



The  
BronxWorks  
January 2023  
Newsletter



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## FEATURED STORY

**BronxWorks Saturday Programming at the**

# Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center

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This year, BronxWorks embarked on a new initiative to provide programming on Saturdays at our Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center. The programming is specifically designed to engage adult learners, parents, and in particular, mothers from our community who may be unable to attend traditional programs during the work week. A collaboration between our Workforce Development Department, Community Health Programs, and Children and Youth Department, the Saturday Programming features Adult Basic Education and GED prep classes, Maternal Self-Care and Infant Health workshops, free on-site childcare, as well as breakfast and lunch for all participants.



Paola Hernandez, Program Specialist for the Community Health Programs leads a body image workshop.

In our first year of the program, we are offering four twelve-week cycles, one cycle per season. The first cycle kicked-off in the Fall of 2022. The second cycle will run through the Winter, ending in February 2023, followed by a Spring cycle and a Summer cycle this year. Participants can enroll at the start of each cycle and continue through as many cycles as they wish or need.

## Focus Groups

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As a part of our preparation to open the Saturday Programming, BronxWorks engaged members of our communities in a series of focus groups to help determine the most requested needs from prospective participants. Throughout the Fall, BronxWorks Community Health Staff implemented five focus groups engaging adults with children. Questions were asked in both English and Spanish and focused on the groups' immediate needs as well as their self-care habits and their goals. Based on the results from these focus groups, we confirmed the key areas for the Saturday curriculum to be Adult Education, GED preparation and support, ESOL, employment assistance, maternal self-care and infant health, and childcare services.

# Adult Education

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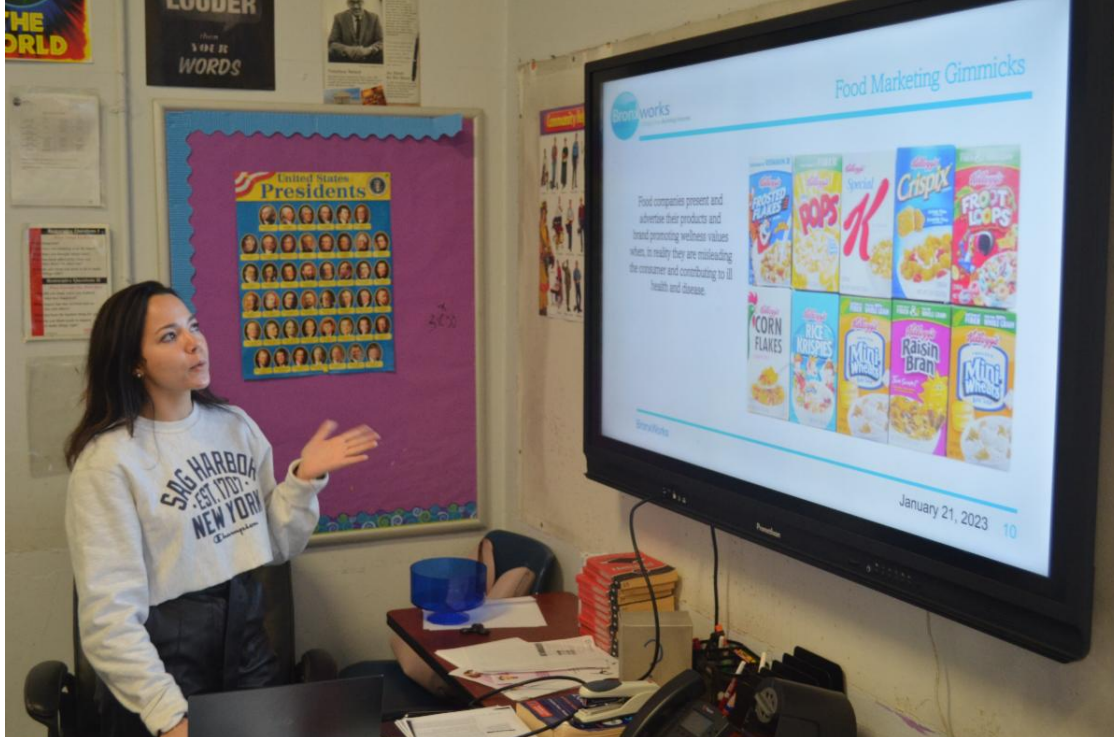
James Dunn, Assistant Program Director for EXCEL Adult Literacy works with a group of adult learners.

Adult Education classes are provided by our Workforce Development Department, which has a long history of helping adult learners achieve the necessary literacy skills to attain their GED. Adult Education Instructors teach reading and writing, mathematics, social studies, and science to each cohort. Students engage with the coursework and in discussions with one another during classes. The program also teaches effective strategies for mastering an academic curriculum that will prepare participants to earn their GED. Classes are offered between 9:30am until 1:00pm during each Saturday session, with additional tutoring and professional development workshops offered from 1:30pm to 2:30pm. During these optional workshops, participants can learn skills such as preparing a resume or cover letter to help them seek employment or apply for additional education opportunities.

## Maternal Self-care and Infant Health

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Maternal Self-Care and Infant Health workshops include food and nutrition education.

Expanding on the BronxWorks Maternal and Infant Health Program, Saturday Maternal Self-Care and Infant Health curriculum includes Nutrition 101, MyPlate: Basic Dietary Guidelines, diabetes education, cooking classes, recreational activities, as well as positive body image, stress management, safe sleep, and breastfeeding workshops. The goal of the overall program is to increase health equity and education for women and mothers to improve birth outcomes in the Bronx, and the expansion to Saturday encourages working mothers to participate with these important topics and resources.

**“Our hope is that through a combination of nutrition education, wellness, relaxation, and self-care activities, mothers will be empowered to prioritize their own health, increase their confidence, decrease their stress, and model healthy behaviors for their families.” – Rachel Gill, Program Director, Community Health Programs.**

## Childcare Services

The final key component of the Saturday Programming is the availability of on-site childcare services. BronxWorks Childcare Associates are available to work with children from 6 months of age up to 12 years. Our childcare services go beyond simply entertaining the children, incorporating age-appropriate activities and mirroring some lessons offered to mothers through the Maternal Self-Care services. The children are split into three groups according to their age. Activities such as yoga, nutrition education, and stress management education will be offered in an accessible manner for the targeted age groups, allowing parents and children to bond over similar activities and increases the likelihood that self-care activities become a part of these families' daily routines.



BronxWorks Childcare Associates incorporate arts and crafts into the Saturday lessons.

**“We wanted to reach participants who would benefit from a highly-curated weekend curriculum. We wanted to reach adult learners, parents, and mothers with young children,” says Eileen Torres, Executive Director of BronxWorks. “The provision of childcare during our Saturday sessions is essential to remove a common barrier to self-improvement for many parents, and allows our participants to thrive within this learning environment.”**

Participants and staff alike have been enjoying the new Saturday Programming. As we approach the end of the second cycle, we continue to receive feedback from participants on how we can expand the weekend services to include even more recreational activities, guest speakers, and more.



## STAFF PROFILE

### **Ailsha Sepulveda, Program Coordinator, Community Health Programs**

BronxWorks Community Health Programs are leading some interesting new initiatives, and Ailsha Sepulveda, Program Coordinator for CHP, is at the heart of many of them. From

infant mortality reduction, to Teen Battle Chef, to intergenerational programming, participatory budgeting, leading focus groups, and more, Ailsha supports many of the ways BronxWorks is working to improve health outcomes in our communities.



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**“The most important thing is to create a safe environment through our very first interactions and let our participants share their stories.”**

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Ailsha was born and raised in the Bronx. She attended the Bronx Dance Academy for middle school and the Bronx Theater High School. Ailsha earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Forensic Psychology with a minor in Anthropology from John Jay College. She also earned her Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice, with a dual specialization in crime and deviance and policing administration, from John Jay.



Ailsha (left) teaching a Maternal & Infant Health Workshop at BronxWorks.

Ailsha joined BronxWorks in 2018 as a Case Manager in an eviction prevention program, and in 2019 she joined the Community Health Programs. As the Program Coordinator for CHP, Ailsha has her hand in almost everything the team is doing. As a part of the Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative, Ailsha helps to create and facilitate the curriculum of infant and maternal health workshops. She also leads our Intergenerational Programming that brings together our youth participants and seniors from our older adult centers for shared learning and activities. She helps



organize Teen Battle Chef for students in our afterschool and summer programs to learn culinary skills, how to utilize the food in their pantry, explore different cuisines, create healthier recipes, and compete in cooking competitions against their peers.

This year, as BronxWorks opened new programming on Saturdays at our Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center, Ailsha was integral in facilitating early focus groups to determine the most needed resources and curriculum. Additionally, this year BronxWorks became a borough partner in the first ever city-wide Participatory Budgeting process. Ailsha has been our community lead and point of contact through the first two phases of the process, responsible for community outreach and engagement, facilitating conversations and idea generation, and working with other partners to vet and develop ideas, and eventually place them onto a public ballot for New York City residents to decide on how to utilize public funding.

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**“Whenever I am speaking with members of our community, I always keep in mind that we are all unique in our own way, and that comes through in how people present themselves and in how we communicate.”**

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In her work with the community, Ailsha draws heavily on her psychology coursework from her undergraduate and Master’s degrees. She uses techniques that help her better engage with members of the community and effectively convey valuable information to participants of all ages.

Outside of work, Ailsha enjoys going to the gym and hanging out with family. She is a life-long dancer. She hopes to do more traveling and creating new memories.

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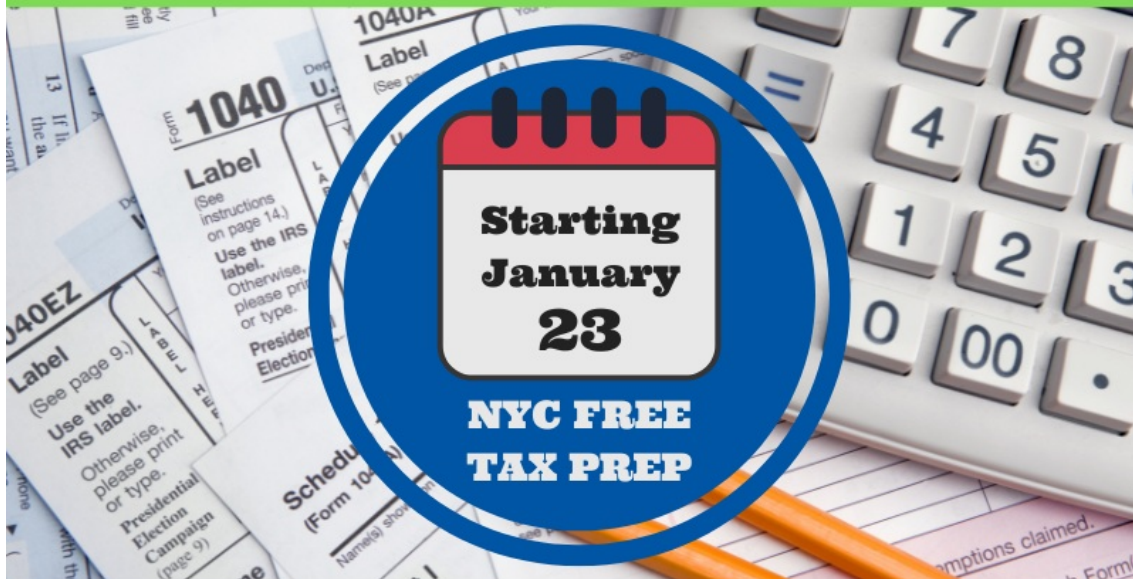


**DID YOU KNOW**

**BronxWorks is Once Again Offering Free Tax Preparation Services**

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# TAX SEASON IS HERE!



**Contact: Taxes@bronxworks.org**

**Elianny Santana: 646.761.4552**

**Angelina Ramos: 347.862.9374**



BronxWorks is here to help with the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and the Bronx-Promote Earned Income Tax Credit to Support At-Risk Children (Bronx-PEACH) program. Bronx-PEACH is a collaboration between Montefiore Health System and BronxWorks that assists qualified individuals in the northern Bronx in filing their taxes and applying for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

To easily book an appointment online, go to:

<https://bronxworkstaxes.as.me/Taxtime>.

For any other inquiries, call 347.896.5044 or email [TAXES@bronxworks.org](mailto:TAXES@bronxworks.org).

Appointments start January 23.

Learn more about BronxWorks VITA and Bronx-PEACH at

<https://bronxworks.org/our-services/workforce-development/tax-financial-services/>.



## PHOTO ESSAY





## Brielle Grace Foundation Clothing Donation

Thank you to Joe & Dawn Fortis and the Brielle Grace Breast Cancer Foundation for coordinating and delivering an enormous donation of brand-new clothing and shoes to BronxWorks! Receiving this donation was a great way to kick off the new year! We shared the clothing & shoes with BronxWorks children, families, adults, and seniors throughout the agency.



## FDNY Hispanic Society Throws Holiday Party For Cornerstones

The Hispanic Society of FDNY provided new toys and gifts to hundreds of children at BronxWorks Cornerstone programs. The department also brought mascots Hot



Dog and Siren to greet the children and take pictures. Thank you, once again, to the FDNY and all who contributed toys and gifts this holiday season to BronxWorks participants of all ages!



BronxWorks Digital and Content Manager Aaron Cipollina stands with one of four pallets of diapers and baby wipes donated by Baby2Baby

## **Baby2Baby Diapers Donation**

Baby2Baby is a non-profit that provides children living in poverty with diapers, clothing, and all the basic necessities that every child deserves. Since late 2020, Baby2Baby has donated thousands of boxes of diapers and baby wipes to BronxWorks families, including a large donation this month. Diapers are one of the most-requested items for our Bronx neighbors. The donation of nearly 1,000 packages of diapers in a variety of sizes provides immeasurable assistance to participants with young children. We are so thankful for this incredible donation.



## **Hot Meals Now Being Served at Twin Parks West Older Adult Center**

The BronxWorks Twin Parks West Older Adult Center is pleased to now



## **St. Mary's Cornerstone Community Center Youth Council Bake Sale**

The Youth Council at the BronxWorks Saint Mary's Cornerstone Community

offer daily hot lunches for its participants. As is with our other Older Adult Centers, seniors are asked to make a \$1 donation, but no senior will be denied a meal if they are not able to give a contribution. Since it opened last year, local older adults have flocked to and enjoyed the community center and the different events it has to offer.

[Learn more about our six Older Adult Centers.](#)

Center hosted a bake sale to raise extra money for activities during the year. Staff sliced up a cake and made cupcakes and sold them for \$1. Our high school intern at the center, Josyah (center), came up with the idea to have a bake sale along with the Youth Council. Josyah, now 17, has attended the program for six years and interns with BronxWorks four nights a week, helping with student dismissal and maintenance.



### **BronxWorks MSTI High School Fair**

The BronxWorks Middle School to High School Transition Initiative (MSTI) program held its first High School Fair. Eighth graders from BronxWorks after-school programs at South Bronx Preparatory School, Mott Haven Charter School, and the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center came together to learn about the high school application process in New York City, take virtual tours of local high schools, and learn other general information about the sometimes-difficult transition to high school. Representatives from New Visions Humanities, Frederick Douglass Academy III, and Urban Dove High Schools spoke with the adolescents and answered questions.



**WAYS TO SUPPORT**





## Donate to the BronxWorks Emergency Fund

and provide critical assistance to children, individuals, and families in need.

<https://bronxworks.org/give2022>

There are many other ways you can support BronxWorks.

- Make a contribution. [Donate Now!](#)
- Purchase essential items for our participants from our [Amazon Wishlist](#).
- Become an early sponsor of the [BronxWorks 50th Anniversary Gala!](#)
- Join or Support #TeamBronxWorks at the [2023 TD Five Boro Bike Tour!](#)

**Visit our Website**

**Save the Date!**

## The BronxWorks 50th Anniversary Gala

**50**  
YEARS



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BronxWorks 50th Anniversary Gala

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