



FEATURED STORY

The BronxWorks 2025 Lifting Lives Gala Recap



Thank you to everyone who supported and attended the BronxWorks 2025 Lifting Lives Gala! The Gala took place on Wednesday, May 7 at the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx. As our biggest fundraiser of the year, the Lifting Lives Gala raises

unrestricted funding to support and develop vital programs we offer, including food pantries, workforce development, and education for all ages. Thanks to the generosity of our stakeholders, BronxWorks will continue to provide these transformative services and many more to lift lives and build futures in the Bronx.

We would also like to thank all those who sponsored the 2025 Lifting Lives Gala, and special thanks to our Advocate Sponsors: Citizens Bank; Bruce Phillips & Joan Feeney; Tishman Speyer; and Turner Construction Company.



The Lifting Lives Gala kicked off with an extended cocktail reception outside on the patio of the Garden Terrace Cafe, with live music performed by Tres Gatos. The cocktail reception was followed by dinner in the Garden Terrace Room. Our program was held during dinner and featured words of inspiration from BronxWorks CEO Eileen Torres, Board Chair Roger Begelman, and Special Guest Speaker April Hernandez Castillo. Honoree presentations followed, led by BronxWorks leadership staff.



BronxWorks Assistant Executive Director John Weed (left) and Honoree Bruce Phillips (right).



BronxWorks Vice President of Workforce Development Betty Ann Tamaisar (left) and Honoree Julio E. Reyes, Jr. (right).



Honoree Jessica Sherman (left) and BronxWorks Vice President of Access to Benefits and Homelessness Prevention Julie Spitzer (right).

Once again, we were fortunate to honor three hard-working and passionate BronxWorks stakeholders and community members: Bruce Phillips, BronxWorks Board Member and Senior Managing Director at Tishman Speyer; Julio E. Reyes, Jr., BronxWorks Board Member and Vice President, Regional Manager at Citizens Bank; and Jessica Sherman, Senior Vice President of Affordable Housing at Douglaston

Development.

Bruce is celebrating over 30 years on the BronxWorks Board of Directors and has been an integral part of our Facilities Committee. He has provided incredible insight into building and construction projects and has led many major developments throughout his career. Julio is celebrating 20 years in the banking industry and, for most of his career, has supported BronxWorks with financial literacy workshops and other workforce development resources. Jessica has led the development and preservation of several affordable housing complexes, including the rehabilitation of the Sack Wern houses where BronxWorks is the social service provider.

Thank you to our honorees for their dedication to the community and continued partnership with BronxWorks!



(L-R) Honoree Julio E. Reyes, Jr., Honoree Jessica Sherman, BronxWorks CEO Eileen Torres, and Honoree Bruce Phillips

We are also very thankful for our co-hosts, Lynda Lopez and Pedro Rivera, and our special guest speaker, April Hernandez Castillo! As three Bronx natives, their powerful words and strong pride for the borough helped to guide our program and inspire our audience.



Special thank you to Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson for taking time out of her busy schedule to join us at the 2025 Lifting Lives Gala! We are so grateful for our longstanding partnership with the Bronx Borough President as we work together to build a better future for the Bronx.



The Honorable Vanessa L. Gibson, Bronx Borough President, speaking at the 2025 Lifting Lives Gala.

Thank you to everyone who made this event possible! Thank you to the New York Botanical Garden for the venue and catering services, to Corporate AV for their technical support, to Tres Gatos for their musical entertainment, and to Rohanna Mertens for her amazing photography work! Thank you to those who donated and facilitated donations for our silent auction! Thank you to the BronxWorks Board of Directors for their continued commitment and expertise! Last but not least, this event would not be possible without the incredible BronxWorks staff who work everyday to uplift and empower their Bronx neighbors to build a better future for the community.

For more photos of the 2025 Lifting Lives Gala, [CLICK HERE](#).

[Thank You to Our Incredible Sponsors!](#)



DID YOU KNOW

**BronxWorks Supports Families With The Transition
From Shelter Into Housing**



BronxWorks Transform Participant Camieka J. recently shared her story and experiences with BronxWorks in our 2025 Gala video. Click the video above to watch Camieka's story.

Did You Know? The BronxWorks Transform Program supports families with the transition out of shelter as they move into housing.

The Transform program works to ensure that families are not returning to the shelter system by connecting them with resources and providing support for the challenges they are facing.

"BronxWorks is uniquely positioned to support families in this way because we do it all. We can connect them to afterschool programs, we can connect them to workforce training, we can connect them to education opportunities, and more. All of that is within BronxWorks."

Sheila Rodriguez, MBA, Case Manager, Transform



STAFF PROFILES

Sheila Rodriguez, MBA

Family Support Specialist, Case Manager, Transform Program

Even as a child, Sheila Rodriguez, MBA, was troubled by the fact that people in her community lived without homes or enough food. She knew from an early age that she wanted to work towards real change for her neighbors. Raised in the Bronx for most of her childhood, Sheila first learned the importance of community from her family. Her parents would often go out of their way to support those in need however they could. Her family's generous actions and values instilled in Sheila a strong sense of compassion and care for others



that has remained with her to this day. Sheila now supports families as they transition out of shelter and into long-term housing as the Case Manager of the Transform program.

"I strive to make each client feel seen, respected, and understood. I want them to know that their individual journey matters. It's incredibly rewarding to work alongside someone, offering guidance and assistance, and to ultimately see them emerge with hope for a brighter future."

[Read More About Sheila](#)



PHOTO ESSAY



ESOL Heritage Day

Students from the BronxWorks English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program recently celebrated their diverse cultures with a Heritage Day event! ESOL participants and staff came together and shared their heritage with food, attire, music

and dance, and more. Some students even gave presentations about their culture in front of the whole group of attendees. These events are a wonderful opportunity for our participants to learn more about one another and appreciate the rich diversity of the community. BronxWorks offers ESOL classes at multiple sites, including some of our Older Adult Centers.



#TeamBronxWorks in the TD Five Boro Bike Tour

BronxWorks once again had a team of riders participate in the TD Five Boro Bike Tour and raise funds for the organization! Riders on #TeamBronxWorks committed to fundraise \$750 each in support of children's programs at BronxWorks family shelters. This year, our riders raised a total of over \$11,000! Thank you so much to our team of riders and those who contributed to their fundraising.



BronxWorks Joins 40th Annual AIDS Walk

BronxWorks staff once again participated in the Annual AIDS Walk New York. The organization has proudly supported the walk for many years, which raises money for AIDS & HIV research. BronxWorks provides educational and other services to people living with these and other chronic health conditions, and we are dedicated to supporting a better future for all of our participants.



Council Member Stevens Youth Summit

BronxWorks staff from the Children and Youth Department recently participated in New York City Council Member Althea Stevens' Youth Summit. We thank Council Member Stevens for the opportunity to connect with young people in her district.



Summer Youth Employment Program Jobsite Fairs

BronxWorks has recently offered several jobsite fairs for participants in our Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). Each year, BronxWorks SYEP provides paid employment opportunities to over 1,300 young adults ages 14-24. These jobsite fairs allow the participants to connect with potential employers and find placement for their summer job.



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Support #TeamBronxWorks in the TCS 2025 NYC Marathon! BronxWorks is proud to once again be a charity partner for the TCS NYC Marathon this year. As a charity runner, members of #TeamBronxWorks each have a goal of raising \$3,000 for BronxWorks Children and Youth programs. [Support our riders here.](#)

Here are some other ways you can join BronxWorks and support our mission this year:

- [**Make a Monetary Gift.**](#)
- Donate personal care items for Bronx students as they prepare for Prom and Graduation events! [**Click here for our Prom Drive wishlist.**](#)

You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Bluesky](#), and [X](#) for exciting updates.

For a full list of ways to give to BronxWorks, [visit our website](#).

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