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The BronxWorks January 2021 Newsletter

Grateful for all of the support throughout the Holiday Season!



BronxWorks received an outpouring of support for our participants and staff throughout this Holiday Season!

In this Issue:

Thankful For All Of the Holiday Support - Stories Of Giving

Staff Profile: Karla Velasquez

Did You Know? BronxWorks Tax Prep Services Are Open

Photo Essay

How to Continue Your Support This Year

Highlighting All Of the Support BronxWorks Received During the Holiday Season!

This recent holiday experience was truly unprecedented for all New Yorkers as many tried to celebrate during the COVID-19 pandemic. While BronxWorks staff and participants faced so many challenges, there were moments during the season that revealed the spirit of our partners, supporters, and family. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few examples of the good will that BronxWorks received during this holiday season.

Baby2Baby sends pallets of diapers, baby formula, shampoo, and jackets to BronxWorks.



BronxWorks Executive Director Eileen Torres and Development Associate Andrew Lin showing off just some of the donations from Baby2Baby.

Baby2Baby is a nonprofit that provides young children living in poverty with diapers, clothing, and all the basic necessities that every child deserves. They partner with organizations like BronxWorks that work directly with children and families living in poverty to facilitate these donations to hundreds of thousands of children. To date, Baby2Baby has distributed over 100 million items in over 40 cities across the country.

This winter, Baby2Baby sent BronxWorks multiple truckloads of diapers, baby formula, baby wipes, shampoo, and child-size jackets. BronxWorks has been distributing these items to households in our community through our food pantries and directly to participants of our programs, including our Children & Youth programs, family shelters, Cornerstone Community Centers, the Family Enrichment Program, and supportive housing.

"The impact that these items will have for our participants and members of our communities cannot be overstated, especially amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are truly thankful for the incredible support from Baby2Baby and all of their donor organizations." - Eileen Torres, Executive Director



Participants of the BronxWorks Community Food Pantry receiving items from Baby2Baby donations.

Immaculate Conception School packs carloads of toys and gifts for children and families in the Bronx.



BronxWorks Director of Advancement and Communications Gianna Dell'Olio celebrates two of the carloads of toys and gifts from Immaculate Conception School.

Immaculate Conception School in Tuckahoe, NY filled multiple carloads with gifts for children and families of our programs. Immaculate Conception Principal Maureen Harten, along with the school's faculty, staff, students, and parents, worked tirelessly to pack and wrap hundreds of gifts for Bronx children. The donations were shared with programs throughout the agency and helped make the holidays so much brighter for so many families. BronxWorks thanks the entire Immaculate Conception School community for their support of our programs and participants.



A young BronxWorks participant shows off his new toy from Immaculate Conception School.

Turner Construction Company donates money for holiday food to the BronxWorks Community Food Pantry.



Turner Construction Company has been a wonderful partner to BronxWorks in many different ways, especially during the pandemic. This holiday season, Turner renewed their commitment to help address food insecurity in the Bronx and donated special holiday food items. The pork shoulders (pennil) and chicken drumsticks were a huge hit at the BronxWorks Community Holiday Food Pantry that took place on December 19. Thanks to the generosity of Turner Construction Company, the Holiday Food Pantry brightened the lives of many. In addition, BronxWorks provided hundreds of Bronx families with other emergency food items as well as toys and gifts in time for the Holiday celebrations. Thank you, Turner Construction Company! [Watch Fox 5's coverage of the pantry here.](#)

More Stories Of Support and Stewardship This Holiday Season.

Thank you to Ellen Rose Associates and the Blauner Family for over a decade of partnership with BronxWorks.



Left: (L-R) Gail Blauner, the late Rose Blauner, and Sam Blauner. Right: Members of the BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team in front of the BronxWorks Living Room.

Ellen Rose Associates and its principals, the Blauner Family, have been a vital partner vendor to BronxWorks since 2010. They own the property at 800 Barretto Street that houses the BronxWorks Living Room Drop-in Center and Safe Haven. Renamed and dedicated posthumously to family patriarch Max Blauner in 2018, the site at Barretto Street also is home to the BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department. Needless to say, our staff and program participants have had the opportunity to build a relationship with the Blauers over the years. Headed by siblings Gail and Sam, the Blauner family are also generous and loyal supporters of BronxWorks fundraising campaigns. We especially want to thank the Blauers for purchasing a sumptuous holiday lunch for every client and all the staff at the Living Room. For their generosity, commitment to the Bronx community, and constant partnership, BronxWorks thanks Gail, Sam, and the late Rose and Max Blauner.

"The Blauers have been generous to BronxWorks for years. Every year over the holidays they provide a nice meal for all our staff and clients at the Living Room. More importantly, the Blauner family have become friends and agency supporters." - Scott Auwarter, Assistant Executive Director

To learn more about the Blauner family's support and the building dedication, read the [BronxWorks July 2018 Newsletter](#).

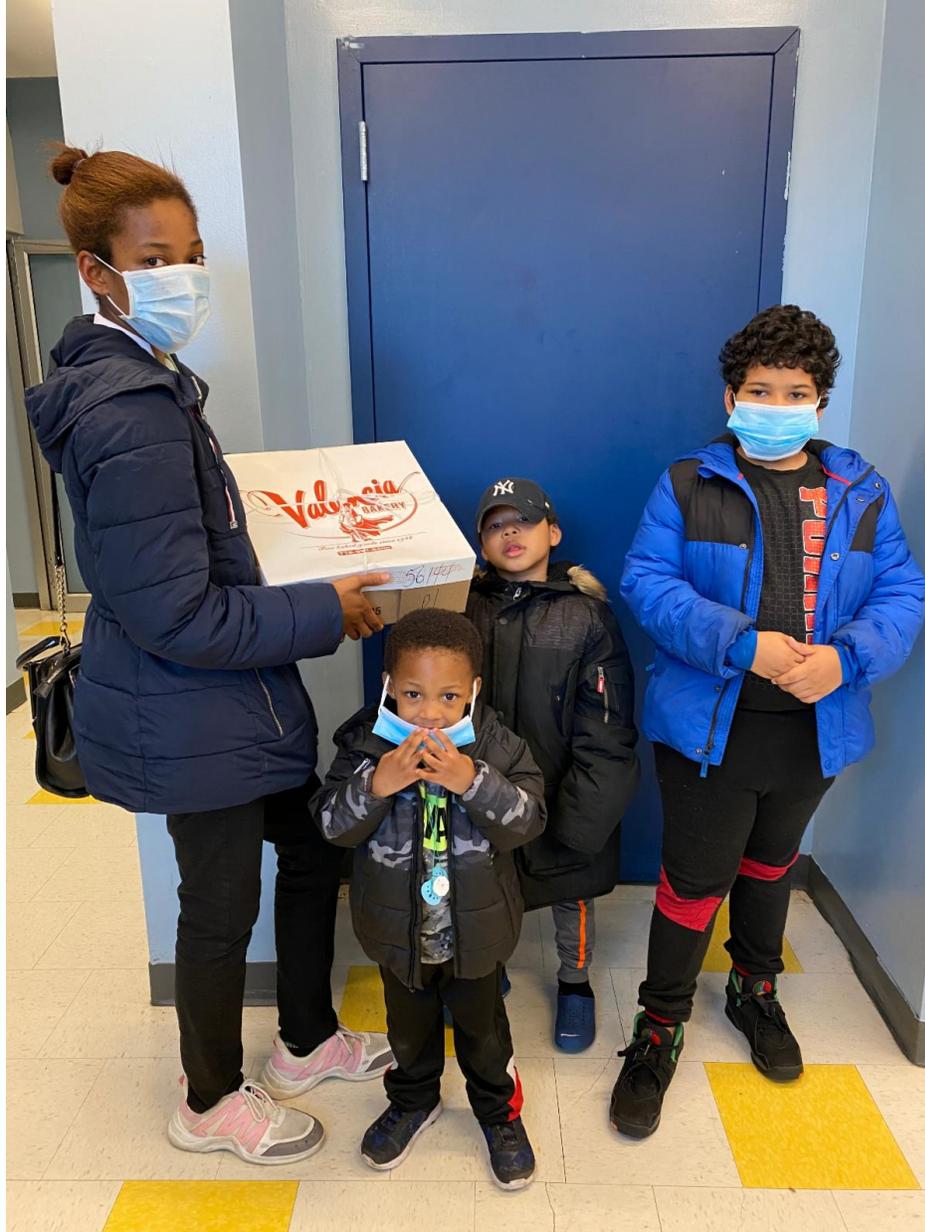
Love, Power, and Grace Church share toys and gifts at the BronxWorks St. Mary's Park Cornerstone Community Center.



Members of Love, Power, and Grace Church share toys and gifts at the BronxWorks St. Mary's Park Cornerstone Community Center on January 2.

Thank you to the Love, Power, and Grace (LPG) Church Congregation for organizing a special holiday toy distribution at the BronxWorks St. Mary's Park Cornerstone Community Center. The event took place on Saturday, January 2, in celebration of Three Kings Day. Over 200 children and families received a variety of toys and gifts. Extra special thank you to Amanda Perez, BronxWorks Director of Compliance who helped to spearhead the effort with her fellow LPG parishners.

An outpouring of support for Ms. Pizarro, whose story was featured on CBS Evening News with Norah O'Donnell.



Ms. Pizarro stands with her three sons and a cake generously gifted to her family to celebrate her eldest son's birthday.

In the fall, BronxWorks program participant Ms. Pizarro and her family shared their story on the CBS Evening News with Norah O'Donnell. Because of the pandemic, Ms. Pizarro faced a multitude of challenges and hardships. Immediately following the story, BronxWorks received a torrent of requests from viewers asking to help the family. As a result, a wave of support came into the BronxWorks Emergency Fund. The donors especially wanted to be sure that Ms. Pizarro would be able to purchase a cake and gifts for her son's imminent birthday. Ms. Pizarro's caseworkers and BronxWorks staff carefully stewarded the support, and Ms. Pizarro identified a list of needs that would help support her household. [Watch Ms. Pizarro's CBS Evening News story here.](#) The story was also featured on CBS 880 AM. Anchor Lynda Lopez interviewed Executive Director Eileen Torres and listeners contacted BronxWorks to provide birthday cakes and even pizza. Read and listen to the coverage [here.](#)

Thank you to the countless other partners and supporters whose stories of good will simply could not fit in the span of a newsletter. We could not provide the scope and quality of services to our communities without you.

Staff Profile: Karla Velasquez



Karla Velasquez, Financial Empowerment Director at BronxWorks

BronxWorks employees often come with vibrant stories that shape their approach to their work. Many have lived through experiences that guide their interactions with clients and inspire their dedication to our mission. Karla Velasquez is one of many examples of staff who know first-hand the impact of BronxWorks programs. Karla came to the U.S. from Honduras as a 12-year-old. She grew up in the Bronx and received her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Alfred University. For 15 years she worked as an Operations Manager for a retail company. When a market downturn resulted in the closure of that company, Karla continued to look for new opportunities.

Eventually, Karla was connected with the Jobs Plus program and applied for a Financial Counselor position at BronxWorks. Like so many of the clients that she works with now, Karla received assistance preparing her résumé. She interviewed for the position and was hired in 2011.

"I'm proud whenever a member graduates from our programs," Karla says. "I've seen members come to us without a high school diploma, with nothing, and they're graduating with a Bachelor's degree and a job."

Karla has worked her way up through the Workforce Development department for ten years. She spent two years as the Jobs Plus Financial Counselor before becoming a Senior Case Manager for the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program, where she helped to pilot financial counseling to clients of the program. After

another year back at Jobs Plus as a Senior Financial Counselor, BronxWorks received a contract to provide tax preparation services at the Morris Innovative Senior Center, followed by grants for the Financial Empowerment Center and expanding tax prep services under the BronxWorks Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Bronx Promote Earned Income Tax Credit to support At-Risk Children (BronxPEACH) programs. Karla worked to support all of these expansions, and she is now the Director of the Financial Empowerment Center, where she supervises 12 staff across all of the BronxWorks tax prep services as well as the FSS Program.

"I'm from the community. My kids go to school in the community. If my community does good, I do good. I love when people succeed."

During the pandemic, Karla's programs have been working overtime trying to help clients secure crucial assistance like unemployment benefits or job training and resources. The FSS Program helps Section 8 voucher holders with employment and training as well as various financial services to assist households toward achieving financial independence. The Financial Empowerment Center helps all individuals who live or work in New York City with free one-on-one financial counseling services. The VITA and BronxPEACH programs are both free tax prep services for all individuals and households that meet the income requirements.

**Did You Know?
BronxWorks Tax Preparation Services
Are Open.**

Happy EITC Awareness Day!!!

Let's Celebrate **YOU**

You Earned It

We'll Help You Get It Back

On average you can get up to **\$2,400**

Please join us on
Friday, January 29th, 2021
1130 Grand Concourse
10am-1pm



- Determine if you qualify for the **EITC**
- Make your tax appointment w/ NYC **FREE** VITA site
- Learn about the **Recovery Rebate Credit** if you did not receive any of your **Stimulus Checks**
- Learn how Unemployment affects your tax return
- On Site, Confidential, One-on-One Financial Counseling and Public Benefits Information available

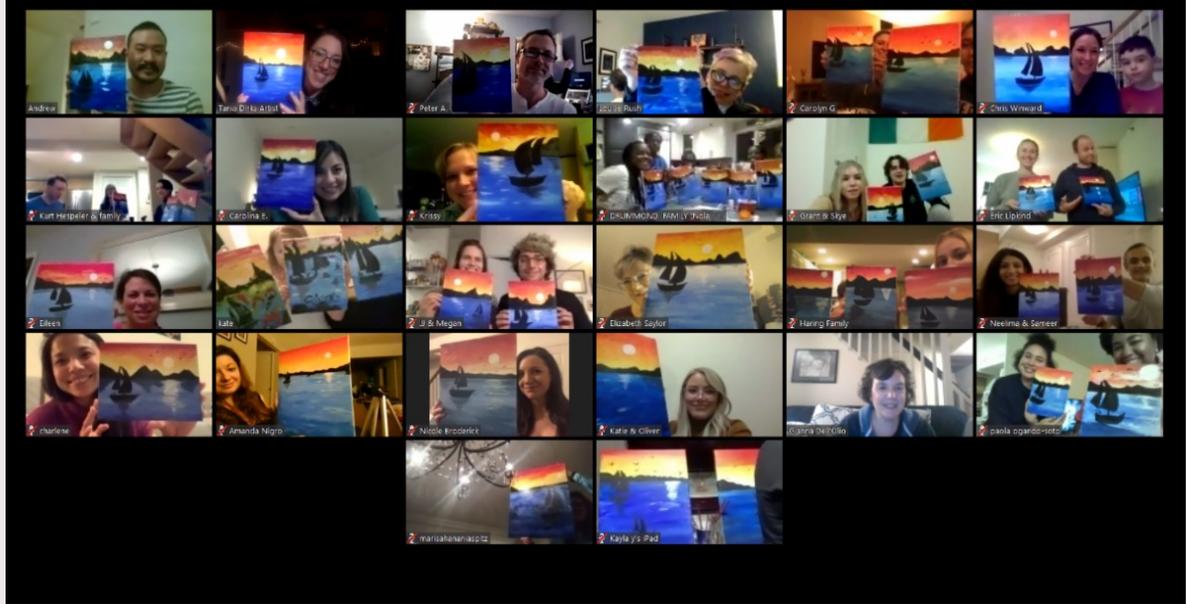
Karla Velasquez
 VITA/PEACH Program Director
 Email: TAXES@bronxworks.org or
BronxPEACH@bronxworks.org
 call 347-896-5044 or
 347-523-4291 (se habla espanol)

If you live in any of the following ZIP codes
10458, 10461, 10462, 10463,
10466, 10467, 10468, 10469
 Please make your appointment by visiting
<https://bronxworkstaxes.as.me/PEACH>
 For all other ZIP codes go to:
<https://bronxworkstaxes.as.me/TaxTime>

BronxWorks tax preparation assistance services are open and accepting appointments. With the support of our many partners, BronxWorks has provided free tax prep services for the underserved since 2007 and assists an average of 5,000 clients in preparing their tax returns each year. For more information on BronxWorks tax preparation centers such as office locations, hours, and a complete list of services, visit our [website](#).

BronxWorks will host an Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day event on Friday, January 29 in partnership with Montefiore and the NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. Participants will receive information and resources on tax prep services and be able to schedule an appointment directly with the VITA program or the BronxPEACH program. The event will be held from 10 a.m.- 1 p.m. at the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center located at 1130 Grand Concourse.

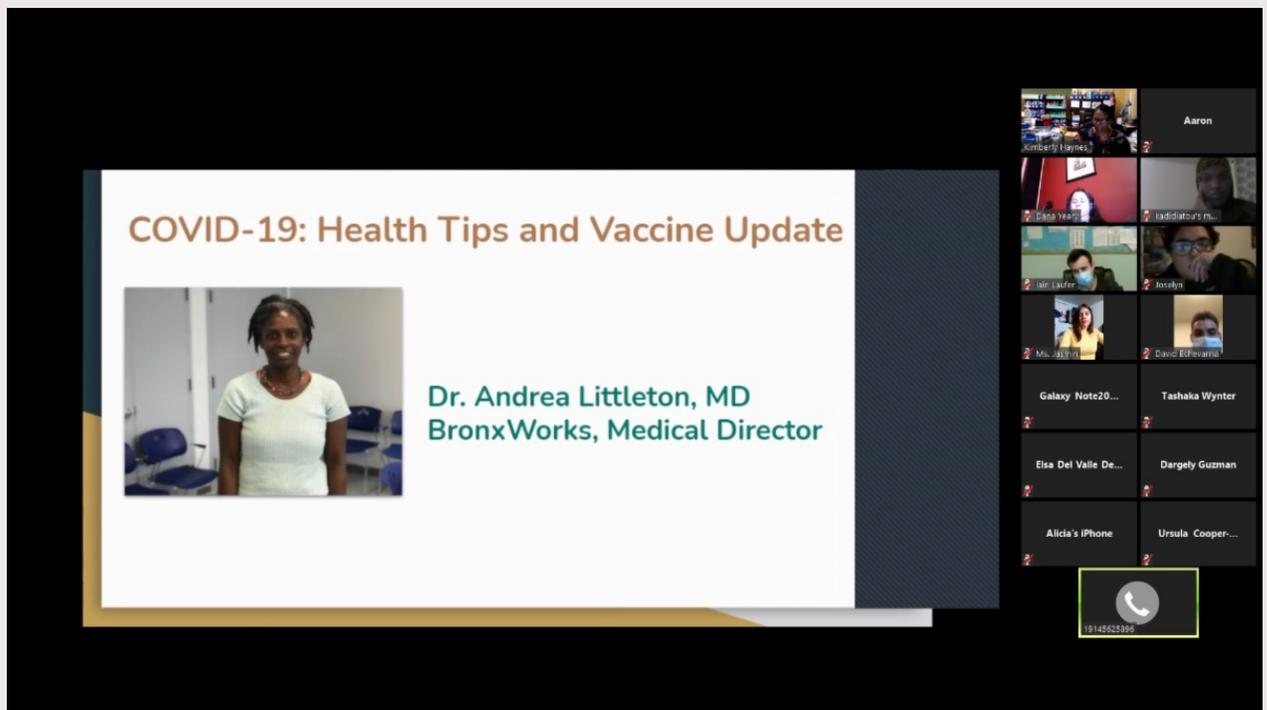
Photo Essay



[The BronxWorks Leadership Council Virtual Paint & Sip](#)

The BronxWorks Leadership Council hosted a Virtual Paint & Sip on January 22, taught by artist [Tania Dirks](#). Over 40 people attended and painted beautiful sunset pictures. All proceeds from ticket sales went directly to the BronxWorks Building Better Futures Fund.

To learn more about the BronxWorks Leadership Council, click [here](#).



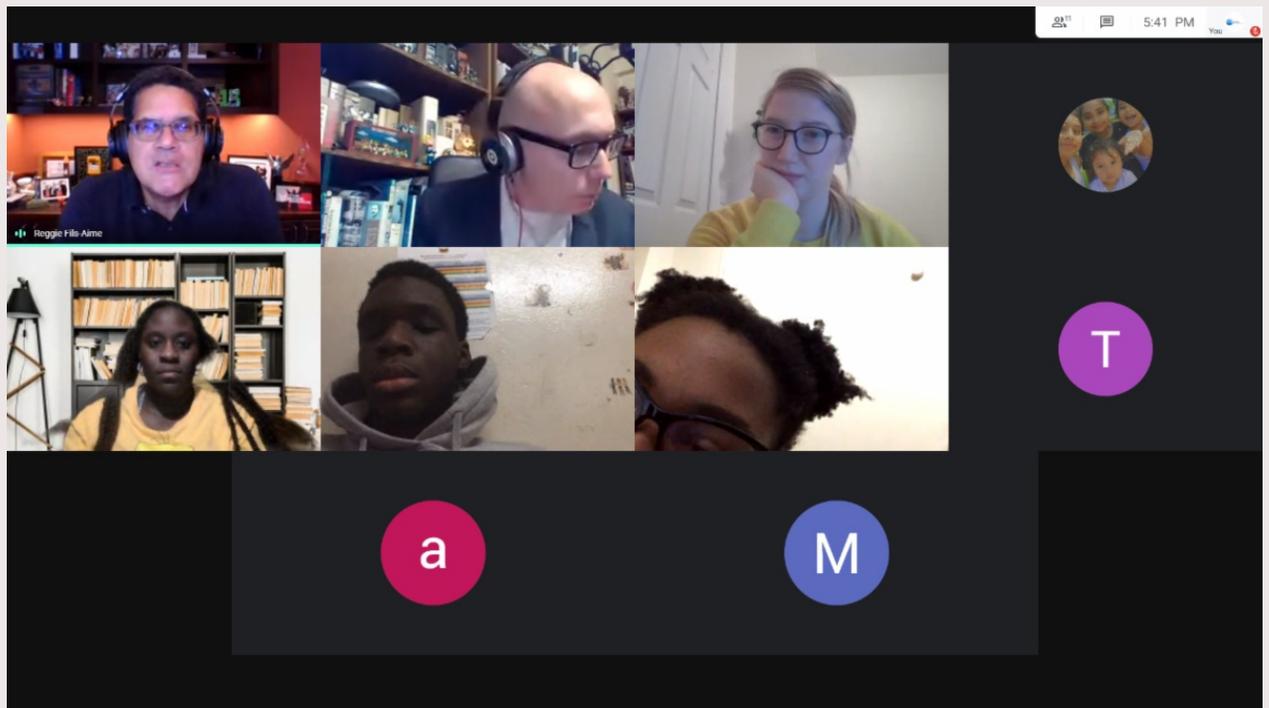
[CMCC Virtual Town Hall and Tour](#)

Parents of children in the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC) educational programs took part in a virtual town hall meeting in January. Parents were provided information about the programs' safety protocols and received a virtual tour of the program since parents have not been allowed in BronxWorks facilities due to COVID-19 health & safety protocols. BronxWorks Medical Director Dr. Andrea Littleton also spoke with parents about health and safety information regarding COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccine.



COVID-19 Vaccines for Older Adults

BronxWorks Heights Neighborhood Senior Center hosted a COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic for adults ages 75 and older at the Sedgwick Houses Social Club. The clinic was part of New York City's effort to get seniors residing in New York City Housing Authority housing vaccinated for COVID-19. The event was spearheaded by New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo's office, and vaccines were administered by staff from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (pictured above with some BronxWorks staff).



Former Nintendo of America President Reggie Fils-Aime (top left) speaks with BronxWorks students

Students in BronxWorks Family Shelters Learn about Videogame Journalism

The New York Videogame Critic's circle ran two 12-week programs for some of our family shelters' high school students. Eight students learned to write reviews of the games they were playing from lead journalists

in the videogame industry. They completed weekly writing assignments and engaged in free play at the end of each class. As a result of her impressive work throughout the course, one student is in the running for a paid summer internship with the NYVGCC. Former Nintendo of America president and Bronx native Reggie Fils-Aime spoke with the participants, taking questions and offering advice to the students.

How to Donate to BronxWorks.



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 dire need of **size 6 diapers** as well as the books *Women in Art*, *Women in Science*, and *Women in Sports* for our Children & Youth Department.
- 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

STAY CONNECTED:



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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