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The BronxWorks February 2021 Newsletter



Despite challenges stemming from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team continues to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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BronxWorks Homeless Outreach, HOPE Count, and The Bronx Health & Housing

Consortium Town Hall.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has presented new challenges to the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), but they continue to provide critical services day in and day out. HOT is especially vital during the winter months when freezing nighttime temperatures result in Code Blue orders throughout the city. A Code Blue weather emergency is ordered on any winter night where the temperature drops to 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below. The HOT Team also played an essential role during New York City's annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) Count. In this story, we highlight how the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team continues to provide essential services throughout the year and especially during the severe winter months.

BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team managed the entire HOPE Count for the Bronx over a three day event.

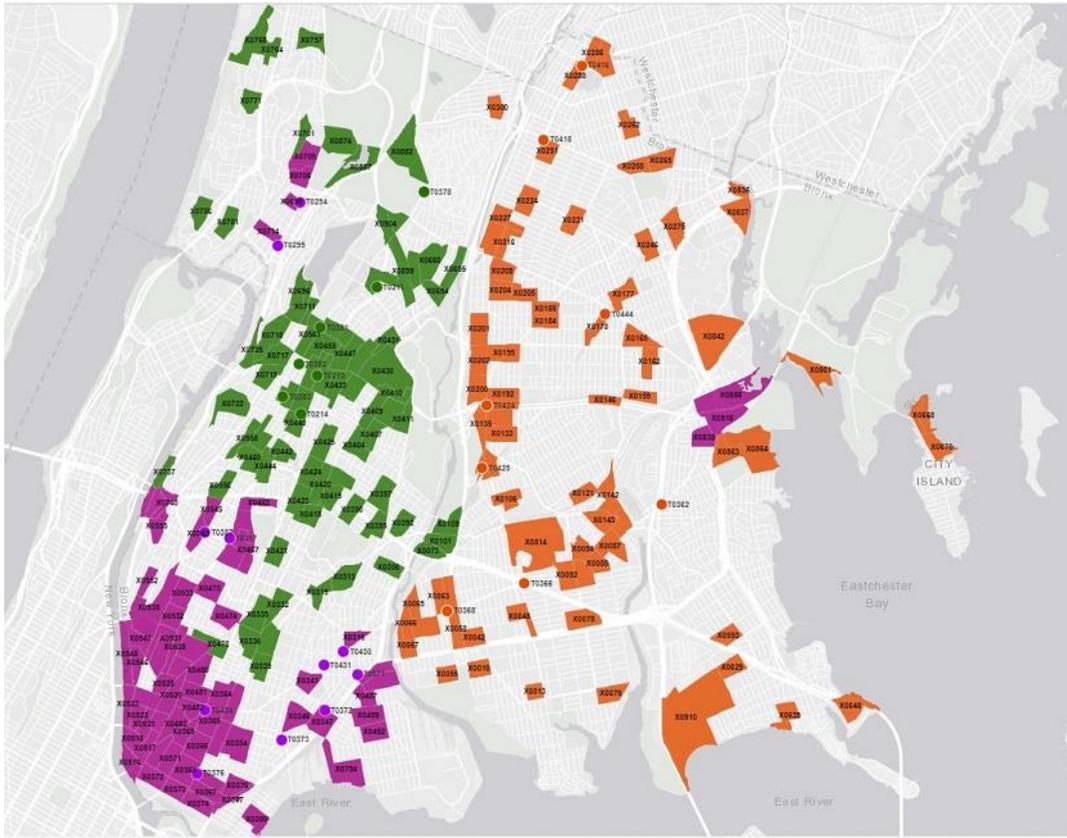


The BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team tracks high-density homeless areas on maps of the Bronx divided in 252 distinct sections.

The HOPE Count is an annual survey of the street homeless population in every borough. In typical years, the HOPE Count is supported by over 3,000 volunteers city-wide, managed by the NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Due to COVID-19 precautions, this year the HOPE Count was completed entirely by each borough's designated homeless outreach provider. BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) provided the HOPE count for the Bronx.

The HOPE Count takes place on the last Monday in January, which is expected to be the coldest night of the year. HOT opted to split the count over three days in order to cover the 252 survey areas, known

as "maps", in the Bronx, assisted by staff members from other BronxWorks departments, the group surveyed 134 maps during the first night, followed by 59 maps each of the following two nights.



A digital dashboard allows HOPE Count managers to track survey progress in real time.

The Team was supported by a digital dashboard to track the progress of each map surveyed throughout the night. The dashboard allows HOPE Count district captains to dispatch or reposition team members as the teams on the ground update data in real time. "It's a huge improvement from having to call teams to track their progress throughout the night. It's also great to have teams using an app to complete surveys, versus the paper surveys we've done in past years," says Juan Rivera, the Program Director of the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team. This year they utilized virtual communication and coordination to avoid large groupings, carefully navigating the neighborhoods of the Bronx to create an accurate picture of the street homeless population on a given night.

"Of the 51 areas where we saw people on the street, we predicted that we would find people in 48 of those areas," said Juan Rivera when asked about the results of this year's count. "We will use the information on the three areas that we didn't predict to inform our outreach in subsequent years."

Over the course of the three night count, the Team surveyed dozens of individuals in street locations throughout the Bronx. The raw count that the BronxWorks team collected will be submitted to NYC DHS, which is expected to release an official report for city-wide 2021 HOPE results in Spring or early Summer. Additionally, HOT helped transport three individuals that needed immediate assistance and referred the rest to warming centers and other resources.

Juan Rivera, Program Director of the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team, speaks about Code Blue at the Bronx Health &

Housing Consortium Town Hall.



The Bronx Health & Housing Consortium held a virtual town hall for providers to speak on caring for homeless individuals during COVID-19.

At a recent Bronx Health & Housing Consortium virtual town hall, members of the BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department spoke about homeless outreach amid the COVID-19 pandemic and during city-wide Code Blue alerts. Juan Rivera, Program Director of the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team said that despite some challenges and adjustments made due to COVID-19, street outreach, particularly during Code Blue alerts carries on largely as usual.

During a Code Blue alert, the HOT becomes the backstop to prevent any street homeless individual from succumbing to freezing temperatures outside. This responsibility remains their top priority. Oftentimes, HOT will help transport or arrange transportation for individuals they encounter to the BronxWorks Living Room Drop-in Center or warming centers setup throughout the borough.

Bronx hospitals have always been locations frequented by homeless individuals for services and for shelter. Working with Bronx hospitals to address the needs of these homeless individuals is an important function of street outreach for HOT. As a result, HOT incorporates a Hospital Coordinator as a part of their team to serve in a liaison role with Bronx hospitals. BronxWorks also developed an Emergency Department Housing Coordinator position stationed at certain Bronx hospitals to specifically target the hospital homeless population, but due to COVID-19, hospitals and BronxWorks agreed to restrict non-medical staff from the hospital premises. In addition to our Outreach Team, the NYC DHS has set up five warming buses at four locations, including hospitals, and one roaming bus to provide emergency shelter and transportation to homeless individuals identified outside during Code Blue alerts.

In New York City, if you identify a homeless individual outside and in need of assistance, call 311 or visit [Home · NYC311](#). To learn more about the Bronx Health & Housing Consortium, their work, research, and programming, visit their website [here](#).

Staff Profile: Juan Rivera



Juan Rivera, Program Director, BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team

Sometimes when you follow your passions, you end up with a career spanning decades before you even realize it. When your passion revolves around helping the street homeless population of New York City, your effect can reach countless individuals in that same time span. For Juan Rivera, Program Director of the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team, street homeless outreach was like a calling to him, something he felt he was uniquely positioned to do, and to do well.

Juan was born and raised in the Bronx. He attended Ithaca College originally to pursue a degree in communications with dreams of working in sports TV or radio. He would later transfer to Fordham University to complete his undergraduate studies and worked at Simon & Schuster for one year after graduating. Juan said that he would have something of an epiphany, that the experience at Fordham University around service would remain with him, and that his communication, interpersonal, and bi-lingual speaking skills were strengths for him to pursue social service work. He left Simon & Schuster to take on social services jobs with a variety of organizations, including the NYC Parks Department where he first developed an interest in working with the homeless.

"You see a lot of folks who are homeless in parks. That's when it became interesting to me," Juan says. "I was thinking, what's going on with these guys? Who's helping them?"

Juan got his first job as an Outreach Worker in May 2000, working in Manhattan. His very first encounter outreaching to a homeless individual was at Madison Square Park. He still remembers the encounter like it was yesterday. Juan recounts it as being pleasant, an older gentleman who shared his story, which Juan says he is thankful for. He says that in that moment it felt like the right thing for him to be doing, that it was what he was meant to do. After working with a few other organizations, Juan joined BronxWorks in October 2007. He spent two years as an Outreach Worker before moving on to case management. In 2009, Juan applied to Hunter College and graduated in 2012 as a Social Worker. In 2014, Juan became the Program Director of the Homeless Outreach Team.



Juan Rivera (left), Program Director, and Issa Asiedo (right), Outreach Coordinator, for the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team.

"I still get that same feeling when I talk to folks or when I have a real connection with someone."

Because of the passion of BronxWorks staff like Juan and his team, street homeless rates in the Bronx have declined over the past 10 years. The work that HOT does 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every single day of the year, has helped bring countless individuals off the street, into shelter, and eventually into permanent housing. It connects the most vulnerable individuals to much-needed services and has become one of the pillars of what BronxWorks provides for Bronx communities.

Outside of his work, Juan has become very much a family man. He and his wife are raising two children and enjoy road trips, exploring places with deep and abundant history, meeting people, and sharing experiences as a family. He's a Yankees fan and a Giants fan, but mostly watches cartoons on the television these days.

BronxWorks COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution At the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center.

BronxWorks and SOMOS Community Care offered COVID-19 vaccinations to Bronx community members.



The BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center became a pop-up COVID-19 vaccination site during the month of February.

In February 2021, BronxWorks became a pop-up COVID-19 vaccine distribution site. In partnership with SOMOS Community Care, the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center offered vaccines to qualifying individuals of the Bronx from Saturday, February 6 through Thursday, February 11, and will offer the second dose to vaccinated individuals in March.

***"BronxWorks is thankful to SOMOS Community Care for the successful partnership and proud to have distributed thousands of COVID-19 vaccines to Bronx community members."
- Eileen Torres, Executive Director***

BronxWorks continues to work with New York City agencies to promote information on COVID-19 vaccines and how members of the community can get vaccinated. To learn more, visit NYC Department of Health vaccine [page](#).

For more information or announcements, follow us on social media: [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#). To learn more about SOMOS Community Care, visit their website [here](#).

**Did You Know?
The BronxWorks Spring Gala Will Be
Virtual.**



Join BronxWorks for our biggest night of the year!

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BronxWorks 2021 Annual Gala will be held virtually. Proceeds and donations will support the BronxWorks [Building Better Futures Fund](#), which allows BronxWorks to continue our vital work to assist Bronx residents weather the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, helping in the recovery of our borough, and rebuilding the Bronx stronger than before. Your support is important and will help our efforts this year more than any other year.

Stay tuned for more details and registration information!

Photo Essay



Workforce Development Department Director Betty Ann Tamaisar (left, standing) speaks with a participant at the BronxWorks Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day event on January 29.

[Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day](#)

The BronxWorks Bronx Promote EITC to support At-risk Children (PEACH) program held an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Awareness Day event at the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center to raise awareness of the credit and get everyone in the Bronx to fill out their taxes! The event, held in partnership with Montefiore Health Systems and the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DWCP), provided Bronx residents with free tax preparation help and education about the EITC.

More than half of the Bronx individuals targeted by the Bronx-PEACH program qualify for the EITC, but in 2018 only 29% of those individuals targeted received this credit.

Determine if you qualify for the EITC and learn more about BronxWorks free tax prep services [here](#).



Errol Louis (left) speaks with BronxWorks Executive Director Eileen Torres (right).

["What Will it Take to Recover" Virtual Panel](#)

BronxWorks Executive Director Eileen Torres was proud to participate in a virtual panel discussion, "What Will it Take to Recover", hosted by Errol Louis and the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY.

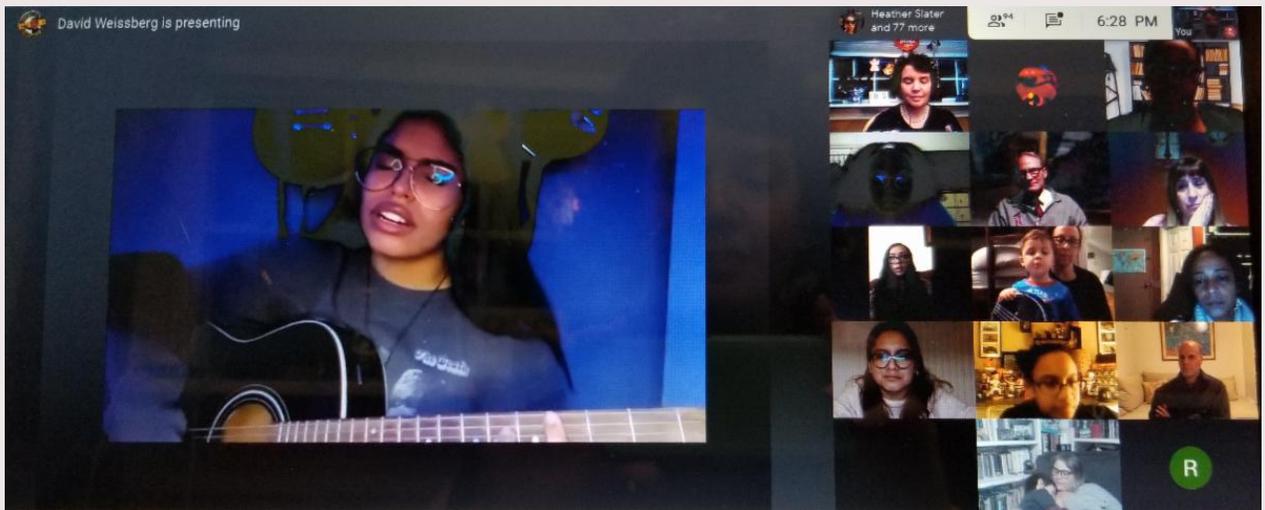
Eileen spoke at length about how BronxWorks has adapted our mission and approach in the time of coronavirus, including our continued efforts to provide more long-term relief for those facing eviction due to the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic.



"What Could Be More American #4" by Terrenceo Howard

[Pyramid Safe Haven Client's Art Featured At NYC Parks Black History Exhibition](#)

Terrenceo Howard, a client of the BronxWorks Pyramid Safe Haven, has impressed us with his artwork during his time with BronxWorks. His incredible, colorful, and thought-provoking artwork was selected by NYC Parks for their Black History Month exhibition. Terrenceo's art uses a combination of techniques, including acrylic paints, foil canvas, and clippings from magazines and newspapers. See more of his work and the full exhibition [here](#).



[IN-Tech Academy Charity Concert](#)

IN-Tech Academy Student Government Association in the Bronx graciously held a virtual concert benefitting BronxWorks programs. Students performed and raised over \$1,500 for BronxWorks! We are so thankful for the thoughtful support from these students and the school community.



BronxWorks ECLC Celebrates Black History Month

The children at the BronxWorks Early Childhood Learning Center at 1472 Montgomery Avenue participated in a virtual Black History Month celebration with their parents and teachers. Students and parents together worked on a project featuring accomplished individuals and their place in Black History. Children learned about differences, equality, perseverance, and believing in themselves. During the virtual presentation, each parent shared and talked about their heroes.



BronxWorks After-School Students at P.S. 42

P.S. 42 Celebrates 100th Day of School

The BronxWorks After-School program at P.S. 42 was happy to celebrate the 100th day of the school year! Due to the changes brought about by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the school year has been incredibly challenging, but these students found a reason to celebrate!. BronxWorks wants to recognize our youngest participants for their continued enthusiasm!

How to Donate to BronxWorks.



Building Better Futures Fund

Text **bronxworks2020** to 76278



The BronxWorks Building Futures Fund supports critical recovery efforts for our Bronx neighbors. The Bronx and the communities we serve continue to reel from the effects of the pandemic.

Your donation will help us continue to provide emergency food and pantry programs, career training and employment search, eviction prevention, and resources for children to be successful in remote learning.

Please give today, and invest in the future of the children, individuals, and families impacted the most by COVID-19. Our communities continue to be challenged in myriad ways during this global economic crisis.

No act of generosity is too small to make a difference, and be assured that 90 cents of every dollar is used solely for BronxWorks programs and activities that benefit our Bronx neighbors.

Your gifts truly make a difference. There are many ways to support BronxWorks this year.

- Contribute directly to the [BronxWorks Building Better Futures Fund](#)
- Text "bronxworks2020" to 76278 to make a donation
- Purchase essential items for our participants from our [Amazon Wishlist](#). We are in need of the books *Women in Art*, *Women in Science*, and *Women in Sports* for our Children & Youth Department, as well as size 6 diapers and Pull-Ups of all sizes for participants' families.
- On Amazon, you can choose BronxWorks as your Amazon Smile charity, and Amazon will donate on your behalf every time you make a purchase
- Donate directly through our [Facebook page](#).

Donate

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www.bronxworks.org

If you have any questions or would like more info about BronxWorks, please contact Danielle at dmobley@bronxworks.org or 646-393-4002.

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