The May 2022 Newsletter

BronxWorks Positive Living staff and participants, members of the LGBTQ+ Committee, and other BronxWorks staff gathered to support the 2022 AIDS Walk New York.

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BronxWorks Positive Living Programs are a collection of comprehensive services providing case management and health education, harm reduction, and transmission prevention to individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The program began in the early 1990s as one of the first Bronx-based HIV/AIDS services, providing a multitude of client-centered services and resources. The programs have gradually expanded since to include harm reduction resources, community testing for HIV and Hepatitis C, nutrition and recreation programs, and more.

Today, Positive Living is focused on three service areas: case management and health education, harm reduction, and HIV prevention. The intensive Case Management Health Education Program provides assistance with every part of life for participants, including access to benefits and financial management; health care management, adherence, and follow-up; assistance with securing substance abuse and mental health counseling; family stability and independent living resources; and more for individuals living with HIV/AIDS both documented and undocumented.
Demonstrating how to administer Narcan, a life-saving drug for someone experiencing an overdose, is just one of the many services Positive Living staff provides.

The Positive Living Harm Reduction program teaches participants different strategies to reduce the harm of risky behaviors related to alcohol and substance use. The goal of the program is to help participants living with HIV/AIDS live a healthier lifestyle. Positive Living staff meet participants wherever they are at in their stage of life, providing individual and group counseling sessions, individualized case management and support, and linkage to care and treatment resources like substance use counseling or training and access to Narcan opioid overdose prevention kits.

Positive Living Program Coordinator Timeka Toussaint conducts an HIV prevention training.
The Positive Living HIV Prevention Program offers workshops in the community for adults and youth on HIV education and prevention. The program also focuses on providing access to HIV and Hep-C testing, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) education, along with linkage to follow-up care and treatment. HIV Prevention Program workshops cover various topics such as infection and reinfection, countering myths about HIV/AIDS, providing facts about HIV/AIDS and transmission, teaching about safer sex, and the importance of testing.

The goal of this trio of programs is to ensure that every participant can lead a healthy life. The day-to-day at Positive Living is a bevy of activity that is anything but static. For participants, Positive Living represents that space where they can go each day to find a welcoming and safe environment, a staff that cares and is invested in their well-being, and a community of friends and colleagues who are all striving for a better life. There are recreational activities, food service, and celebrations. Staff also provide special food items, like turkeys and whole chickens, during the holidays. Staff are there to help participants manage their crises and accomplish their goals.

"Many participants wish to move forward and better themselves. We've had many participants land jobs, get married, and start their own families."
- Bibi Karim, Department Director

That's what the Positive Living program at BronxWorks is about - providing services to the underserved, meeting people where they are at, having a conversation, and listening to their goals. In doing so, we help our participants reach new heights and see them thrive.

Positive Living and LGBTQ+ Committee Support the AIDS Walk New York 2022

The AIDS Walk New York is the world's largest HIV/AIDS fundraising event. It started in 1986 and has continued to grow through the passion of diverse New York City communities, activities, and organizations that were touched by the early waves of the HIV epidemic and its persistent effects through the decades. BronxWorks has a history of attending and supporting the AIDS Walk New York over many years. Our staff have walked as both the Citizens Advice Bureau and as BronxWorks.
The 2022 AIDS Walk New York took place on Sunday, May 15. Staff from BronxWorks Positive Living and our LGBTQ+ Committee were proud to continue the tradition of supporting the event along with staff from all corners of the organization. Positive Living participants were also invited and several joined on the day of the Walk. Leading up to the AIDS Walk, our staff helped to raise awareness and funding in support of Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC), the world’s first HIV/AIDS service organization working to end the AIDS epidemic and uplift the lives of all affected.

“While the AIDS crisis is not only an LGBTQ+ issue, it is still an issue that is prevalent in the LGBTQ+ community. Our committee was proud to support the AIDS Walk and the efforts of all organizations working to help those afflicted by the disease and working to find an effective HIV vaccine.” - Raymi De La Cruz and Aaron Cipollina,
Co-Chairs of the BronxWorks LGBTQ+ Committee

The organizations supported by AIDS Walk New York have made incredible progress regarding education and stigma surrounding the AIDS crisis. Still, it remains an important issue at the intersection of many communities, particularly communities of color and the LGBTQ+. As BronxWorks was one of the first Bronx-based HIV and AIDS service providers in the 1980s, the agency is proud to participate in the AIDS walk as a way to support our efforts in education and prevention.

Staff Profile: Lumesh Kumar

For Lumesh Kumar, becoming the Program Coordinator for the BronxWorks Positive Living Department was the result of several different and long-term motivations. Lumesh was born and raised in the Parkchester area of the Bronx. He attended Daemen University in Buffalo, New York, where he graduated with both his Bachelor’s Degree in Health Promotion and his Master’s Degree in Public Health. As a Bronx native, Lumesh has always wanted to give back to the community that raised him, and as a student of public health, he developed a keen interest and passion for sexual health and in particular HIV prevention.

During his Master’s program, Lumesh interned with the RAKAI Health Sciences Program in Uganda, working on a health campaign to decrease the transmission of HIV. After graduating, Lumesh spent some time with the Peace Corps in Guyana working to provide health education and knowledge.

“There are a lot of misconceptions about HIV; it’s just something I’ve been passionate about for a long time. If you have a little bit more knowledge, some things could be prevented. Like the importance of testing: sometimes people don’t know their status and transmit unknowingly.”

Lumesh joined BronxWorks in 2018 as a Health Educator for the Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention & Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (CAPP/SRAE) Program. He provided in-person and virtual workshops on sexual and mental health education for participants ages 13-24 throughout the Bronx. In the fall of the 2020, Lumesh joined Positive Living as the Program Coordinator, overseeing harm reduction, case management, and health education services for a group of 60 clients.

“We never closed throughout the pandemic. We made all of the necessary safety adjustments and precautions so we could continue to offer a safe place and the meaningful services for our clients.”
In many ways, working at Positive Living has been a fulfillment of many long-standing goals for Lumesh, but it is just the beginning. “There is still a lot of important work to be done to raise awareness of HIV,” Lumesh says, “to remove the stigma around people living with HIV, to help people reintegrate into society, to address other challenges that our clients face, like housing or substance use.” Outside of work, Lumesh loves to play video games with his friends, and is looking forward to traveling again.

Did You Know? The 2022 BronxWorks Evening Reception is next month!

The 2022 BronxWorks Evening Reception at the Bronx Zoo is just a few short weeks away on June 15! Tickets and sponsorships are still available for this unique event as we celebrate the resilience of the Bronx. Proceeds from the event will benefit the critical work needed to assist Bronx residents as they recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
This year, BronxWorks will honor an esteemed cohort of women leaders who are making unique contributions to the Bronx, including: Teresa Gonzalez, Co-founder/Principal, DalyGonzalez and Partner, Bolton-St. Johns; Annie Tirschwell and Jill Crawford, Type A Projects; and Lidia Virgil, Chief Operational Officer, SOMOS Community Care.

Click here to join us at The BronxWorks Evening Reception at the Bronx Zoo

RSVP

Photo Essay
Councilmember Pierina Sanchez Visits Morris OAC
Councilmember Pierina Sanchez dropped in to speak with our program participants at the BronxWorks Morris Innovative Older Adult Center. After some of our seniors had stopped by her office to ask when she would come visit again, she paid a visit in early May. Councilmember Sanchez spoke to the seniors as a group and then took time with many of them individually to learn more about them and ask about their concerns.

The TD Five Boro Bike Tour
Thank you to all of our #TeamBronxWorks riders who took part in the TD Five Boro Bike Tour on May 1! Our 16 riders raised over $14,000 for programs for children at our family shelters! Thank you to our riders and everyone who donated. Thank you to BronxPro Group, who sponsored six riders, and a special thank you to our three
staff members, Raymi De La Cruz, Genesis Pena, and Marina Weiss, and the Vice-Chair of our Board of Directors, Janice Hart, and her husband Rudy, who all rode from BronxWorks!

### Middle School Field Day

BronxWorks Middle School Programs didn't let a rainy Monday deter their Field Day! Middle school-age participants descended upon the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center for a Field Day! Students were able to play half-court basketball, learn about archery, and compete in team low-impact Airsoft games. Students also got to use the air hockey and arcade basketball machines while spending an afternoon together. Snacks and other refreshments were also provided.

### Denim Day

Staff from all of the BronxWorks Cornerstone Community Centers recognized Denim Day on April 27 and 28 by wearing Denim to stand with survivors of sexual assault. Denim Day honors Sexual Assault Awareness Month and grew out of a 1998 Italian

### BronxWorks GED Prep

Bronx residents 16+ looking to get pass the GED test can now take advantage of free High School Equivalency/GED Prep courses. Our program also provides job readiness training, free tutoring, and referrals to other services. If you know someone...
Supreme Court decision that overturned a rape conviction because the victim had worn tight jeans.

who is looking to take the next step and pass the GED test, email our program at EXCEL@bronxworks.org.

Help Support BronxWorks

There are many ways you can support BronxWorks.

- Make a contribution. Donate Now!
- Purchase essential items for our participants from our Amazon Wishlist
- Set up an Amazon Smile account and choose BronxWorks as your charity and Amazon will donate on your behalf every time you make purchase

Visit our Website

Announcements

Are you...

✓ 18 or older?
✓ A Non-Custodial Parent with a child younger than 24?
✓ Trying to improve your parenting skills?
✓ Unemployed or looking for a better job?

Join HERO Dads!
You can earn up to $450!

Dads can do hair. And a lot of other cool things.

HERO Dads can help you strengthen your relationship with your children and build your family's financial security. And best of all, it's FREE.

Are you or someone you know 18 or older? A Non-Custodial Parent with a child younger than 24? Trying to improve your parenting skills? Unemployed or looking for a better job? BronxWorks and Montefiore have partnered for HERO Dads! Go to https://bronxworks.org/HERO for more information or text “HERO” to 917.886.2512.

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