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FEATURED STORY

Health & Wellness Across BronxWorks

With a large portfolio of Community Health Programs and a SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program covering the entire borough, BronxWorks is deeply committed to addressing the persistent health challenges in the Bronx. But the expectations of improving health and wellness do not stop with our clients and participants. As a major employer of the Bronx with over a thousand employees, many of whom are a significant part of the community, our commitment must of course extend to our staff and colleagues.

In previous issues of our newsletter, we shared deep dives into our Community Health Programs, SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Program, Farm Stands, and our Saturday Family Wellness Program. In this issue, we will share an update on new community health activities, as well as our internal employee wellness initiatives.



BronxWorks Mott Haven Farm Stand sells fresh fruits and vegetables sourced at local farms.

Community Health Activities



BronxWorks Community Health Program staff setting up the farm stand outside Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center.

BronxWorks Community Health Programs encompass a large set of activities that range from community organizing, operating two seasonal farm stands, at Padre Plaza Park in Mott Haven and at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center (CMCC) at 1130 Grand Concourse, providing a whole curriculum of nutrition education through our SNAP-Ed Program, cooking classes, Teen Battle Chef, food pantries, a commercial kitchen providing hundreds of meals made from scratch every day at dozens of BronxWorks programs and sites, and a dedicated Family Wellness Program on Saturdays, just to name a few. You can read more about this extensive programming in previous issues [here](#).

With a workforce passionate about health and wellness, we are constantly searching for new activities to bring to our communities. We are excited for the official re-opening of the BronxWorks Community Pool at CMCC in the fall. The pool, which has undergone a complete renovation, will offer a suite of aquatics programming for all age groups, including swim lessons, mommy and me classes, water aerobics, and more. In addition to the pool re-opening, BronxWorks Community Health Programs are offering free yoga classes at CMCC on Saturday mornings and Wednesday afternoons starting in August.



(Left) Cross Bronx Preservation Program staff and participants take a group walk through Baychester. (Right) SNAP-Ed group walk with Morris Older Adult Center participants.

Through a mini-grant from Bronx Health REACH, a CDC-funded coalition to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities, the BronxWorks SNAP-Ed Program has started walking groups with participants and staff at different program sites. The grant provides technical assistance from Equity Design, a partner that provides program modeling for physical activities to help transform communities, to help the team design safe walking routes, understand and share metrics, and incorporate strategies and safety plans to ensure the well-being of all participants. Walks are adjusted depending on the age and physical abilities of participants, so they can be designed for any age group and ability level, including seniors and families with young children.

The first group walk took place this month setting out from the BronxWorks Morris Older Adult Center, visiting nearby farm stands and community resources, before looping back. The idea behind the group walks is a train-the-trainer type of activity, where participants can take the experience and organize group walks of their own.


In partnership with the Tremont Health Action Center, the Cross Bronx Preservation Community Services Program, part of the BronxWorks Workforce Development Department and based at Baychester and Murphy Houses NYCHA complexes, also started a walking group to visit nearby farm stands and community partners, espousing the often overlooked but amazing health benefits of simply walking.

BronxWorks Health Committee

The BronxWorks Health Committee is a group of staff members who volunteer and commit their time to support fellow colleagues in pursuing healthier habits by promoting health and wellness initiatives and sharing information and resources. The Chair of the Health Committee rotates every two years and is currently occupied by Andrew Lin, Development Manager. Members of the Health Committee come from throughout BronxWorks and include representation from Community Health Programs, SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education, Access to Benefits, Children &


Youth, Adult Homeless Services, Family Shelters, Training Department, Human Resources, and more.

To build a culture of health and wellness throughout BronxWorks, the Health Committee implemented a number of initiatives. The first initiative is a monthly Health Committee Newsletter shared with all BronxWorks staff, covering a range of topics from exercise and nutrition resources to healthy shopping tips during the holidays, healthy recipes, mental health awareness, employee benefits, and more. With a focus on design and entertainment, the newsletters provide a brief and digestible editorial for staff to enjoy during the work week.



Worksite Wellness at BronxWorks
A monthly newsletter from the Health Committee


February
2023



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LOW VISION AWARENESS



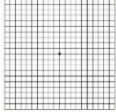
FEBRUARY IS AMD/LOW VISION AWARENESS MONTH

Collaborated by Andrew Lin, Development Manager & Nancy Fullerton, Total Rewards Manager

AMD stands for Age-related Macular Degeneration. It is the leading cause of vision loss for Americans age 50 and older. AMD affects the macula, the central part of the retina, which lines the inside of the eye.

Symptoms of AMD include difficulty seeing in the center of your vision, which is needed for tasks such as driving, reading, recognizing faces, difficulty seeing in dim light, and lines appearing wavy, blurry, or missing.

A simple eye test can help you determine if you are experiencing symptoms of AMD. If the dot at the center of chart is blurry or obscured at all, you should consult an eye doctor as soon as possible.



The key to preventing vision loss is to schedule regular eye exams. It is recommended for people age 60 or older to complete eye exams every one or two years. All employees at BronxWorks are covered for one Optical Exam each calendar year. You do not need to be enrolled in either Health Plan.

IN THIS ISSUE

- AMD/LOW VISION AWARENESS
- STAFF VISION BENEFITS EXPLAINED
- VISION RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU
- MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR STAFF
- HEALTH COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS - JOIN TODAY!

VISION BUY-UP PLAN

- Optical Exam - Once every calendar year
- Lenses - Once every calendar year
- Frames - Once every (2) calendar years
- Contact Lenses - Once every calendar year
- Eyeglasses Frame Allowance: \$130
- Contact Lenses Conventional/Disposable: \$130


VISION BENEFITS EXPLAINED

All employees of BronxWorks are covered by our Optical Exam Only Vision Coverage at no extra cost. You do not have to be enrolled in a BronxWorks Health Plan. If you work at BronxWorks, part-time or full-time, you are covered. There is also a Voluntary Vision Buy-Up option, for a small additional deduction each pay period. Employees may purchase coverage for spouses and dependents for an additional deduction.

Optical Exams are covered once every calendar year for a \$10 copay.

Medical Eye Exams are covered under both Health Plans and are considered a specialist visit requiring a copay:

PPO: \$30 EPO: \$60



OTHER VISION RESOURCES

Whether you are on the Vision Buy-Up Plan or not, there are several other vision resources available to you for discounted eyeglasses and contact lenses. For the most up-to-date employee benefits information, check out the benefits website at: <https://bronxworks.ebenefits.net>

You can often find eyeglasses and contact lenses at a reduced price at online retailers like Warby Parker, Zenni Optical, and Vision Works. Big box retailers like Walmart, Costco, BJ's, and Target may also have deals. Please note that these resources are not associated with our health insurance plans.

The second initiative comes in the form of agency-wide health and wellness challenges for staff to engage with and compete against each other for prizes. This initiative kicked off in the Fall of 2022 with the first ever Health Committee Hydration Challenge, encouraging staff to cut back on sugary drinks and consume more water throughout the day. The Committee created rulebooks, a scoring rubric, and weekly logs for participants to record their hydration. During the 4-week challenge, the Health Committee organized weekly workshops to engage challenge participants with information and resources around hydration and the benefits of drinking water. For the Fall 2022 Hydration Challenge, 106 staff members registered.



Group Walk selfies from staff participants in the BronxWorks Health Committee Summer 2023 Walking Challenge.

Building on that experience in the Fall, the Health Committee organized a Summer 2023 Walking Challenge, called *Bronx Walks*. This challenge implemented a bonus scoring system that encouraged staff to once a day take group walks with their colleagues. During this challenge, 116 staff enrolled for the 4-week challenge, with over 60 participating week to week. Additionally, 58 staff engaged with weekly health workshops, and the bonus scoring encouraged 151 instances of BronxWorks staff taking time to walk with other staff members in a group.

The Health Committee continues to plan future challenges covering a range of topics, like eating healthy, mental health awareness, fitness and exercise, and more. The goal of the challenges is to create experience for our staff, encourage moderate behavior change, engage staff with resources and information, and to expand the reach of the Health Committee to be a staff-driven internal group to increase the well-being of our colleagues.

Upcoming Activities and Events

Through a grant from Lyft and Citi Bike, a collaboration between the BronxWorks Community Health Programs and Health Committee will host four group bike rides utilizing Citi Bikes. The group rides will be offered during the summer and fall and will tour various neighborhoods around the Bronx. The rides will be directed at BronxWorks staff as well as community members. Riders of various skill levels are welcome to join. Citi Bike day passes and helmets will be provided. We are thrilled to work with Lyft and Citi Bike again to promote this healthy alternative mode of transportation in our city.



Group photo of runners from the BronxWorks 5K in 2019.

This coming October, BronxWorks is excited to present our Fall 5K Run/Walk, returning for the first time since 2019. The event will fundraise to help address food insecurity in our communities. Hosted as a collaboration between BronxWorks leadership, Development Department, Leadership Council, Community Health Programs, SNAP-Ed, and the Health Committee, the 5K will be expected to take place once again at St. Mary's Park in Mott Haven on October 21. Registration information will be shared soon.



STAFF PROFILE

Wendy Weil, Director of Clinical Supervision, Family Residences

Ever since Wendy joined BronxWorks in 2011, she has been a stalwart champion of mental health awareness. Wendy, who majored in psychology at Clark University and obtained a Master's Degree in Social Work from Columbia University, espouses the connectivity between our mental, physical, and behavioral health. This extends not only to her clients, many of whom are counted amongst the most vulnerable in our city's population, but more and more to BronxWorks staff. As a member of the BronxWorks Health Committee, Wendy

is the constant voice reminding us to take deep breaths, to stay present, and to not be afraid to ask for help if needed.



Wendy grew up in the suburbs north of New York City, in Westchester County. She credits her upbringing for her passion for social justice. “As a child, my parents always pushed me to think about how I could leave the world a better place than I found it.” When Wendy joined BronxWorks, she did so as a social worker with over a decade of experience. She joined a newly-opened supportive housing program at The Brook as the Assistant Program Director.

“We were about a year into the opening of The Brook, so we had to create the programs that we wanted to do with the clients, like the peer program, like tenant services, creating different committees and organizing staff retreats to bring out the best in our team to provide the best services for our clients.”

At The Brook, Wendy worked with formerly homeless individuals who have moved into permanent supportive housing. Many of the residents of The Brook live with chronic illnesses or serious mental illness and require significant supportive services on-site to help them adopt healthier and more independent lifestyles.

After four and a half years at The Brook, Wendy became the Clinical Supervisor for the Health Home Program, and then in 2019, she became the Director of Clinical Services for the BronxWorks Family Residences. She helps oversee clinical services at three homeless family residences at Jackson Avenue, Nelson Avenue, and Willow Avenue, as well as the BronxWorks Family Sanctuary.

Wendy’s approach to clinical supervision is rooted in her decades of experience as a clinical social worker herself. She helped to build a framework of supervision for aspiring social workers at BronxWorks. Many of the licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) at BronxWorks today received their clinical licenses under Wendy’s supervision. The process of obtaining a clinical license requires thousands of hours of client work and supervision. Due to the work of Wendy and others, BronxWorks is better able to attract and retain social workers and provide them with supervision to offer the highest level of care to our clients.

“I’ve had many opportunities here at BronxWorks to work with so many committed, interesting, hardworking people who just give so much and that is a really wonderful experience.”

Outside of work, Wendy lives for the summer. She loves go to the beach, swim in the ocean, paddle board, and spend time with friends and family. She is looking forward to her annual trip to Cape Cod in August, which she has been going on to for 30 years.



DID YOU KNOW

BronxWorks Farm Stands Are Open From July Through November!



Summer is in full swing which can only mean one thing: BronxWorks Farm Stands are back! The two seasonal farm stands are open from July through November and partner with local farmers to offer a wide array of fresh produce at affordable prices. Both farm stands have kept their prices the same as last year, seeking to promote access to fresh and nutritious foods. BronxWorks Community Health and SNAP-Ed programs also invite farm stand customers to participate in nutrition workshops and cooking demos to receive health bucks which they can use to purchase produce. BronxWorks Farm Stands accept CASH, FMNP coupons, Health Bucks, and EBT/SNAP.

The Mott Haven Farm Stand will be held every Wednesday in Padre Plaza Park at 541 E 139th St, Bronx, NY 10454. The BronxWorks Community Farm Stand will be held every Thursday at the Carolyn McLaughlin Community Center at 1130 Grand Concourse.

To learn more about the BronxWorks Farm Stands, take a look at coverage by [Noticias](#), and [News 12](#), and [Bronx Times](#).



PHOTO ESSAY



Cooking Class at Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter

Men at BronxWorks Jerome Avenue Men's Shelter (JAMS) took a cooking and nutrition class together led by BronxWorks Community Health Programs. JAMS provides beds to 200 men with mental illness who are experiencing homelessness. The residents taking the class shared their favorite fruits and vegetables and then were taught how to make a chicken, broccoli, and pepper stir-fry. All the men in the class were getting ready to move out of the shelter and into permanent housing. BronxWorks provided this class to help them make the transition into single living. The men all received a set of pots and pans as well as a bag of groceries to bring with them to their new housing.



Park Haven Field Day

Families living in the BronxWorks Park Haven Supportive Housing residence came together at Saint Mary's Park for a fun summer picnic and field day. Park Haven, which opened in 2022, offers 50 total housing units for formerly homeless people: 40 for individuals and 10 for families. Multiple BronxWorks programs, including SNAP-Ed, provided workshops and fun family games like giant Connect 4 and hula hooping. Special thanks to Jerome Environmental Services, LLC for volunteering at the event and helping check families in and run the games.



BioBus Visits Bronxchester Summer Camp

BronxWorks school-age children continue their learning through BronxWorks summer camp programs! The *BioBus* program is an initiative focusing on inclusion in the scientific community by teaching K - 12 students how science is part of their lives. Elementary-age students in our summer camp program at Bronxchester boarded the *BioBus* mobile science lab and participated in STEM activities and experiments. Campers had a chance to experiment with microscopes and learn more about microscopic structures as well as how different parts of our environment make the life cycle go round! Programs like these aim to create a lifelong interest in STEM fields.



BronxWorks Provides Free HIV Testing at Walgreens

BronxWorks Positive Living programs teamed up with Walgreens, Greater Than HIV, and other nonprofits to provide free HIV testing to New York City residents at Walgreens across the city in recognition of National HIV Testing Day on June 27.

Early Childhood Learning Center Family Field Day

Students from BronxWorks Early Childhood Learning Centers and their families broke into teams and competed in Field Day activities to celebrate the end of the school year and the start of summer! Children and their parents participated in relay races, hula hooping, and other fun summer activities.

Remembering Judith Leonard



Judith Leonard (right) at the 2012 BronxWorks Annual Gala with her husband Deane (center) and then-Executive Director Carolyn McLaughlin (left).



Judith Leonard (right) at the 2008 CAB Annual Gala with (L-R) former board member Lena Townsend, Adrienne Harris, and current board member Jean Smith.

Judith Leonard, longtime BronxWorks board member, passed away earlier this month. Judith served on the BronxWorks Board of Directors for many years, joining

the board of then-Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) after the merger between Girls Club of New York and CAB. Judith was an incredibly dedicated board member, and she provided guidance and support as CAB grew and transformed into BronxWorks in 2009. Her loss is felt throughout the organization and especially by the BronxWorks Board of Directors. We send our thoughts, well-wishes, and our deepest sympathy to her family.

In 2012, in celebration of our 40th Anniversary, Judith wrote a letter about why she had served on nonprofit boards for over 40 years. [Read the full letter here.](#)



REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



We are pleased to announce the **BronxWorks 2021-22 Report To the Community!** The Report details our work and accomplishments as the Bronx recovered from the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you to all our donors and supporters for making our work possible!

[Take a look here.](#)



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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