



The  
BronxWorks  
February 2023  
Newsletter



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## FEATURED STORY

## BronxWorks Joined by Volunteers for the 2023 New York City HOPE Count

Every year, the Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) takes place at the end of January to estimate the number of unsheltered individuals in New York City. For the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic, HOPE 2023 invited volunteers to once again help canvass areas across the city for individuals who are experiencing street homelessness.

Prior to the pandemic, HOPE volunteers were essential to completing the surveying of area maps throughout each of boroughs during the night of the count. To protect volunteers and limit the spread of COVID-19, the past two previous HOPE Counts were coordinated exclusively by borough homeless outreach providers. In our case, BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) was solely responsible for surveying all the area maps for the Bronx during those HOPE Counts, conducting the counts over three nights in 2022 and two nights 2021 to accommodate for the reduced number of counters.



Allyce Morrissey, Homeless Outreach Team Assistant Program Director, leading a group meeting of Outreach Workers and BronxWorks volunteers.

Planning for this year's HOPE Count started in October 2022. BronxWorks and other homeless service providers across the city met with the New York City Department of Social Services Office of Research and Policy Innovation to coordinate the city-wide survey. For the first time, the 2023 HOPE Count utilized a hybrid model of both traditional volunteers and homeless outreach teams. In previous HOPE Counts before the pandemic, the Bronx had five sites hosting HOPE volunteers while BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team helped support the volunteer operations. This year, the City re-opened two volunteer sites in the



Bronx at Hostos Community College and Lehman College. Volunteers from these two sites covered surveys for many of the area maps in the South and Northwest Bronx, while BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team and staff volunteers covered surveys for the remaining 130 area maps throughout the Bronx.



BronxWorks Homeless Outreach Team and volunteers meet before the HOPE Count.

Juan Rivera, Assistant Department Director of Adult Homeless Services, helped oversee the operation in the Bronx. He was joined by Homeless Outreach Team members, including Issa Asiedo, Homeless Outreach Team Outreach Coordinator, and Allyce Morrissey, Homeless Outreach Team Assistant Program Director. As always, staff from different BronxWorks departments and programs volunteered to join members of the Homeless Outreach Team. A total of 46 BronxWorks staff formed 22 teams utilizing 15 agency vehicles to canvas the 130 Bronx area maps. With the hybrid model of volunteers and homeless outreach teams, this year's HOPE Count was once again completed in one night, from 11pm until 3am, allowing our teams to capture a more accurate representation of the homeless population on the street at a given time.



During the night surveying the Bronx, the teams came across one homeless individual who accepted transportation to the BronxWorks Living Room Drop-in Center.

Juan is a veteran of the HOPE Count since 2008. Issa has gone on over 15 HOPE Counts, and Allyce is already on her third. Many other BronxWorks volunteers have notched multiple HOPE Counts in their careers, but others, like Aaron Cipollina, our Digital and Content Manager, joined for the first time. We spoke with the four of them to explain why the HOPE Count is so important.

**Juan:** The goal is to hopefully capture the work we are doing. We plan for the HOPE Count to be on one of the coldest nights of the year so we can get a sense of who is out on the street and who is not. It's also important from the public perspective for the community to get involved and volunteer. It gives people one night of understanding what people are going through on the street.

**Issa:** I always look at it as a reflection of the work we are doing and the resources that we have over the years. It's important for us to go out and see for ourselves how the situation has changed compared to previous years and to personally reflect on this work.

**Allyce:** The results of the HOPE Count help the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to allocate funding to services, so it is important for us to be as thorough and accurate as possible. It's also important for the conversations we have between volunteers and people on the street, conversations that help us see why some people don't want to go into shelters.

**Aaron:** I wanted to capture images of the people who are working and volunteering on that night. It's a part that a lot of people don't get to see, that Homeless Outreach really is working at all hours. And for me, working in Development and not in direct services, it

was a rewarding experience to join people like Issa who have been doing this for so long and getting their perspective.

Now with the HOPE Count complete, the raw data from the night will be used to extrapolate official results that are expected later in April or May.



## Marina Weiss, Program Coordinator, Park Haven Supportive Housing

In much the same way that the people who come to work for BronxWorks select for themselves the higher needs of purpose and mission, young people choose to join the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC). Jesuit Volunteers commit a year to provide services and live in local communities, followed often by a lifetime dedicated to building a more just and equitable world. For many years, BronxWorks has shared a partnership with JVC that has brought some of the most dedicated, long-standing, and mission-driven staff members to the benefit of our programs and participants.



Like her predecessors, Marina Weiss started at BronxWorks as a JV, and like many of them, her year in the Corps was just the beginning. Marina grew up in California, moving to Washington DC to attend Georgetown University as an undergrad. She majored in Global Health and Urban Studies and graduated with her Bachelor's Degree in 2018. Right out of college, Marina joined JVC who sponsored her employment at BronxWorks as well as her move to New York City. During her first year, she lived in the JVC house in Harlem with eight other volunteers.

At BronxWorks, she got her start as a Program Specialist with the Community Health Programs, where she helped organize programming, like Teen Battle Chef, community gardens, food justice classes with our Cornerstone participants, and of course, the yearly farm stands. In 2019, after completing her year as a Jesuit Volunteer, Marina stayed at BronxWorks to join the newly-opened Cooper Gardens Supportive Housing Program as a Case Manager. At Cooper Gardens, Marina helped individuals and families move from the shelter system into permanent housing and provided them with the resources and support



they may need to remain stably-housed. In 2021, Marina would take her experience from Cooper Gardens to another brand new supportive housing program as one of the first three staff members at Park Haven.

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**“Apartment viewings are one of my favorite parts of the job – being there for people’s first viewing, seeing how they can envision a future for themselves and their families in their permanent home.”**

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Now, Marina is the Program Coordinator at Park Haven. While no longer a Case Manager, Marina continues to carry a caseload of 4 adults and 2 families. She focuses more on administrative and programmatic functions, like collecting data and reporting on impact to funders; organizing onsite activities and events, holidays and celebrations, knitting, group work, peer led meetings; running the medication monitoring program, training staff in medication monitoring; collaborating with a team of 7 staff to support over 50 adults and families with children. It goes on.

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**“I love that the job is building a community with people. The people we work with have all experienced homelessness – that is the only thing they share in common – but in every other way, they come from different backgrounds. I learn a lot from my coworkers, but also from the clients. We all learn a lot from each other.”**

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For the second time in New York City, Marina has volunteered for the HOPE Count, on top of volunteering three times for the HOPE Count in Washington DC. She thinks it is important that the data from the HOPE Count help us best determine what resources are needed to support the people living on the street. Also this year, Marina will be riding for a second time in support of BronxWorks in the TD Bank Five Boro Bike Tour in May. She is also in her fourth semester toward her Master’s Degree in Social Work from Columbia University. Outside of work, Marina is learning to knit. She spends a lot of time with friends and her cats, Zora and Neale. And she bikes everywhere, including to and from work, and on the weekends for exercise.



**BronxWorks and the New York Liberty Hosted a Basketball Clinic for Middle School Girls**



For National Girls And Women In Sports Day, BronxWorks teamed up with the New York Liberty to conduct a basketball clinic for dozens of our middle school girls. Did you know that girls who participate in sports in school are more likely to have academic success, graduate from college, and land leadership positions later in life? The 2021 WNBA MVP and New York Liberty Center, Jonquel Jones led our students in drills and shared inspiring stories from her life and career. BronxWorks is so thankful to the New York Liberty and Jonquel Jones for their amazing partnership.

To see press coverage of the basketball clinic, click the links below:

[Spectrum News NY1](#)  
[NY1 Noticias \(en Espanol\)](#)  
[Bronx Times](#)  
[PIX 11](#)





## Black History Month Celebration at BronxWorks Morris Innovative Older Adult Center

With February being Black History Month, BronxWorks older adults and Older Adult Center staff enjoyed a Black History Month Celebration event. Co-organized by longtime participant Sallie Smith (top left), Older Adults came together and learned about Black History by recognizing important Black historical figures like Shirley Chisholm and Harriet Tubman, read selections by poets like Maya Angelou, and sang gospel songs. The event started with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance as well as the singing of the U.S. National Anthem and the Black National Anthem, "Life Every Voice And Sing".





## **BronxWorks Older Adults Celebrate Dominican Heritage Month**

January 21 - February 27 is Dominican Heritage Month! The BronxWorks Morris Innovative Older Adult Center and BronxWorks Heights Older Adult Center came together this month to also celebrate Dominican Heritage. Our older adults discussed and learned about Dominican culture and history, including a dance presentation and light refreshments. New York City Council Member Pierina Sanchez (top right in center) also joined in on the festivities and spoke to the seniors. A high percentage of our older adults either were born in the Dominican Republic or have Dominican ancestry, and this event was a wonderful way to celebrate the rich Dominican heritage in the communities we serve.



### Valentine's Day Family Event At Park Haven

Residents and families in the Park Haven Supportive Housing complex gathered in the Park Haven community room for a fun-filled afternoon to celebrate Valentine's Day! Our supportive housing programs regularly hold holiday events for the residents of the building. Families came and played games like checkers and Jenga, did fun Valentine's-themed activities, and enjoyed light refreshments.



### Valentine's Day Event at Soundview OAC

Older adults at the BronxWorks Soundview Older Adult Center also celebrated Valentine's Day together. Older adults dressed in red, white, and pink and enjoyed music, dancing, and light refreshments. Many of our participants took pictures in front of the Valentine's backdrop in the community room.



### 720 Tiffany Street Office Grand Opening

BronxWorks celebrated the opening of a Benefit Access office at 720 Tiffany Street. The program welcomed formerly homeless families to their new homes in the building through a celebration in the community room. The celebration was an introduction to the service offerings of BronxWorks and the on-site Case Manager, Diana Cuevas.



### **Tax Services Continue At BronxWorks Workforce Development**

Staff with the BronxWorks Workforce Development department continue to provide free tax preparation services to eligible Bronx residents. Services like these are a lifeline for so many of our neighbors who need help filing their taxes. Our tax preparers also make sure that filers are getting their maximum benefit and applying for tax credits for which they are eligible. We also offer services in multiple languages, including American Sign Language for those who need it!





## Services For Employers Breakfast

BronxWorks Workforce Development hosted local employers at our offices in Mott Haven for a networking breakfast. The BronxWorks Workforce Development Office works with employers in various industry sectors such as construction, healthcare, maintenance, warehouse, transportation, security, administration, retail and food service, and social services. We often partner with these employers to host job fairs and other recruitment events while providing employers with pre-screened candidates for their jobs. [Learn more about these services here.](#)



### Middle School Games Day

Middle school students from BronxWorks programs at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC) and South Bronx Prep came together at CMCC for a games day during the NYC School Mid-Winter Break. Students and staff competed in air hockey, pool, video games, foosball, and musical chairs. We will have more highlights from BronxWorks Mid-Winter Camp activities in the March 2023 Newsletter! Subscribe below!



## Introducing Our Honorees for The BronxWorks 50th Anniversary Gala

[Click here](#) to learn more about our honorees,  
**Douglas Tween and The Monadnock Family of Companies!**

There are many other ways you can support BronxWorks.

- Make a contribution. [Donate Now!](#)
- Become an early sponsor of the [BronxWorks 50th Anniversary Gala!](#)

- Join or Support #TeamBronxWorks at the [2023 TD Five Boro Bike Tour!](#)

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