

breaking barriers

Summer 2010

A Quarterly Publication of Barrier Free Living Holding Corp., Inc.

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Healing of Memories At Transitional Housing Program

Barrier Free Living (BFL) brought an intense three-day 'Healing of Memories' workshop to participants of its Transitional Housing and Secret Garden programs this May.

The Transitional Housing program provides safe shelter and case management services to people with disabilities who are homeless. Secret Garden specializes in working with people with disabilities who are also victims of abuse.

The workshop is an ongoing partnership between BFL's President/CEO Paul Feuerstein and Fr. Michael Lapsley who heads the Institute for Healing of Memories (www.healingofmemories.co.za) in Cape Town, South Africa. It offers a model for healing through creative group activities which explore emotion, reconciliation and forgiveness.

"This experience helped me begin to release the negative low self esteem I have carried with me all of my life," said Alejandrina Cruz, a client at Secret Garden. "I have grown mentally and spiritually."

Fr. Michael developed the Healing of Memories workshops while heading the Chaplaincy Project of the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture. The workshop evolved from his experience of living in exile, losing both hands in a parcel bomb explosion, and listening to the stories of the survivors whom he counseled at the Trauma Centre.

BFL customized a Healing of Memories workshop curriculum for both staff and residents at its programs. Agency staff from BFL's Transitional Housing, Freedom House and Secret Garden programs serve as facilitators, guiding the three-day event.

Activities included sharing poetry about disability; drawing 'life stories', and creating a symbol of peace, which was shared during a final celebration.

"This is my first time as a workshop facilitator and the experience was exhilarating," said Cynthia Amodeo, Coordinator of Generations of Freedom at Freedom House. "To see participants begin their path toward real healing through creative expression was awesome."



Art created by a participant at the Healing of Memories workshop.

For more information about Healing of Memories visit
www.healingofmemories.co.za
For information about Barrier Free Living visit
www.bflnyc.org

A Message from the C.E.O.

There are certain resources that make our work possible.

Owning our two buildings has been critical because it has allowed us to stay in communities where real estate values have skyrocketed.



*Paul Feuerstein,
President/CEO*

Buildings alone can't meet our mission. Our staff is the key resource that makes all of our good work possible. They come to us because they believe in the work that we are doing. Each one comes with a set of experiences and skills which complement the other members of our team.

When we do our biannual review of our mission, vision and values, every staff member is involved in the exercise because every staff has a role to play in fulfilling the mission of BFL.

We are working with researchers from New York University who interact with our staff on a regular basis. The feedback that I have gotten is that our staff "walks the talk." In a lot of places where the NYU teams do research, managers regale them with the goals and mission of the agency but there is a disconnect with the daily work being done.

Our staff know our mission because they helped to create it. Our hats are off to them for the tremendous job that they do to help people with disabilities help themselves.

Staff Awarded for Excellence

This June, BFL honored over forty individuals and teams at the agency's Fourth Annual Staff Appreciation Awards Ceremony.

Statuettes were given in categories ranging from Best Leadership Skills to Integrity on the Job. This year, special categories were added to honor specific Team commitment.

The 'red carpet inspired' awards ceremony was created to highlight the outstanding work and dedication of staff members at FL's programs: Transitional Housing; Freedom House; Secret Garden; Outreach, as well as the Occupational Therapy Team.



*Cathy Gormley,
Director, Transitional
Housing Program, at
last year's Awards.*

2010 Staff Appreciation Award Winners

Best: Attendance:

LUIS LLERA
NUMANCIA CASTILLO
PRUDENCIA PENA

Goes Beyond the Call of Duty:

MARITZA GOMEZ
TIFFANY WILLIAMS

Best Attitude:

NANCY ESCOBAR
DAISY ARCHILA
MICHELLE BRITTON

Integrity on the Job:

CYNTHIA AMODEO
ANDRES RODRIGUEZ
JENA HERNANDEZ

Best Leadership Skills:

TERESA MARCUS
MOLLY FREYER
DONALD LOGAN

Most Creative:

YENELY GOMEZ
JENNIFER FRANCO
AEILUSHI MISTRY

Best Sense of Humor:

BRENDA MCGRUFF
ANTOINETTE
CALABRETTA
SOL CORIAT

Most Dedicated to BFL Vision:

ISA MARTINEZ
NICOLYN PLUMMER
PAUL FEUERSTEIN

Best Team:

HOUSEKEEPING
SG TEAM
MAINTENANCE

Team Commitment Awards:

SG- Case Manager's
TH- Kitchen Maintenance

Best Team Player:

TODD DOUGLAS
KATHERINE WEBB
BRYAN COHEN

TH- Case Managers

FH- Child Care

TH- Accounting

Best Under Pressure:

AIDA COLON
GEORGETTE DELINOIS
CATHERINE GORMLEY

FH- Social Worker

TH- Program Aid

FH- Resident Aide

Gets Along Well with Co-workers:

THOMAS WILSON
ANGEL CAULA
DENISE L. BAKER
JAMES CROUCH

TH- Food Service

TH- Reception/Security

FH- Housing

Larry Reader

Occupational Therapy



Members of the OT Team with a plaque featuring a photo honoring Luca.

BFL Remembers Luca

After a decade of service, Luca, the beloved canine providing pet therapy to homeless residents at BFL's Transitional Housing Program, passed away this spring.

The Husky literally 'grew up' at BFL, visiting bi-monthly as part of the agency's Occupational Therapy (OT) lead 'Pet Therapy.' Residents visited with Luca and his trainer Jen Davis. Pet Therapy can lower blood pressure and stress, and also help with smoking cessation.

"One visually impaired resident developed an interest in finding a guide dog after he spent time with Luca," said Patricia Motus who manages the OT program.

Luca's visits were coordinated with Bidawee (www.bidawee.org). Bidawee's mission is to "promote safe, loving, long-term relationships between people and companion animals by providing a continuum of services and programs that are innovative, personalized, and high-quality."



Kids Wish Honors Heroes

This summer, BFL began working with the Kid's Wish Network's (kidswishnetwork.org) 'Heroes of the Month' program. The nationally renowned organization honors children between the ages of 3 and 18 who have "faced and overcome difficult circumstances, often enduring a great deal of pain and suffering."

To date, two young 'Heroes' have been cited from BFL's Freedom House (anonymously due to confidentiality). Freedom House is an Emergency Shelter for survivors of domestic violence with disabilities or survivors who have children with disabilities. The Hero of the Month is awarded with special items and a prepaid gift card.

FIGURES

+

FACTS

30 YEARS

BFL will celebrate in 2011, working with people with disabilities who are homeless; survivors of domestic violence with disabilities; and survivors who have children with disabilities.

123 THOUSAND

Number of homeless men, women and children who found safety in a NYC shelter last year.

1.3 million

Estimated number of women who are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence).

51 PEOPLE

were placed in permanent housing by BFL's Transitional Housing program in 2009, a 24% increase from the previous year.

On the Calendar

Summer

Women Make Movies Inc. (www.wmm.com) has two new releases in its catalogue: Grace Poore's heralded documentary *Voices Heard, Sisters Unseen* and Olivia Klaus' *Sins By Silence*. Poore is a South Asian feminist lesbian writer and activist and her film incorporates interviews, poetry, dance and music to present a feminist analysis of how courts, police and social services' re-victimize' battered women who are deaf, disabled, lesbians, prostitutes, HIV-positive and without official immigrant status. *Sins of Silence* is a film about domestic violence victims who are serving time in prison for killing their abusers and who have formed a support group.



June

Jeanette Moreno, a client of BFL's Secret Garden program has named the agency beneficiary to proceeds from her new book *I am a Survivor*. The book chronicles her journey to hope after years in an abusive marriage. In a letter to the Secret Garden, Moreno wrote: "Your agency helped me move forward...and showed me that we can do anything we set our minds to." The book is available at Xlibris (www2.xlibris.com) and on Amazon.com.

July 31

Disabled American Veterans (DAV) will hold its National Convention July 31 - August 3 in Atlanta, GA at the Hyatt Regency. For information: 404.577.1234. The 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans (DAV) is a non-profit 501(c)(4) charity dedicated to building better lives for America's disabled veterans and their families. www.dav.org.

How to Donate

Support BFL at: www.bflnyc.org/Contribute.asp

Barrier Free Living is on Facebook as (Barrier Free Living). Friend us today.

Sign up for our new Breaking Barriers In Domestic Violence E-Newsletter at www.bflnyc.org. A FREE SERVICE.

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