



The
BronxWorks
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Newsletter

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BronxWorks CAFE Program Helps Students Explore Future Education Opportunities

As a Bronx-based organization, a key part of the BronxWorks mission is to provide services that will help break the cycle of poverty within our communities. We offer an array of programs to support the children and youth of the Bronx starting at preschool and running all the way through high school, post-high school and young adulthood. BronxWorks is invested in every stage of our participants' education and has recently expanded our post-high school and college preparation programming in the Center for Achieving Future Education (CAFE).

BronxWorks CAFE is a program that has helped young people and their families for nearly twenty years with a critical life stage: the transition from high school and/or HSE completion to college. CAFE helps students explore higher education and post-high school opportunities and prepare for their college career. The program provides one-on-one college counseling, SAT prep classes, assistance with college and trade school applications, assistance navigating financial aid and scholarships, college tours and fairs, a variety of workshops covering all aspects of the college application and transition process, and college retention and support services. CAFE works with students throughout the Bronx and other boroughs and shares strong partnerships with Bronx area high schools including Frederick Douglass Academy III, Theatre Arts Production Company School (TAPCo), Validus Preparatory Academy, and Bronx School for Law, Government & Justice (LGJ).



BronxWorks CAFE students at a campus tour at Alfred University in Alfred, NY.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, CAFE, much like other BronxWorks programs, shifted to virtual programming. Now as the Bronx recovers, CAFE has doubled-down on college and post-high school education opportunities as a way to make generational impact for the students and families of the program. CAFE expanded its programming to include a focus on college retention. Funded through the Robin Hood Foundation, CAFE added three College Success Advisors to provide ongoing engagement and support to participants during their college journeys. Now the BronxWorks CAFE team has a total of eight staff working with over 200 students each year throughout their college exploration, application, transition, and matriculation phases.

“I feel extremely proud of the program and the additions we’ve made,” says Program Coordinator, Angela Rodriguez de Jesus. “A lot of our staff have their own college stories or are the first in their families to attend college and that’s why they are passionate about the work we do.”

CAFE also launched its Summer Bridge program in July 2022, working to prepare first-time college-bound students ages 17-24 with the skills required to be a successful student in college. The program assigns each participant with a designated College Success Advisor that guides them before and during their transition to college, addressing any challenges including academics, financial aid, and navigating campus resources and on-campus living. Students receive one-on-one retention assistance and life skill workshops and, after completing the coursework, a stipend for book and transportation.



BronxWorks CAFE students from Theatre Arts Production Company School show off their college tees.

“Our students are awesome and more motivated than ever. They want to hear about all of their opportunities. They are referring their friends to CAFE. They’re attending college tours and trips again. As a group, we held a graduation ceremony celebrating the seniors that are attending college in the coming fall semester.”

All of that work has already made a difference for the participants of CAFE. From the Fall 2021 cohort, 88 of the 120 students remained enrolled for a second year of college. And the recent graduating cohort for Fall 2022 includes acceptances and enrollments to Boston University; Brandeis University; Columbia; Cornell; Fordham; Ithaca College; St. Joseph’s College; Yale; several Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HCBUs) including Howard University, Morehouse College, Spelman College, and Lincoln University; as well as the full suite of CUNY and SUNY schools.

We spoke with two recent graduating participants about their college journey and how the CAFE program helped them make decisions and prepare for it.

Emely M. Is Attending Columbia University

Emely’s family came to the United



States from Mexico when she was six years old and she has lived in the South Bronx ever since. She and her younger sister were raised in a single-parent household by her mother. Emely attended Bronx LGJ High School where she connected with the BronxWorks CAFE Program in the tenth grade.

“I always knew I wanted to go to college but I didn’t know where to start or look. CAFE helped me engage with my peer mentors and showed me what college would be like.”

BronxWorks CAFE mentors came to Emely’s class twice a month to present about college opportunities, answer student questions, and distribute resources and information. As she progressed through high school, Emely worked with CAFE staff to set her college goals and ultimately applied to 19 colleges, including CUNY and SUNY schools, University of Rochester, Hamilton College, and Columbia University. Emely was accepted by a number of her schools and decided to enroll at Columbia University for the Fall 2022 semester.

“My first true acceptance was to Hamilton College. I got really excited and really emotional. That’s when it set in that I was about to go away. It will be the first time moving out of my mom’s house.”

Emely has spent the past summer in Columbia University’s Academy Success Program, a three-week program designed to help first-time college-bound students adjust to the academic rigor and on-campus lifestyle. She is planning to study biochemistry with a pre-health concentration and to one day apply to dentistry school to become an orthodontist.

“My motivation is to help my family get out of poverty and to break the life cycle that my parents lived through. Coming here from Mexico has shown me the opportunities I have here and the support that I’ve received from CAFE and other BronxWorks programs to succeed. I hope that other students can see that as well. Like my sister, she is seeing how if I can do it she can do it too, and she’s really putting her foot in.”

Jared M. Is Attending Alfred University



Jared (left above) was born and raised in the Kingsbridge area of the Bronx. He spent much of his childhood at the St. James Recreation Center and as he got older he also worked there as a mentor, helping the younger kids with their homework and connecting with them through shared experiences. “My parents separated when I was 13 or 14,” Jared says, “I wasn’t prepared for that and it set me back mentally, but I was also able to use that experience to connect with other kids going through the same thing.” For all of his community service, Jared received a Rising Star Award from the Bronx Parks Department. At home, it’s largely the same way. He is the middle child of six siblings and excels in his role of holding the family together.

Jared attended BronxWorks afterschool programs when he was in middle school, and then reconnected with BronxWorks and the CAFE program while he was at the Theatre Arts Production Company High School (TAPCo).

“CAFE helped me out a lot. Angela and Elsie were my College Advisors who guided me in high school. At the beginning I didn’t want to go to college at all, but when I decided I wanted to, Elsie sat beside me and helped me fill out my application.”

Ultimately, Jared applied and was accepted to Alfred University. He spent the past summer in the Alfred University Summer Program where he stayed on campus, took classes, and started his work study. He is saving money to purchase his own car and maintain his financial freedom.

“I came up here early and at first I was scared. I missed my family and friends so much. It was a big transition for me. But I’m doing better now. I’m already connecting with people and faculty, and making friends. As soon as school starts, I’m hitting the ground running. I can’t wait to start honestly.”

Even though he has graduated from the CAFE Program, Jared says he still gets emails from Elsie on scholarship information and college resources. Jared plans to study psychology and communications. He wants to become a psych therapist and a motivational speaker one day, building off his earlier experience as a mentor at St. James Rec Center and taking after his grandfather who is a deacon.

Staff Profile: Angela Rodriguez de Jesus

Angela Rodriguez de Jesus is the Program Coordinator for the BronxWorks Center for Achieving Future Education (CAFE) Program. Angela was born in the Dominican Republic and came to the United States when she was seven years old. Like many families, Angela's came to seek more opportunities, specifically education opportunities, for her and her siblings. It is a story that is so common to the children that grow up in the Bronx, a story that Angela shares with many of her participants in the CAFE Program.



Angela Rodriguez de Jesus,
Program Coordinator,
Center for Achieving Future Education
(CAFE)

Angela earned her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology with a Minor in Sociology from City College, and she is currently pursuing her Master's Degree in School Counseling from Lehman College. She joined BronxWorks in May 2019 as an Education Specialist for the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). At the end of the Summer term, Angela joined the CAFE Program as a College Advisor and was promoted to Program Coordinator in June 2021.

“We spend so much of our life in school and we spend that time building our character and mentality through the people we meet. For me, that became the setting where I wanted to make an impact and be one of those positive examples for young people growing up today.”

During her tenure with the CAFE Program, Angela worked through the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many programs, CAFE paused all in-person programming and switched to a remote and digital curriculum. Angela and one other College Advisor provided all of the workshops to a cohort of 50 participants in 2020. As the pandemic subsided, Angela helped CAFE expand its programming and staff, adding three College Advisors to focus on retention. As the Program Coordinator, she now supervises a team of eight staff working with over 200 enrolled participants year-round.

“I was always interested in why people do certain things. In my work, I am able to mesh education and psychology and help people explore their future selves and that's what I love about CAFE.”

Now in her work preparing students for future education opportunities, Angela is bringing her own story around full-circle. The common ground that she shares with her participants is part of what makes her so effective as a counselor and advisor. Participants can relate to her story and the expectations that she feels as an immigrant and as one of the first members of her family to go to college.

Outside of work, Angela likes to sing karaoke with her friends. Between work and school, she does strength training and also enjoys cooking new recipes from different countries.

BronxWorks Celebrates the End of Summer

For BronxWorks programs, the end of the Summer means more than just the return of the Fall and the school year. It also means our end of summer trips, and after a couple of summers without them, you can bet our participants were excited. In this spotlight, we share two trips for BronxWorks participants at different ends of the age spectrum.

BronxWorks Older Adult Centers Visit Holiday Hill Park



Seniors from BronxWorks programs and Older Adult Centers visited Holiday Hill Park in Prospect, CT on August 25 for an end-of-summer celebration! Over 250 BronxWorks seniors enjoyed a number of activities, including dancing, bingo, boating, and the big pool! Breakfast, lunch, dessert, and snacks were provided during the all-day party. BronxWorks seniors were joined by other seniors from across NYC. We had such a wonderful day celebrating with our seniors!

BronxWorks Family Shelters Visit DreamWorks Water Park at American Dream Mall



For their first big trip since the COVID-19 pandemic, the BronxWorks Family Residences celebrated the end of the 2022 Summer by making a splash at the DreamWorks Water Park at the American Dream Mall in New Jersey. The trip was funded through donations raised by our amazing riders in this year's TD Five Boro Bike Tour. Over a dozen families and staff from all three BronxWorks Family Residences enjoyed time at the water park followed by lunch and activities in the mall. Thank you to our amazing volunteer riders, fundraisers, and everyone who donated to make this trip happen!

Did You Know? New Programs Opening At The Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center



BronxWorks is excited to open two new programs at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center at 1130 Grand Concourse. A new Older Adult Center will provide case management assistance, food pantry services, daily activities and recreation, trips, and meals to 100 seniors from the surrounding community.

CMCC is also introducing Saturday programming to provide GED/HSE preparation classes, health and wellness workshops, financial counseling, maternal and infant health programs, and more for adults ages 25 and older. The Saturday

programming will include on-site childcare services to encourage parents to participate in the services and bring their children. Breakfast and lunch is provided to all participants.

Photo Essay



Backpack Giveaway For New Kindergartners

The BronxWorks Early Childhood Learning Center hosted a special event for the children that moved on to Kindergarten this month. The students were presented with backpacks stuffed with school supplies courtesy of La Escuelita de Sofia preschool in Riverdale. Children had the chance to pick out their own backpacks with their parents. Families were also treated to lunch and some other donated goods, including diapers, books, socks, and clothes donated by other organizations and members of the community.



BronxWorks Visits Dorney Park

Older youth participants from our Cornerstone programs took an end-of-summer trip to Dorney Park in Allentown, PA this year. Participants had a blast soaking in the sun on the lazy river and going down the many water slides at the park. This was the first BronxWorks trip to a water park in many years!



Twin Parks West Family Day

The BronxWorks Twin Parks West Community Services Workforce Development

Program took part in the Twin Parks West Family Day, hosted by the Tenant's Association. The event at the recently-opened playground and courtyard featured food prepared by staff members and activities provided by the Police Activities League. Families also enjoyed a raffle, a comedy show, and live music. Roughly 140 residents attended the event.



Cornerstone Participants At New York Giants

Thanks to a partnership with United Way, BronxWorks participants from our Cornerstone programs got to take in a preseason New York Giants game against the Cincinnati Bengals at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey! We are so thankful for these partnerships that give our youth participants great and unforgettable experiences like these!



Melrose Houses Tenant Association Pantry Donation

Thanks to a generous donation from the Melrose Houses Tenant Association's board of directors, the BronxWorks Classic Cornerstone Community Center held a Food Distribution event for NYCHA residents and the surrounding community. Participants received bags of canned goods and other pantry staples. Food pantries continue to be a lifeline for many in the Bronx.



BronxWorks Annual All-Staff Picnic

On August 26, BronxWorks held our Annual All-Staff Picnic at Tibbetts Brook State Park in Yonkers, NY. The picnic is a welcome tradition every year, bringing hundreds of staff together for a chance to enjoy each other's company. Staff indulged in hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken, rice, and much more! Children of all ages had fun activities to take part in, including giant Connect 4, face painting, and Bean Bag Toss. Many staff members explored the park, including the pool and small water park at the park. [See more pictures here!](#)

Announcements

Save The Date



Save the date!

December 7, 2022

A special BronxWorks event at the Hard Rock Cafe at Yankee Stadium.

More details to come!

Help Support BronxWorks



OFFICIAL CHARITY PARTNER
TCS NEW YORK CITY MARATHON

BronxWorks is an official charity partner of the TCS New York City Marathon. Our amazing #TeamBronxWorks runners are supporting our Children & Youth programs this year! Click below to support our #TeamBronxWorks runners!

SUPPORT OUR RUNNERS

There are many other 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

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