BronxWorks Training Coordinator Alex Soto conducts a virtual staff training from his office.

The BronxWorks September 2021 Newsletter

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BronxWorks Fiscal and Training Departments Implement Key Adjustments to Support Operations Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic

Over the past year we have
shared stories of how BronxWorks programs have adapted services to support the community and meet new challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The untold story is how BronxWorks administrative operations, like the Fiscal and Training Departments, adapted crucial organizational functions to support our programs and staff.

We spoke with Gordon Miller, CFO, and Amy Greenbaum-Strauss, Director of Training, on how their departments made and maintain adjustments as we seek to operate within the realities of the COVID-19 landscape.

**Gordon Miller, Chief Financial Officer:**

From the outset, we had a conversation with the whole team to determine how everyone felt and what options they preferred. As we quickly shifted to remote work, communication was key to ensure that the team could handle the workflow. Your communication tools are the backbone of your team's operations. For us, RingCentral team meetings became essential and we scheduled them regularly each week within each division and altogether as a department.

When you're not in the office every day, communication with program staff and managers can be a challenge. We are setting up a Program Manager Dashboard within our accounting system to give our directors more self-service to their assigned teams.

**Amy Greenbaum-Strauss, Director of Training:**

It was monumental, the beginning of the pandemic, and it also occurred in the context of a lot of fear and unknown, particularly around how the virus was transmitted, and how we as a department would be able to handle onboarding new staff, and supporting the training needs of our organization, and do it all virtually. My team, which consists of me, our Training Coordinator Alex, and our Training Assistant Elhadji, met virtually, every day, to stay close, to stay on top of what people needed, and to figure out how our department could pivot and confront the new challenges.

There was a loss, I have to say—when you enforce distance between people, you lose the human connection, and my team had to figure out how to continue to foster that connection. There was also a great deal of tragedy and human loss, and we had to figure out how we could support our staff and how we could help our staff support our communities, to cope with the loss we were all experiencing. We adjusted our Manager Training Series, focusing instead on bringing Program Managers together in a peer support groups, enabling our colleagues to share and discuss challenges that we are all seeing. We hosted weekly COVID-19 Q&A sessions with our Medical Director to provide our staff with the most up-to-date information. We continued to provide monthly Wellness Wednesday workshops to promote a variety of workplace wellness initiatives with our staff.

I started to send out Deep Breath Moments to share some positivity and stress management strategies with our staff. At the beginning, I sent them out three times a week. After a short
With the dashboards in place, program managers can access their programs' fiscal reports, spending information, and projections directly.

Working in the COVID-19 office landscape is complicated. Navigating work from home, hybrid schedules, and digital communication can be challenging. The key is to establish communication channels and habits immediately and create functions to increase ease of access to information in real time, allowing everyone to be prepared for that upcoming Zoom meeting.

I'm very proud of the BronxWorks Fiscal team, and for everyone who worked hard and remained dedicated throughout this challenging period. We were able to adjust and continue to get our jobs done.

During the pandemic hiatus, we adapted our New Employee Orientation to be entirely virtual, which still remains today. We hosted an entirely virtual Annual Staff Meeting for over 1,000 BronxWorks staff. We adapted all of our mandatory trainings to a virtual format, and offered trainings tailored to meet the challenges, such as Team & Support in Challenging Times, Trauma Informed Care and Community Crisis, and many more. We still offer 95% of our trainings virtually. In addition to the pandemic, there was also the pain of grappling with racial issues in the summer of 2020. BronxWorks hosted a virtual event on Juneteenth that summer and implemented agency-wide virtual DEI trainings.

The key for the Training Department was to provide the most needed support to our staff at each turn of the pandemic to ensure that they could provide the most needed support to the community. I am so proud of the Training Department team for how we were able to stay connected and face this challenge.

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**BronxWorks Welcomes Vice President of Human Resources: Felicia Rickett-Samuels**

In an effort to expand our administrative and human resources operations, BronxWorks is excited to welcome Felicia Rickett-Samuels as our Vice President of Human Resources. This new role reports directly to our General Counsel, Erica Coleman, and will oversee both the Training and Human Resources Departments.

As VP of Human Resources, Felicia will provide strategic and operational leadership to unite the Training and HR Departments to enhance BronxWorks ability to recruit, hire, train, integrate and support new staff. Additionally, the HR and Training departments will evaluate, retain, and promote talented staff in pursuit of our organizational mission.

Felicia brings over 10 years of experience in human resources and nonprofit leadership to BronxWorks. She has worked in senior HR leadership roles at Birch Family Services and Daytop Village, and most recently worked as the Senior Human Resources Director at Jewish Board of Family & Children’s Services. Felicia’s experience makes her particularly well-equipped to contribute to the ongoing development of operations and expertise at BronxWorks.

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**Did You Know? BronxWorks and the Bronx RHIO**
A recent video highlights how BronxWorks partners with the Bronx Regional Health Information Organization (RHIO) to connect to the Statewide Health Information Network for New York. The network allows care providers across the state to exchange important clinical information that enables social service providers to deliver high quality care and support clients in making an informed decision on their treatment and health. Click above to learn more.

Photo Essay

BronxWorks Summer Camp at Legoland

As the culminating trip for BronxWorks Summer camp, students from our Third Ave., Bronxchester, and PS 42 programs went to Legoland New York for a day of fun! Together they enjoyed rides and some amazing LEGO statues. It was an unforgettable experience for students and camp counselors alike!
Volunteers Back At BronxWorks

Volunteers return to BronxWorks programs! Sothea Shreck and Kate Blasco (pictured), volunteers from BCW New York, a PR firm working with BronxWorks, helped out at the Community Farm Stand recently. BCW volunteers are committed to assist our Community Health team in organizing and bagging produce for our farm stands throughout the rest of the season. Learn more about volunteering for BronxWorks by emailing Kelly Hart atkhart@bronxworks.org.

Happy Hope Factory Donates Backpacks

The Happy Hope Factory donated over 150 book bags filled with school supplies to BronxWorks! The much-needed backpacks were shared with BronxWorks middle-school students and other children throughout the organization. As students return to in-person school and after-school programs, the new supplies are truly appreciated. Here's to a safe and happy 2021-2022 school year!

BronxWorks Vaccine Equity Program

Staff from the BronxWorks Vaccine Equity Program canvassed neighborhoods across the Bronx to provide the most up-to-date information about the safety and availability of the COVID-19 vaccine. Access links on vaccine information, recent press stories, and more resources at https://bronxworks.org/vaccine.
BronxWorks is thrilled to be a charity partner in the 2021 TCS New York City Marathon on Sunday, November 7.

Meet our runners and donate to their cause here.

Coming Soon! The BronxWorks Park Haven Supportive Housing and Community Services Office

BronxWorks will open the Park Haven Supportive Housing and Community Services Office in October 2021. The 10-story, mixed-income, mixed-use building is located in Mott Haven in the Bronx. Developed by nonprofit housing developer, The Community Builders, Park Haven will house 178 residential units, including 50 permanent supportive housing units, as well as office space for social services and the BronxWor Workforce Development Department, which will move to Park Haven.
Help Support BronxWorks

There are still many ways you can support BronxWorks.

- Donate to one of our #TeamBronxWorks TCS NYC Marathon Runners
- Purchase essential items for our participants from our Amazon Wishlist
- Setup an Amazon Smile account and choose BronxWorks as your charity and Amazon will donate on your behalf every time you make purchase

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