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The BronxWorks October 2020 Newsletter



BronxWorks Community Health and SNAP-Ed team members at the weekly CMCC farm stand.

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Community Health Programs Feature Spotlight

BronxWorks remains committed to food justice and addressing food insecurity issues in the Bronx. Our Community Health Programs seek to change the health landscape of the Bronx by providing health and nutrition education, access to fresh food options, interventions, and advocacy.



BronxWorks Community Health Staff manage a line of shoppers at the CMCC Fresh Food Farm Stand.

Building off the success of the Healthy & Livable Mott Haven (HLMH) initiative, the Community Health Programs have grown to include SNAP Nutrition Education & Obesity Prevention (SNAP-Ed); Maternal Infant Health and Mortality Reduction; Food and Nutrition Service Bundle; the Healthy Eating, Active Living (HEAL) Project; Youth Food Justice Program; Nutrition Education Capacity Building Program; two seasonal farm stands; the CMCC Kitchen; and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

The HLMH initiative was a BronxWorks collaborative funded through the New York Community Trust and involving several partner organizations brought together by a mutual interest in improving health outcomes in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. The collaborative sought to address social determinants of health, especially healthy eating, active lifestyles, and access to fresh foods. Recently, BronxWorks secured additional funding from multiple sources to expand our community health services through a multifaceted and borough-wide effort.

One of the biggest additions is the SNAP Nutrition Education & Obesity Prevention program, funded through the New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance (OTDA). The program seeks to promote health and prevent or postpone the onset of diet-related diseases among the SNAP population of the Bronx through providing nutrition education and obesity prevention services. SNAP-Educators develop and employ a curriculum that targets school-age children, adult caregivers with children, and older adults ages 60 and up. The objectives are to promote consumption of nutrient dense and low fat foods, decrease consumption of low nutrient sugar sweetened foods and beverages, increase physical activity, improve food resource management and preparation skills, and increase access to affordable and nutritious food options. The program is led by Carolina Espinosa, who took over as the Program Director in 2020.

Other notable additions include: 1) the HEAL Project, funded by the Mother Cabrini Foundation, that works with community members of Bronx Community Districts 1 and 4 to decrease high rates of diet-related chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart disease by providing nutrition workshops and cooking education sessions; 2) the Youth Food Justice Program, funded by the Levitt Foundation, which engages youth participants with an advocacy curriculum to help them become food advocates; and the 3) Food and Nutrition Service Bundle, which connects BronxWorks to a national online referral network called UniteUs where providers can share and respond to referrals. Through UniteUs, BronxWorks was

able to connect hundreds of families to our emergency food services and refer countless others to much needed care. Rachel Gill is the Program Director overseeing these programs, along with the maternal and infant health programs, the CMCC and Mott Haven/Belvis Fresh Food Farm stands, as well as managing the CMCC Kitchen.

Speaking of the BronxWorks Farm Stands, both remained busy throughout the summer months. SNAP-Ed and Community Health food educators were on site to continue their outreach and provide other resources.

BronxWorks SNAP-Ed and Community Health Programs Go Virtual



BronxWorks SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator Jairy Padro creates a virtual cooking demonstration.

When New York State issued stay at home orders on March 16, BronxWorks SNAP-Educators faced an unforeseen challenge: how do we provide essential food and nutrition programming amid a state-wide shelter in place order? The solution quickly surfaced: make the programming easily accessible within the household.

The SNAP-Ed team created a virtual platform that the community could access from the safety of their homes, including YouTube videos, virtual demos and workshops, digital and print distribution of newsletters and information, and online advocacy. There are even plans now to help create a podcast series. The BronxWorks Community Health Programs also adapted to online program delivery, creating cooking videos, virtual physical education workshops, hosting virtual yoga, and much more.

"The team became experts on creating digital content around food. They are thinking about lighting, framing, angles, sound, and everything to create the best content we can for our communities," said Program Director Carolina Espinosa.

As the pandemic continued, it became clear that senior citizens would become an increasingly difficult population to reach, as senior centers remained closed for safety. SNAP-Ed prioritized physical distribution of printed newsletters and information packets to senior residences and BronxWorks food pantries. They also began connecting with seniors over the phone to conduct check-ins and one-on-one nutrition sessions.

If you did not already know, BronxWorks has a YouTube channel. You can check out all of our content, including SNAP-Ed and community health food and nutrition videos at [BronxWorksInfo](#).

The Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center Kitchen Continues to Produce Hundreds of Meals Every Day



CMCC Kitchen staff Maribel Abreu (left) and Daisy Pinero (right) prepare hot meals from scratch.

The CMCC Kitchen produces over 600 meals from scratch every day to support multiple BronxWorks programs and hundreds of participants. BronxWorks Children and Youth programs receive meals through the Child and Adult Care Food program, a federally funded meal program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks provided to eligible children and adults. The program provides healthy meal guidelines and nutrition education resources. The CMCC Kitchen takes nutrition one step further by including local and regional produce from GrowNYC's Greenmarket Co. in every meal it prepares. The partnership with GrowNYC began in 2015 to provide fresh produce to the community and our program participants through kitchen meals as well as fresh food box programs and farm stands.

"I am proud of our efforts, from the kitchen team that shows up every day to make hundreds of meals to feed the community and who have shown up throughout the pandemic without hesitation, to the Community Health team who acted quickly to get our programming online," said Program Director, Rachel Gill

CMCC Kitchen staff continued to work throughout the pandemic as essential programs such as BronxWorks homeless programs relied on the prepared meals to feed the hundreds of street homeless clients that depended on BronxWorks for shelter. The kitchen continues to improve the quality of food delivery within BronxWorks programs, and will work with the kitchens in the BronxWorks Adult Homeless Services Department to develop new menus incorporating more fresh ingredients.

To stay up-to-date with all of the ways that BronxWorks is supporting food equality in our programs, subscribe to the Healthy & Livable Mott Haven monthly [newsletter](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

BronxWorks Youth-led Community Health Initiatives



BronxWorks youth participants have been integral in providing food outreach to the most vulnerable members of our communities amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the summer and the fall, participants from the BronxWorks youth programs were employed at the BronxWorks CMCC and Belvis Hospital Farm Stands. Youth from the programs supported operations of both farm stands and conducted outreach as a part of the Levitt Foundation Youth Food Justice Program. During the summer, they developed a series of short videos to be shared on social media platforms to increase awareness of food justice issues and encourage healthy eating. Participants are engaging local elected officials, community leaders, and food retailers with these videos and their food justice messages to build grassroots momentum. Finally, as New York City began to re-open, youth participants supported critical in-person outreach in the community and at BronxWorks Farm Stands to engage vulnerable populations, in particular seniors who could not reliably access resources and materials online.

SNAP-Ed Program Director Carolina Espinosa said, "Not everyone is able to access information or participate in our programs virtually. Particularly, seniors have had difficulty participating with our virtual content, so we have to make sure we have options to reach every group safely and reliably."

Youth-led programming has proven to be pivotal in building community support for change and healthy initiatives. It is particularly effective in engaging children and other young people, as well as building intergenerational connections with older adults and seniors. The youth participants gain work experience, engage in the Youth Food Justice curriculum, and learn first-hand what it takes to become food advocates. Naturally, strict social distance guidelines are observed. For more information about outreach programs contact info@bronxworks.org.

Staff Profiles: Carolina Espinosa & Rachel Gill



Carolina Espinosa (Left), Program Director of SNAP-Education, and Rachel Gill (Right), Program Director, Community Health Programs

Carolina Espinosa became the Program Director of the BronxWorks SNAP-Education Program in February 2020. Carolina earned her Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in Science and Nutrition at Rutgers University and then completed her dietetic internship at James J. Peters VA Hospital, becoming a Registered Dietitian in 2015. She first joined BronxWorks in 2016 where she was a part of the HLMH team. Carolina spent 3 years implementing and expanding the BronxWorks-led collaboration and was integral in securing external partners. She also organized outreach events and promoted national diabetes awareness. Carolina then spent a year as the Nutritionist with the Positive Living Department, providing nutrition and health consultation to clients living with HIV/AIDS, before returning to the Community Health Programs as the Program Director of SNAP-Education.

"There is so much to be proud of. I am proud of the great team we've assembled that has adapted to the challenges and that allows us to consistently provide quality programming to all of our different patrons." - Carolina Espinosa

In her free time, Carolina enjoys hiking, traveling, photography, and exploring new surroundings. She is passionate about animal rescue and volunteers with feral cat catch, neuter, and release groups. She is also passionate about food in her personal life and loves to cook and help others with their nutrition journeys as well.

Rachel completed her Bachelor's degree in journalism at Salve Regina University and worked in her home state of Vermont in various food industry initiatives. She came to New York City to pursue a Master's at the NYU Food Studies Program and joined BronxWorks in 2014. Rachel started her time with BronxWorks at the senior-operated farm stand at the Heights Neighborhood Senior Center. Shortly after, she assumed the role of the Administrative Assistant supporting the operations of the CMCC Kitchen, which provides daily meals for multiple BronxWorks programs and hundred of participants. She slowly integrated into several other community health programs. Rachel is now the Program Director of Community Health Programs, where she oversees the CMCC and Adult Homeless Services Kitchens, Infant and Maternal Health initiatives, Food Nutrition Service Bundle program, Teen Battle Chef, Nutrition Education Capacity Building program, and a partnership with Citibike/Lyft to promote the bike-sharing model in the Bronx.

"My goals are to continue to show up and stand with the Bronx community to advocate for change and increased equity in all regards. I hope to continue to expand health, nutrition, and food service programming to serve the community." - Rachel Gill

Rachel spends her time outside of work swimming, kayaking and singing with a pop choir. Rachel is also passionate about food culture in her personal life and loves to go on food adventures where she is able to

try out new dishes and cuisines. Together, Rachel and Carolina have over a decade of experience

providing strong leadership around food education and nutrition services to the Bronx and are a *tour de force* when it comes to food access and resources for the communities that we serve.

Photo Essay



New York State Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda (center) talks with BronxWorks Assistant Executive Director John Weed (right) about the BronxWorks Community Food Pantry.

Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda visits BronxWorks Food Pantry

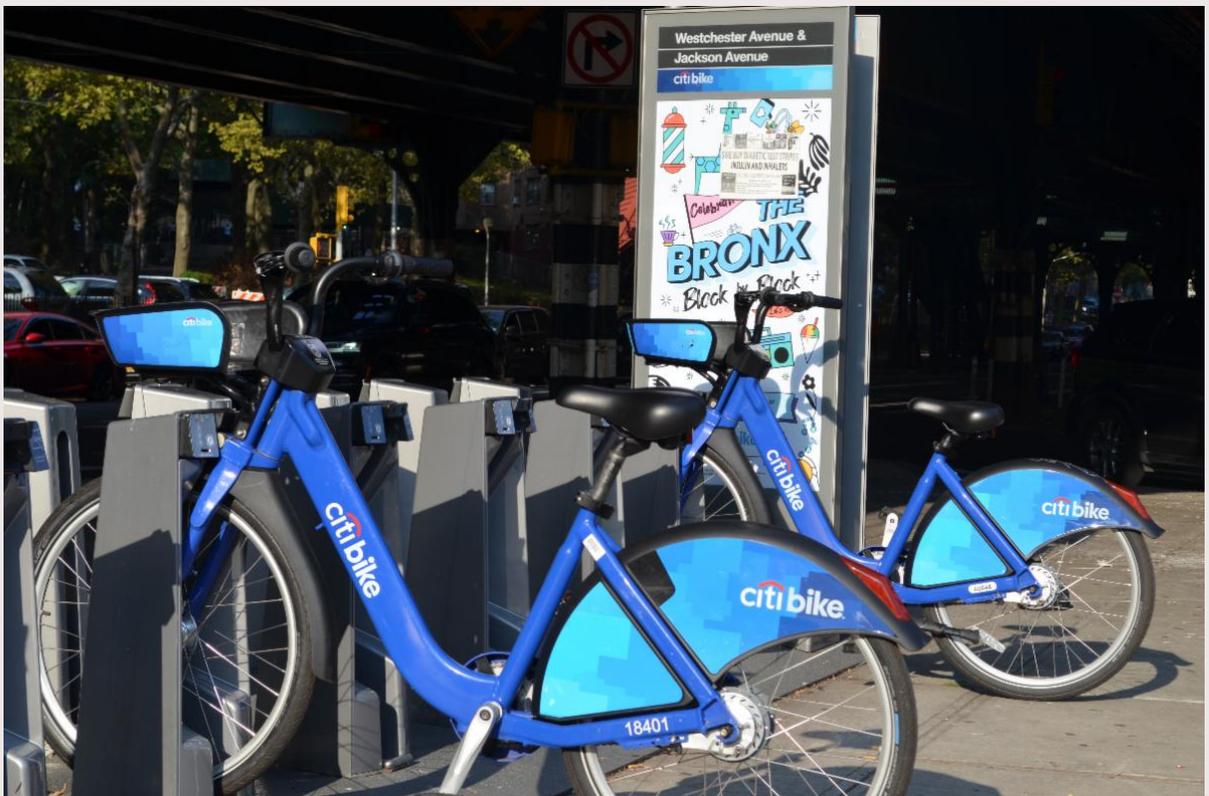
New York State Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda visited the weekend Food Pantry at the BronxWorks Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center. The senator handed out face masks to pantry participants and experienced how the weekly BronxWorks Food Pantry operates.



New York City Councilmember Vanessa Gibson (center) speaks with BronxWorks Community Health team members at the weekly farm stand.

Councilmember Vanessa Gibson distributes Health Bucks and PPE

New York City Councilmember Vanessa Gibson continues her loyal support of BronxWorks programs while handing out Health Bucks and PPE at our weekly farm stand. Her staff was also on-site to promote filling out the 2020 Census to meet the deadline that passed this month.



CitiBike and BronxWorks

BronxWorks Community Health partnership with CitiBike and Lyft Expansion Programs promote partnership promotes alternative transportation options in historically underserved neighborhoods and encourages residents to integrate health and wellness activities into their daily lives. Pictured above, newly installed CitiBike docking station at the corner of Westchester Avenue and Jackson Avenue.



BronxWorks Program Specialist Fabiola Estevez (right) hands a USDA food box to a BronxWorks Heights Innovative Senior Center Food Pantry participant.

USDA Food Boxes

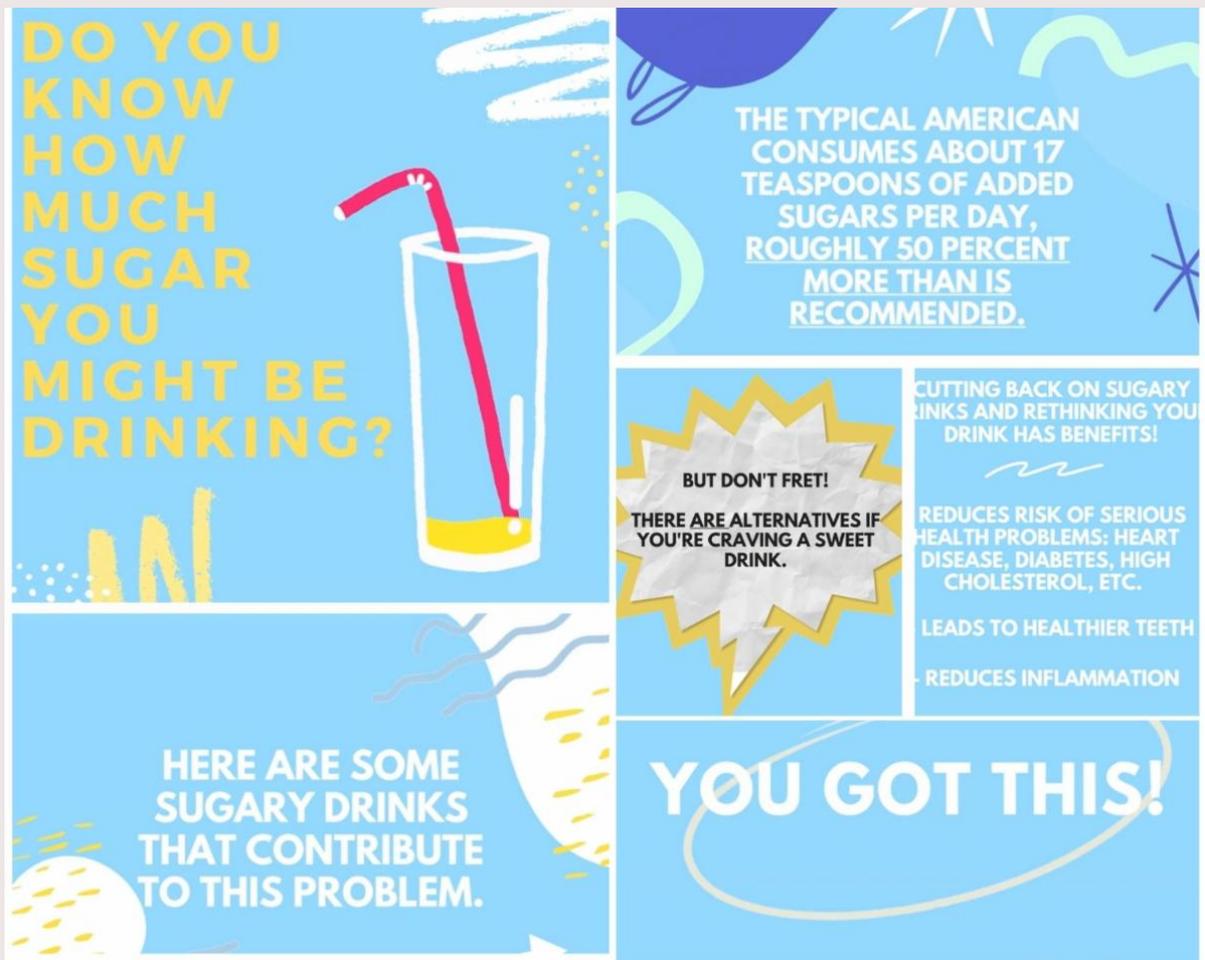
The BronxWorks Heights Neighborhood Senior Center distributed hundreds of boxes of food to Bronx community members. The boxes are part of the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program, established as part of the federal Coronavirus Food Assistance Program. The boxes contain milk, eggs, protein, and fresh produce from farms across America.



Twin Parks West residents receiving grab & go bags of food.

Twin Parks West Food Pantry Grand Opening

Last week, BronxWorks launched the grand opening of the Twin Parks West Food Pantry. While emergency food has been shared with the residents through the pandemic, Twin Parks West will now have a regularly scheduled pantry day. During the grand opening, over 150 bags were given out. BronxWorks Financial Empowerment Counseling workers were also present to enroll residents in Financial Literacy Workshops and Financial Counseling.



A collage of still shots from a Youth Food Justice Program video encouraging others to drink alternatives to sugary drinks.

[Youth Food Justice Program Videos Shared on Social Media](#)

Participants from Youth Food Justice Program funded by the Levitt Foundation created short videos to share on social media to increase awareness of food justice issues. After creating these videos, youth participants are working with local elected officials to promote their food advocacy messages.

Did You Know?

The BronxWorks 2018-2019 Report to the Community will soon be available!





REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



BronxWorks is pleased to announce that the 2018-2019 Report to the Community will soon be available in print and digitally through our website. The annual report highlights the important work of our programs and the many accomplishments of the past year that are thanks to dedication of our staff, partners, and supporters throughout the BronxWorks family. Read the report [here](#), or continue to check our website and social media to request your physical copy.

Support BronxWorks The Building Futures Fund



Bronxworks
Lifting Lives Building Futures

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.

communities we serve continue to feel 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 programs to keep people stably housed, and resources for children to be successful in remote learning and after-school programs.

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.

To donate now text bronxworks2020 to 76278 or visit [here](#).

DONATE

The Bronx communities we serve are also in need of many essential items. Headphones, toys, diapers, and wipes are among the items requested the most from our program participants.



Donate Headphones to BronxWorks!

Click [here](#) to buy items from the BronxWorks Emergency Needs List.

Good news! You can now support BronxWorks in the Amazon app on your phone! Follow these instructions to turn on AmazonSmile and start donating while you shop today!

How to Activate AmazonSmile in the App:

Open the Amazon Shopping app on your device

Go into the main menu of the Amazon Shopping app and tap into 'Settings'

Tap 'AmazonSmile' and follow the on-screen instructions to complete the process



Turn on AmazonSmile in the Amazon app to generate donations.





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