



COMMUNITY NOTES

Fall 2009

New Space Offers Convenience and Comfort for Residents and Staff at Brooklyn Gardens

In July 2009, BCHS opened new offices for program staff at Brooklyn Gardens. The new space offers a convenient on-site location where residents can access case managers, nurses, and mental health clinicians, and represents the first expansion of Brooklyn Gardens since it opened in 1991.

“Our goal was to create a warm and inviting place where residents and staff can meet, coordinate services, and discuss issues related to the clients’ housing,” says Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky. “We were fortunate to secure this space in a neighboring building, which is conveniently connected to our courtyard.”

Architect, and BCHS Board Member, Ben Baxt helped transform the formerly unfinished space into a sunny and versatile suite that comfortably accommodates many of the Brooklyn Gardens staff. The innovative design affords each employee a private workspace, as well as access to a larger meeting room for confidential sessions with residents and colleagues.



Volunteers in Full Bloom at BCHS' Fall Gardening Day

On Saturday, October 3, alumni from Vermont's prestigious Mountain School and Milton Academy volunteered their time and energy to help beautify the grounds at Brooklyn Gardens. Nearly a dozen volunteers of all ages joined BCHS staff and residents in planting nearly 1,000 tulip and daffodil bulbs at the agency's three-building complex.



Special thanks to our gardeners: Lacy Austin, Nell Boeschstein, Biz Ghormley, Evan Merck, Katrina Monzon, Janice Nimura and Morgan Robinson. Very special thanks to our good friend Emily Sweet, who was instrumental in connecting BCHS with Mountain School and Milton Academy.



Employee Profile of Wanda Wu, Human Resources Administrator

How long have you worked for BCHS?

I started as a part-time accountant in August 2002. In July 2004, I was promoted to my current position as HR Administrator.

What are your job responsibilities?

1. Communicate with staff about agency policies and benefits;
2. Maintain confidential files for employees and volunteers;
3. Oversee the agency's compliance with federal, state and local employment guidelines.

What do you like most about your job?

I like interacting with people, and helping staff in every area of the agency.

What would you like to accomplish, job-wise, in the next year or two?

I would like to further implement some of the current and emerging practices related to effective workplace communication and creating a positive work environment.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I enjoy crafts like designing jewelry, crocheting, and knitting; and, like many people, I love to shop!

Message from Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky



Dear friends,

I am happy to report that the summer and fall were very productive for Brooklyn Community Housing and Services (BCHS). We were able to expand our historic Brooklyn Gardens facility for the first time since its opening in 1991; we held our first Fall gardening day, with the help of an extraordinary group of volunteers and residents; and we were able to celebrate the hard work and wonderful efforts of our staff, with our 4th annual Staff Picnic in Prospect Park. You can read about all of these activities in the current issue of Community Notes.

Sadly, despite all of the good work being performed, these are very difficult times for many. In fact, there are now close to 40,000 individuals in the City's shelter system, a record high. Its no surprise then that BCHS receives calls regularly from individuals who are either at-risk of losing their housing or have a family member at-risk, and who don't know where to turn. In order to more fully respond to these circumstances, BCHS has developed a new homelessness prevention effort called the Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center (BHAC), which is designed to help people resolve the crises that are putting their housing in jeopardy, so that they can avoid ending up on the street or in a shelter. We are currently applying for funding for the BHAC and hope to announce a launch date in 2010.

The coming holiday season has brought a great opportunity for BCHS. We are partnering with the Indie Market Crafts Fair, which will set aside a portion of its proceeds on the weekend of December 12th and 13th to help support BCHS' work. I hope you'll be able to stop by - its also a great place to pick up gifts for the holidays (you can read more about the Indie Market in this issue of Community Notes).

Please keep a look out for our Annual Appeal, which was mailed recently - in these times of shrinking government resources, your support has helped BCHS maintain and enhance its services just when they have been needed most. 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 a wonderful holiday season!

New Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center Focuses on Preventing Homelessness

Recent statistics from the NYC Mayor's office reveal that the city's homeless population has grown more than 50% since 2000. In fact, as of Fall 2009, the number of homeless residents has reached a record high. **Currently, more than 39,000 people, including nearly 17,000 children, are sleeping in shelters across the city,** compared to 23,000 at the beginning of the decade.

To address this situation, BCHS has developed the *Brooklyn Housing Assistance Center* (BHAC), a groundbreaking initiative to prevent homelessness among the Borough's most at-risk populations including seniors, veterans, and a rapidly growing number of single men returning from incarceration. In addition, the program will offer comprehensive aftercare to help former BCHS residents avoid a recurrence of homelessness when serious crises put their housing in jeopardy.

"These are crisis cases where, without significant intervention, the individual or family will lose their housing within 60 days," says Wendy Junious, Assistant Executive Director for Programs at BCHS. "Our goal is to prevent homelessness for at least 95% of participants."

The agency is currently securing funding for the Housing Assistance Center and hopes to announce an official launch date in 2010.



Benefit Shopping Days to Support BCHS December 12 and 13

Tell your friends, wake the kids, and plan your holiday shopping spree at Brooklyn Indie Market's Benefit Shopping Days to Support BCHS.

Through this special partnership, BIM will generously donate 10-15% of all revenue from purchases made on December 12 and 13 to BCHS.

"We are extremely grateful that BIM has chosen to help us in our efforts to end homelessness in Brooklyn," says BCHS Executive Director Jeff Nemetsky. "The Market is a shining example of how compassionate citizens are helping build socially rich and economically vital communities in Brooklyn."

For more information, visit www.brooklynindiemarket.com

Summer Sun Brings Summer Fun for BCHS Residents and Employees

Despite a particularly rainy season, residents and staff of BCHS found a couple of excellent opportunities to get together for some fun in the sun this Summer. In June, employees spent a fun-filled day at the agency's annual Staff Picnic in Prospect Park, where they played games, relaxed and enjoyed recreational activities like softball, three-legged races, and a very competitive tug-of-war!

The agency also used the occasion to present its annual Employee Recognition Award for Outstanding Performance to Kesha McLean, Case Manager with the Scattered-Site Program, and Leonard Rickman, Cook for Arbor Inn.

In August, employees and residents at Brooklyn Gardens gathered in the complex's beautiful courtyard for a full-on Summer Barbeque, complete with delicious home-style food, games, dancing and fun for all.





Brooklyn Community Housing and Services

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Halloween 2009 at BCHS



Visit www.bchands.org, or call (718) 222-1808 (ext 2140), to make a tax-deductible contribution, for more information about a item in this newsletter, or to learn about ways you can help BCHS end homelessness.