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YEARS



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FEATURED STORY

Pride Across BronxWorks



BronxWorks Pride Event organized as a collaboration between the LGBTQ+ Committee and the Cornerstone Programs.

Throughout the month of June, BronxWorks programs and staff have been committed to advancing significant conversations around LGBTQ+ representation and issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community. For an organization as large and diverse as BronxWorks, pride is an important opportunity for us to come together, to stand with staff and program participants who are a part of the LGBTQ+ community, to learn from their experiences, and to support them as they challenge our society to recognize and accept LGBTQ+ rights and identities.

LGBTQ+ is an acronym representing the community of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer/Questioning people, with the plus sign encapsulating the other innumerable identities included under the LGBTQ+ umbrella. June is recognized across the country as LGBTQ Pride Month, dedicated to celebrating and supporting the people in the LGBTQ+ community. This month, BronxWorks programs, staff, and participants came together to celebrate Pride by joining the Bronx LGBTQ+ community at Bronx Pride Festival, by hosting a BronxWorks Pride Event at Betances Cornerstone Community Center, and facilitating important conversations through the BronxWorks LGBTQ+ Committee.



Positive Living staff and the BronxWorks Medical Outreach Van join the celebrations at Bronx Pride Festival.

On Saturday, June 17, staff from BronxWorks Positive Living attended Da Bronx Pride Festival hosted by Destination Tomorrow, joining the celebration of the Bronx LGBTQ+ community. The BronxWorks Medical Van was also brought to the Pride Festival, offering free testing for HIV and Hepatitis C, as well as harm reduction resources, and more.

BronxWorks Positive Living is 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 and has remained an important client-centered resource for the community ever since. "One of Positive Living's biggest efforts over the years is advocating on behalf of individuals living with HIV/AIDS in the Bronx, including a subsection of the population that is in the LGBTQ+ community," says Bibi Karim, Department Director. "It has always been important that our program shows our Pride."



On Friday, June 23, a collaboration between BronxWorks Cornerstones and our staff-led LGBTQ+ Committee organized the 2023 BronxWorks Pride Event. One part conference and one part celebration, the BronxWorks Pride Event held at the Betances Cornerstone Community Center shared information and resources about the LGBTQ+ community to members of the Betances Houses and St. Mary's Park communities. Guests were invited to join a party with a live DJ, food and refreshments, and giveaways.

Kiesha Roberts, Assistant Department Director of Cornerstones explains the importance of the event. "Pride at BronxWorks is our way to show the communities of the Bronx that we stand for LGBTQ+ rights," she says. "We have staff and we have participants who identify as LGBTQ+, and we want all of them to know that BronxWorks is a safe and open place for them to be. To do that, we have to also educate our communities on LGBTQ+ issues."



Community partners and BronxWorks programs table at BronxWorks Pride Event.

The event featured BronxWorks programs and staff, including the LGBTQ+ Committee, Betances Cornerstone Community Center, Human Resources Department, Jobs Plus, Fatherhood Center, EXCEL, Positive Living, and SNAP-Ed. Thank you to our community partners who joined the BronxWorks Pride Event, including Ricardo Cosme Ruiz, the Deputy Chief of Community Affairs for the Bronx County District Attorney, as well as representatives from Boricua College, NYC Smoke Free, THRIVE Sunrise Health Center, and the NYC Family Justice Center.

BronxWorks LGBTQ+ Committee



LGBTQ+ Committee Co-Chairs Jairy Padro (top right) and Crisbelly Contreras (bottom right) are joined by SNAP-Ed team members Julio Salcedo (top left) and Karen Valencia (bottom left).

One of the most important initiatives at BronxWorks to ensure the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are practiced and actively promoted is the staff-led LGBTQ+ Committee. The Committee's mission statement is: *The BronxWorks LGBTQ+ Committee is a group of BronxWorks staff, made up of members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies. The Committee's goal is to ensure BronxWorks is an open, welcoming, and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ service recipients, staff, and the community.*

The Committee was started in 2019 and was immediately instrumental in bringing changes that affirm the diverse identities of our staff. One such change was helping the adoption of all-gender restroom signs wherever they are possible. Another was the addition of pronouns to staff email signatures. "Something that may seem as a tiny step as just adding one line to an email signature is actually a huge step in promoting inclusion," says Aaron Cipollina, BronxWorks Digital and Content Manager and Co-Chair of the LGBTQ+ Committee. Aaron, who identifies as a member of the LGBTQ+ community explains why the addition is important. "Introducing ourselves with our pronouns lets any prospective employees or participants know that they are accepted as they are, no matter their gender identity."



LGBTQ+ Committee Co-Chairs Aaron Cipollina (left) and Crisbelly Contreras (right) table at the BronxWorks Pride Event.

Members of the Committee come from programs and departments throughout BronxWorks and include staff who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community and other staff who have joined to learn from and support their colleagues. “I don’t identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community, but I feel that being a Co-Chair is really important to show others that we can hold spaces to talk about LGBTQ+ issues, to learn about them ourselves, to show our support whether we identify as part of the group or not,” says Jairy Padro, BronxWorks SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educator and Co-Chair of the LGBTQ+ Committee.

The strength of the Committee lies in the resolution of its colleagues to support each other in challenging our society to recognize the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. It this goal by fostering conversations at Committee meetings, by creating a space for staff who identify as LGBTQ+ to have their voices, experiences, and aspirations heard, and by serving as a resource for co-workers and allies to learn from the experiences of their LGBTQ+ colleagues. “When I joined the LGBTQ+ Committee, I thought that this was something that is really necessary for staff because there is always more to learn. The conversations we have, it’s a piece of a bigger strategy that we all need to be a part of,” says Crisbelly Contreras, SNAP-Ed Nutrition Assistant and Co-Chair of the LGBTQ+ Committee.

That bigger strategy is underway at BronxWorks within a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) initiative. “DEIB is important work, particularly as it pertains to human services. We need to encompass people from all walks of life, to open the table to our staff and people from the community so that all their voices and perspectives can be heard and contributed to the mission of BronxWorks,” says Felicia Rickett-Samuels, Vice President of Human Resources and DEIB Officer. The initiative will create affinity groups for staff throughout the organization to share experiences and to support one another. It will conduct assessments around language used throughout the organization, and will encourage and incorporate our incredibly diverse staff to help ensure that BronxWorks remains an open and equal workplace.

Within the DEIB initiative, the LGBTQ+ Committee is certain to play a pivotal role leading by example as an organic, entirely voluntary, staff-run group that will continue to promote bi-lateral discourse and mutual understanding for years to come.

If you have questions or wish to join the LGBTQ+ Committee, please email lgbtqcommittee@bronxworks.org.



STAFF PROFILE

Dylan Cahir, Program Developer, Supportive Housing and Care Coordination Department

BronxWorks is proud of our staff who are dedicated to not only providing critical services to our clients and the communities of the Bronx, but also to helping ensure that our diverse identities and backgrounds are represented throughout the organization. In talking to staff, we are always fascinated by their stories, how they each found their way to BronxWorks, and how so many of them find a kindred purpose in the mission of BronxWorks. Dylan's story exemplifies why these aspects of our staff are so important.



Dylan grew up in Rhode Island. He attended Hofstra University, earning his Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, Global Studies, and Italian. After graduating in 2015, Dylan joined AmeriCorps for a year. In 2016, Dylan joined the Peace Corps and spent the following two years teaching English in Morocco. He joined BronxWorks in February 2020 as a Housing Coordinator for the Emergency Department Outreach Team (EDOT) at Lincoln Hospital. The program stationed BronxWorks staff within the emergency departments of partner hospitals to engage homeless individuals and patients in need of housing resources.

In March 2020 after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lincoln Hospital temporarily suspended the EDOT program, restricting access to the hospital for all non-essential programs and services. Dylan and the other team members moved to the Pyramid Safe Haven as stand-in Case Managers for three months until Lincoln Hospital allowed the EDOT program to resume. As one of the original team members, Dylan was pivotal in helping hospital staff and patients better understand the resources that the EDOT program and BronxWorks could provide to the homeless population at Lincoln Hospital.

“It was a lot of outreach, interjecting myself into conversations, explaining the program to staff, and eventually people would start to

remember, oh yeah there's that guy from BronxWorks to help with the homeless patients."

In June 2021, Dylan moved into a different role as the Program Developer for the BronxWorks Supportive Housing and Care Coordination Department. He also enrolled at Hunter College for his Master's Degree in Social Work. In June 2022 Dylan started his social work internship as a Case Manager at the BronxWorks Park Haven Supportive Housing Program. He continues to work as a Program Developer for the Department, and is expecting to graduate with his MSW in August.

Since joining BronxWorks, Dylan has been a member of the agency-wide LGBTQ+ Committee, helping the staff-led group create a space within the organization for staff to safely discuss LGBTQ+ issues and encourage each other to share experiences.

"It's a way to feel more connected to my colleagues who share a part of my identity. BronxWorks is such a large organization, it can feel sometimes that stuff can get lost in the shuffle, but with the Committee, we know there is a mechanism in place to make sure that the LGBTQ community is represented."

At the moment, Dylan's schedule is packed between his job, his social work internship, and working toward completing his MSW. He's looking forward to having time once he graduates to explore new hobbies. He loves to play volleyball recreationally, and is always trying to learn a new language. Dylan shared that he can speak some degree of Arabic, Italian, Spanish, French, German, and Swedish.



DID YOU KNOW

BronxWorks Supports #JustPay



#JustPay Rallies

On May 25, over 500 BronxWorks staff joined with over 5,000 nonprofit human services workers from dozens of organizations for a "Day Without Human Services" #JustPay rally. BronxWorks and other New York City nonprofits closed most of their programs for a day and rallied at City Hall to demand New York City Mayor Eric Adams add a 6.5% COLA (cost of living allowance) and multiyear compensation plan for nonprofit human services workers into the FY24 New York City Budget.

Nonprofit human services workers are among the lowest paid in the city, making about 71% of what government employees make for the same role. The low pay grade is frequently written into the city contracts that fund the programs. The human services contract workforce employs over 80,000 workers and is staffed predominately by workers of color (75%) and women (70%). Women of color constitute 55% of this workforce, and roughly two-thirds of all full-time human services workers had earnings below the City's near-poverty threshold.

Media Coverage:

[PIX 11](#)

[NY Daily News](#)

[Gotham Gazette](#)



On June 22, hundreds of human services workers once again descended on City Hall as City budget negotiations come to a close on July 1. Multiple City Council members, including Speaker Adrienne Adams (bottom right), Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, and Council Member Althea Stevens, joined in calling on Mayor Adams to add the COLA and multiyear plan for nonprofit human services workers into the City budget. The rally followed up an overnight rally (bottom left) where executive directors and executive staff camped out near City Hall all night. BronxWorks Chief Financial Officer Gordon Miller represented BronxWorks.

[Learn more about the #JustPay movement.](#)



PHOTO ESSAY



ECLC Moving Up Ceremony

BronxWorks Early Childhood Learning Center (ECLC) programs celebrated the students moving up into kindergarten with our annual ECLC Moving Up Ceremony. Students processed into the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center gym with their parents and family members cheering them on. Each class also put on a short performance, with one group song at the end. Students then received their preschool diplomas! This is a wonderful tradition that our ECLC staff and families look forward to each year.



Elder Abuse Awareness Month Outreach Event

BronxWorks and NYPD PSA 7 Domestic Violence Unit teamed up to host a resource event recognizing World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on June 15. The purpose of WEAAD is to provide an opportunity for communities around the world to promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect of older persons by raising awareness of the cultural, social, economic and demographic processes affecting elder abuse and neglect.



E. Roberts Moore Seniors Perform Puppet Show

Seniors at E. Roberts Moore Older Adult Center worked with Teatro Círculo, a New York City bilingual theatre company, to put on *abuelito dime tu*, a short comedic play with handmade puppets. Staff and program participants each played different roles and helped to create a set, as well as all puppets used in the performance. The show was performed for other program participants. Seniors had performed

BronxWorks has a dedicated case manager who helps victims of elder abuse in all its forms: physical, emotional, verbal, and financial. Learn more about this program [here](#).

theatrical exercises together and developed the play with Director and Instructor Mariana Buoninconti from Teatro Círculo leading up to their final performance.



BronxWorks Middle School Programs Basketball Tournament

The competitive spirit was alive in the Adolescent After-School programs at BronxWorks! To celebrate the end of the year, teams made of students at the different BronxWorks After-School programs for 6th-8th grade students competed in a basketball tournament at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center. The tournament was brought together students across different BronxWorks programs to teach teamwork. 60 students across four teams competed, with the CMCC Crusaders taking home the title.



BronxWorks Intergenerational Program

The Intergenerational program at BronxWorks wrapped up its first session with a pizza party and awards ceremony. Once a week, the program has brought together seniors from the BronxWorks E. Roberts Moore Older Adult Center and students from the BronxWorks Saint Mary's Park Cornerstone Community Center to complete different activities as one unit. Activities included working on the garden at the Older Adult Center, learning about different neighborhoods in the Bronx and how they've changed over time, and more. All participants received certificates of recognition for their work. Programs like these help to bridge the generational gap in the Bronx by helping young and old find shared interests.



WAYS TO SUPPORT

There are many other ways you can support BronxWorks.

- Make a contribution. [Donate Now!](#)
- Contribute to the Call To Action of the [BronxWorks 50th Anniversary Gala!](#)
- Support #TeamBronxWorks at the [2023 TCS New York City Marathon!](#)

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