



# breaking barriers

helping people with disabilities help themselves

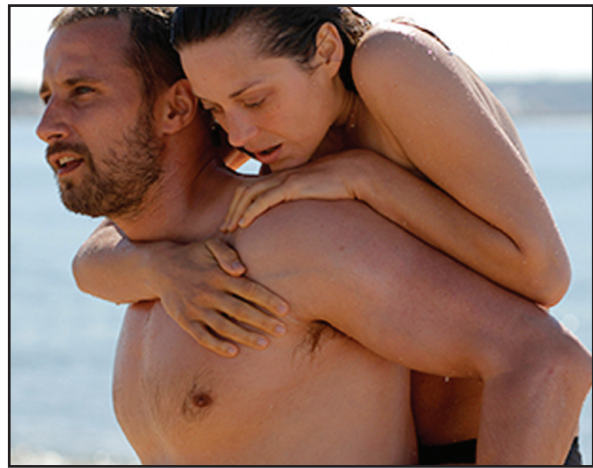
**WINTER 2013**

A Quarterly Publication of Barrier Free Living

## Vibrant 2012. Visionary 2013.



*From left: BFL President/CEO Paul Feuerstein and Freedom House Program Director Isa Martinez at the AWARE benefit. Marion Cotillard and Matthias Schoenaerts in the disability-themed film fest fave, Rust and Bone.*



Barrier Free Living saw vibrant support and increased visibility in 2012 as the agency broadened its mission to help people with disabilities, and survivors of domestic violence with disabilities, lead dignified lives free of abuse.

The agency garnered numerous awards, being recognized during National Disability Awareness Month and at the Human Services Council ([www.humanservicescouncil.org](http://www.humanservicescouncil.org)) Leadership Awards among other honors (page 4).

This year, BFL President/CEO Paul Feuerstein delivered the agency mission nationwide, presenting at various high profile events. He shared BFL's expertise involving safety planning for survivors of domestic violence with disabilities at Bridging the Gap: The 2012 National Conference on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Against People with Disabilities ([www.accessingsafety.org](http://www.accessingsafety.org)). He also joined a panel of experts addressing the topic of disabled victims of crime at the National Crime Victims Conference in New Orleans, LA. Of note, BFL is recognized as a lead agency in five different collaborations addressing sexual assault for deaf women.

Last year, BFL's Freedom House Emergency Shelter

gained a valuable new sponsor in AWARE ([www.aware-nyc.org](http://www.aware-nyc.org)). AWARE (Assisting Women through Action, Resources & Education) is a grass-roots organization dedicated to promoting awareness and generating funds in order to make meaningful improvements in the lives of females in the New York City community and worldwide. The AWARE Freedom House October benefit raised over \$25,000 for survivors and the group continues to promote and support BFL on its website.

In December, an inspiring story about Freedom House was featured on ABC News. ABC's Emmy-award winning journalist Lauren Glassberg spent time at the shelter speaking with staff and residents in creating the piece. View the news clip on our website pressroom page or at [Vimeo.com](http://Vimeo.com), barrier free living page. In January 2013, BFL was featured in a *New York Times* feature story about Secret Garden Consumer Alejandrina Cruz. The piece was part of the Neediest Cases Fund stories (NY Times, January 14, 2013, NY Region / *Finding in Kung Fu Movies a Refuge, and Perhaps a Calling*).

*Continued on page 3.*





## Pressroom

In our mission to stay at the forefront of critical trends, advocacy and news in the areas of disability, shelter and domestic violence, last year saw the creation of the vibrant Pressroom page ([aboutus/pressroom](#)) on our website. Pressroom includes a site specific Barrier Free Living Daily newspaper feed, which culls news relevant to our mission from around the world, and is updated daily. Pressroom also highlights trending topics related to everything from politics to culture.

BFL's New Visions Blog is another new feature of the website, including both internal and external news items that feed into Pressroom. Just a few of the many stand out New Vision Blog items last year included: coverage of the Reel Abilities Film Fest ([www.reelabilities.org](#)) and films like *Ocean Heaven*, from Hong Kong, pictured above; a popular item about Marine Lance Cpl. Alex Minsky (pictured at right) who lost his leg when his truck rolled over an IED (improvised explosive device) in Afghanistan (Read the Blog story on our site, *Marine Alex Minsky Inspires People with Disabilities*); and news about the creation of the BFL Speakers Bureau in which founding organizers Theresa McIntosh and Patrice C. Queen offer educational opportunities for organizations, schools, or events on the issues of domestic violence and its intersection with disabilities.

For more info: [bflspeakersbureau@bflnyc.org](mailto:bflspeakersbureau@bflnyc.org).



## DV & Disability

Based on the hard fact that the number one issue of Women with Disabilities nationwide is Domestic Abuse, BFL launched the new Domestic Violence & Disability website page ([about us/domestic-violence-disability](#)). The page features our expertise, advocacy and visionary thinking around the topics, including a vital DoYou Know report sharing facts like: 80% of women with disabilities have been sexually assaulted.

In his introduction to the page, BFL President/CEO Paul Feuerstein writes:

"In 1986, I hired Liz Lederman, a new graduate from NYU's Deafness Rehabilitation Master's Program, to join our clinic team. She had around 12 years' experience working with disabled victims of abuse. Prior to her joining us, we had no knowledge of abuse among people with a disability. We quickly learned a lot. After she taught us to ask the right questions, we found that many of the women in our program had histories of abuse. Once we asked the right questions, we heard stories of childhood abuse, abuse by family or caregivers and abuse by people who provided disability services. Those early experiences gave us a passion for the work. We advocated for services and shelter for victims with disabilities. Over the course of our history, we have worked with thousands of individuals and created the largest DV intervention program in the country."

Read more on our website, [About Us/Domestic Violence and Disability](#) tab.

This is the final print issue of *Breaking Barriers*, as the agency furthers its commitment to Go Green! All the stories in this issue can be found on our website and we encourage you to visit our home page and pressroom page which are updated weekly. Also sign up for our E-Newsletter, *Breaking Barriers in Domestic Violence* featuring stories and expertise around DV and Disability.

## Celebrate & Advocate

This past year saw a major leap in the number of fund-raising and friend raising events for BFL, as groups like AWARE ([www.awarenyc.org](http://www.awarenyc.org)) lent support to our fight to end domestic violence with a high-profile Manhattan party, and a new generation of friends discovered BFL through social media. The agency's Lavender & Blue Megamixer resulted in the creation of the new BFL Sponsorship Page (how-to-help/become-a-sponsor), as a slew of new supporters, including Gleason's Gym and edgy designer Scooter LaForge, donated raffle prizes to the event held at XES Lounge. A spring event is in the works. If you'd like to attend or learn more about sponsorship contact: [info@bflnyc.org](mailto:info@bflnyc.org).



## Transitional Housing New Director

LeShan Gaulman spent a good deal of time at Barrier Free Living before signing on this January as the new Transitional Housing Program Director.

"For the past three years I have been Independence Care System's (ICS) Social Service Coordinator for BFL, working on site at BFL's Transitional Housing Program," said LeShan, a native of the Bronx and life-time New Yorker. "ICS provides services for the residents that are enrolled and provides long-term managed care for people with disabilities."

As Social Service Coordinator for ICS at BFL, LeShan worked closely with the former Program Director Cathy Gormley and her team.

"Working with the homeless in my career has given me keen insight into the population first hand. And working with BFL gave me a good internal perspective on how the agency works. My transition into this position is quite natural."

Hitting the ground running, LeShan has set goals to increase housing placements and focus on keeping a positive working relationship between staff and residents. "I want to run a fluid program," he said.

In addition to camping and sailing in his free time, LeShan writes, and is an advocate for equal opportunities for homeless people with disabilities. "I'm currently writing an article on the challenges faced by the physically disabled homeless in New York City entitled "The journey to live with a physical disability without a permanent address: A look at the Physically Disabled Homeless in New York City". I presented the concept at the 45th Annual New York State Social Work Education Association conference last year and hope to publish the piece in 2013."

You can reach LeShan at [leshang@bflnyc.org](mailto:leshang@bflnyc.org)

*continued from page 1.*

### **Vibrant 2012. Visionary 2013.**

The 13th Step Group and Assurant ([www.assurant.com](http://www.assurant.com)) supported BFL's Secret Garden and Transitional Housing Programs with generous grants, including funds for an industrial stove to serve meals to 48 residents in the shelter.

The agency also began a new tradition in 2012 during October's National DV Awareness month, launching its Lavender & Blue megamixer at Manhattan's XES Lounge (page 4).

Nationally, 2012 was deemed the year of disability awareness in film, with a host of flicks gaining awards and recognition, all featuring themes of disability and strength including *Rust and Bone* and *The Intouchables*. In sports, the courage and tenacity of athlete Oscar Pistorius at the Olympic and Para Olympic games empowered people with disabilities greatly. Olympic diver Chris Cowell, who is deaf, also offered inspiration (page 4).

Looking forward with vitality and vision into 2013: BFL launched a new webpage this January, Domestic Violence & Disability (website, under About Us tab) to share our expertise and valuable resources around the topic of DV & Disability, which also ties into the launch of our new Supportive Housing program coming soon.

### **New Supportive Housing!**

**Opportunities for survivors of domestic violence with a disability and vets with disabilities. Breaking ground next year.**

**Track our progress/Learn More: [info@bflnyc.org](mailto:info@bflnyc.org)  
[www.bflnyc.org/programs-services/supportive-housing](http://www.bflnyc.org/programs-services/supportive-housing)**



*Clockwise from top left: Transitional Housing Thanksgiving celebration; Vivi Le Voix performs at BFL's Lavender & Blue Megamixer; Scott Hess (with Homeless Services United's Christy Parque) receives the Human Services Council's Next Generation Leadership Award; The 13th Step Group provides Back packs for the children of BFL's Secret Garden Program; Diver Chris Cowell, who is deaf, at the Olympics.*

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