windsor Wine Merchants, and delicious hors d'oeuvres catered by Paradis to Go. Many thanks to Sean, Ambereen, and their family for welcoming everybody into their home for this lovely evening.



Top, left to right: Maitland Jones, Perla Delson, and Board Member Jonathan Jones

Above, left to right: Jodi Hauptman, Board Member Margie Hanssens, and Kevin McGrath



Above from top, left to right: Honoree Elizabeth Giamatti and Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky; Board Vice-Chairperson Jens Peter Hansen with honorees Michael and Stark Ward; Melanie Porter, Board Member Sean O'Neal, and Ambereen Sleemi

Right from top, left to right: Board Members Leslie Feder and Ben Baxt; Volunteer Beth Cooper Lawrence, Elena Feliciano, and BCHS Resident Natasha D.; Evan Lewis and Board Member Nadja Pinnavaia; Sugartone Brass Band

This year BCHS was pleased to honor Brooklyn-based filmmaker Elizabeth Giamatti at the 2016 *Talented Brooklyn* Gala. Ms. Giamatti is an active community volunteer who generously donates her time and expertise to BCHS. In recent years she has created beautiful photo essays that portray the agency's residents and staff through a range of powerful images.

The agency also honored longtime friends Stark and Michael Ward of Ward & Company Works of Art. Mr. and Mrs. Ward have lent their support for BCHS' efforts to end homelessness in numerous ways for more than twenty years, while being among the most well respected specialists in early European and Ancient art worldwide.

In addition, BCHS presented a special Resident Achievement Award to Annette Taylor, who is featured on the cover of this issue. Ms. Taylor, a professional singer, has overcome addiction and other challenges since moving to BCHS from a homeless shelter in 2011. Today she is back to performing and recording, while also working as a full-time counselor to help others who are facing difficult times.

Thanks to all of the sponsors, advertisers, contributors and auction item donors for their extremely generous support. Thanks also to all of the volunteers, performers and staff members whose time and energy helped make the 2016 *Talented Brooklyn* Gala a tremendous success. And a very special "thank you" to everyone who attended and helped celebrate BCHS and our honorees.



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Activities & Holidays at BCHS

The Activities Team at BCHS works hard to present a robust schedule of events for our residents. Often, when individuals come to BCHS, they are shy or withdrawn after having spent a significant amount of time in crisis or without a home. However through the agency's broad range of activities, socialization skills are developed, and residents begun making friends with their peers and neighbors.

From the mild Winter through the not so mild Summer, this year residents were treated to creative, fun and informative Black History Month and Women's History Month programs, Easter Egg Hunts, Costume Parties, Cookouts, Amusement Park trips and many other great activities. Additionally, residents participated in specialized programming such as Therapeutic Horticulture, Art and Crochet groups, and a number of Wellness oriented events.

