

barrier free living



**Annual Report**  
**2015**

# Letter from the CEO

## 2015 was a milestone year for Barrier Free Living.



Paul Feuerstein, President/CEO

Our first venture in Supportive Housing is up and running. Our 70-unit building got its Temporary Certificate of Occupancy in April and our 50-unit family building earned the same on June 30th, the last day of our fiscal year. By that point, staff had been hired, furniture had been ordered, and basic telephone and internet infrastructure was in place. Our first tenants moved in on July 15th, and we completed a great deal of work to get us to the point of welcoming them.

This was the first time that supportive housing was developed specifically for victims/survivors of domestic violence. Prior to BFL Apartments, New Destiny Housing determined that only ten victims of domestic violence had been placed in family supportive housing. There was skepticism that we would be able to identify enough single people and families within the time frame to fulfill our mission.

The skepticism was unfounded. Our studio building identified 100% of our target population (victims of domestic or interpersonal violence; people with severe physical disabilities; veterans with disabilities) within the first 60 days of our work. 85% of our single residents have a history of domestic or interpersonal victimization. We identified 100% of our

family heads of household that had both a disabling medical condition and were escaping domestic violence.

Domestic violence is the number one issue for women with disabilities in nation-wide surveys. Barrier Free Living is leading the way in creating critically important programs to address this issue.

Secret Garden, our community based domestic violence program, is growing in size and responsibility. We have moved some of our administrative staff to our buildings in the Bronx to make room for more social workers and case managers in our downtown offices.

Our downtown Transitional Housing facility, opened in 1990, is in need of significant TLC. We are working with the city and state to find the capital funds to fix the roof, upgrade our elevators, address problems in aging bathrooms and showers, and prepare the building to be viable for the next 25 years.

We do critical, life-saving work for individuals in the most vulnerable time of their lives. Your support of Barrier Free Living helps us to continue to make a positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities. The story of one of those people is part of our annual report.

# Spotlight



April 2015

## **First Lady of New York Visits Freedom House**

New York City first lady Chirlane McCray visited BFL's Freedom House Domestic Violence shelter in April, speaking with residents of the shelter and touring the facility. Her visit helped shine a spotlight on the program and its groundbreaking work with survivors of domestic violence with disabilities.

# Expansion



July

August

September

July 2015

## **Barrier Free Living Apartments Opens**

Barrier Free Living (BFL) Apartments opened its doors in July of 2015, offering 120 permanent homes to families with a disabled head of household who is a survivor of domestic violence and to veterans with disabilities. All of the apartments are filled and a vibrant support staff team is in place.

# Education



July

August

September

August 2015

## Secret Garden Debuts ASL Video

BFL's Secret Garden domestic violence program debuted a video in American Sign Language to explain domestic violence and inform survivors with hearing loss how to seek assistance. The video was developed through BFL's 2012 Office on Violence Against Women disability grant program award, which focuses on building capacity to serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors.

# Leadership



July

August

September

September 2015

## Leadership Team Begins Anti-Racism Curriculum

The Barrier Free Living Leadership Team signed on for an Anti-Racism curriculum in 2015 led by MPG Consulting. The work, continuing into 2016, includes workshops which address the impact of structural racism as well as racial/cultural/gender identity and sexual orientation on relationships.

# Partnerships



October

November

December

December 2015

## **Strong Partnerships Continue To Grow**

BFL continued to build strong partnerships with organizations like Spread the Sparkle and corporate action day sponsors like AON and Deloitte. Spread the Sparkle sponsored its second event for residents, tenants and participants of all BFL programs on December 25; and corporate sponsors in 2015 supported BFL with multiple projects including revamping a rec room for the residents of our Transitional Housing program.

# Olga's Story

The day Olga found a safe haven at Barrier Free Living's Freedom House Domestic Violence Shelter for herself and her three children is a moment she will forever cherish.

That moment, however, was only the beginning of a journey that would take several twists over the next several years.

"My abuser beat me up very bad on the street. The police came and took him to jail. That was in 2012," says Olga, who is legally blind. "I went to Freedom House that year and that was the best thing I ever did."

By 2014 Olga had rebuilt her life piece by piece, and her family had moved into their own home. That was also the year her abuser was released from prison.

"He followed us and one day he stabbed me in the chest and tried to kill me," says Olga.

Her abuser again landed in jail, but Olga was left with a strong desire to not only find safe haven for her family, but also an opportunity to strengthen her commitment to an empowered life.

"I had a call from Paul (Feuerstein, President/CEO of BFL) and Cynthia (Amodeo, Director of Social Services, Freedom House) and they told me about the agency's new Barrier Free Living apartments. They had a place for me and my family. I was so excited."

Barrier Free Living Apartments opened the summer of 2015, and Olga and her family are one of the families living there as tenants and receiving such support services as counseling and occupational therapy.

BFL Apartments offer fifty family units for families with a disabled head of household who is a victim/survivor of domestic violence and seventy studio apartments for disabled victims/survivors of domestic violence, people with



disabilities who are being diverted from possible nursing home placement, and veterans with disabilities.

"My family feels safe. We are learning to be strong and to love ourselves. I am so glad we are here," says Olga, who plans to enroll in a computer class and pursue job related courses.

"I would also like to work with people with a disability and people who have been through things like I went through," says Olga. "I want to send a strong message to people like me. So they can feel what I feel now. That is my goal. To help others."

# Letter from the Chairman



Gerald Francese,  
Chair, Board of Directors

More than 38 years ago, Paul Feuerstein began making New York City a better place for people with disabilities. From his first “Project Outward Bound” to forming Barrier Free Living, Inc. in 1981, to the recent opening of the Barrier Free Living Apartments, he has remained steadfast in his commitment to helping people with disabilities survive and thrive in New York.

Over the past 35 years, the entire BFL team has remained true to Paul’s vision to better the lives of people of New York who live with disabilities. Due to the efforts of the dedicated BFL team, BFL’s last ten years

have seen significant growth and advancements in services.

In 2006, BFL opened its state of the art domestic violence center, which was built to provide a caring, safe place for domestic violence victims with disabilities and their families. The center was built from the ground up to accommodate people with disabilities: the apartment rooms are designed for wheelchair access, the kitchens and bath facilities have lower counters and cabinets and accessible facilities, and all rooms are outfitted to suit the needs of other disabilities including blindness and deafness. The center’s unique design allows it to stand ready, willing and able to welcome families of all sizes – each apartment is expandable, by linking apartments together, to suit each family’s specific composition of parent and children.

As soon as BFL’s DV center was up and running, Paul and the BFL team learned how difficult it was for the center’s DV victims to obtain perma-

**It’s my pleasure to report significant achievements and milestones reached by the Barrier Free Living (BFL) family.**

nent housing coming out of the shelter system. This unmet need was the impetus for Barrier Free Living Apartments. BFL broke ground on the Apartments in 2013, and opened its doors to its first tenants in April, 2015. BFL Apartments offer fifty family units for families with a disabled head of household who is a victim/survivor of domestic violence and seventy studio apartments for disabled victims/survivors of domestic violence, people with disabilities who are being diverted from possible nursing home placement, and veterans with disabilities.

While all of this growth and advancement continues, BFL stays the course on existing programs including Secret Garden, our domestic violence community outreach program, and our BFL residence for homeless people with disabilities. That, in my humble opinion, is what BFL is all about – growing for the community that we serve while keeping the caring going!

In the case of Barrier Free Living, to say it takes a village is an understatement. I would be remiss if I didn’t extend my heartfelt thanks to all who make our mission possible and our goals achievable – thanks to all the wonderful partners that we have in New York State and City government, our superlative and dedicated staff, the members of the BFL boards of trustees, the community at large who house and support our programs, and most of all to our deserving clientele.

We invite you to read our Annual Report to learn more, make a donation and to find out how you, too, can join our long-standing tradition of supporting our disabled community. Please see our website, <http://www.bflnyc.org>, for more details about the BFL team and its programs. This is a very special and impactful organization. Thank you for helping to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

# Financial Health

The data below is a consolidated balance sheet. Details on BFL's financial statements are available at [bflnyc.org/about-us/leadership/](http://bflnyc.org/about-us/leadership/)

## Assets

\$3,022,453  
current assets

\$3,542,181  
deferred charge

\$5,085,350  
property and equipment

**\$11,649,984**  
Total Assets

## Liabilities

\$1,373,576  
current liabilities

\$8,326,039  
notes payable

\$1,950,369  
net assets

**\$11,649,984**  
Total liabilities and net assets

# Support & Generosity

## Individual In-Kind Donors

Marco Bertolozzi  
Mrs. Gretchen Buchenholz  
Lourde Burdo  
Michael Caplan  
Thomas Charlon  
Catherine Chin  
August & Ella Craanen  
Emily Cooper  
Yolanda Diaz  
Pamela Estes  
David & Sara Evans  
Sharon Fong  
Mr. Gerald Francese  
John & Anne Fritts  
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Bernard Holand  
Mary Hess  
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Emily Mandelstam  
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Eileen Murphy  
Lenore Neier  
Dan & Lisa O'Connor  
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Raquel Olmo  
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Sonia Rodriguez  
Wendy Jill Rogers  
Lisa Sharelle  
Giddeon Schein  
Seth Schulman

Clare & Jerry Thomas  
Oliver Triunfo  
Malcolm & Donna Wattman  
Eric Wechsler  
Katherine Wolpe  
Lawrence Zlatkin  
Shazad Zamidar  
Patrica Zeno  
Genevieve Davis  
Yael Dredsner  
Janice Ewing  
Olivia Hollis  
Lindsay Hurd  
David Kessler  
Forbes Litcoff  
Anne Markowitz  
Faith Silberstein  
Michael Trenk  
Alison Trenk  
Shazad Zamidar  
Yin Zheng

## In Kind Groups & In-Kind Agency Donors

A Fair Shake for Youth  
Berkley Carroll School  
Coalition for the Homeless,  
Camp Homeward Bound  
CESD Talent  
Empire Quilters  
Floral Park High School  
Food Bank  
FPWA

Fred Alger Management  
Hearts of Gold  
Holy Trinity Church  
NAPO-NY  
Peace of Heart Choir  
PS 90  
Purge4Peace  
Second Chance Toys  
Temple Shaaray Tefila/Nursery School  
The Pajama Program  
The Giving Group  
Tu-Lus Bakery  
World Idea Toys

## Corporate Impact Day Sponsors & Volunteers

Aon  
Deloitte  
Goldman Sachs  
Moody's  
Morgan Stanley  
Foundation Grants & Other Donors  
Art is Power  
Assurant Foundation New Growth Fund  
Ford Foundation  
GE Foundation  
Schwab Charitable Grant  
St. John's University  
Wechsler Foundation

# Boards

## **BFL Holding Inc. Directors**

\* Gerald A. Francese, Esq. - Chairperson

\* Anna Fay – Vice Chair

\* Dr. Randolph Mowry, PhD, CRC - Secretary

\* Malcolm Wattman, Esq.- Treasurer

Vincent Grenier, CFP

Daniel O'Connor, CPA

Lenore Neier

\* *Barrier Free Living Inc. Directors*

## **Freedom House Board of Directors**

Sally N. MacNichol, MDiv, PhD - Chair

Lenore Neier - Secretary

Eileen Murphy - Treasurer

Ravi Kotru

Adrian Walter-Ginzburg, PhD

Rev. Yvette D. Wilson, MA, JD, MDiv

## **The New York City for the Disabled Housing Development Fund Corporation Directors**

John Fritts

Ravi Kotru

Anna Seddio

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Malcolm Wattman, Esq

Dr. Randolph Mowry

## **Barrier Free Living HDFC Directors**

Gerald Francese, Esq., Treasurer

Ravi Kotru

Benjamin Warnke - President

Donald Logan - Non-Board Secretary

## **BFL East 138th Street Inc. Directors**

Gerald Francese, Esq. Treasurer

Ravi Kotru

Benjamin Warnke - President

Donald Logan - Non-Board Secretary

# Leadership Team

**Paul B. Feuerstein, President/CEO**

**Donald E. Logan, MPA Chief Operating Officer**

## **Transitional Housing**

LeShan Gaulman, MSW Program Director

Felipe Sepulveda, LMSW Director of Social Services

David Rodriguez, Facility Manager

## **Secret Garden**

Georgette Delinois, LCSW Program Director

Jules Perkel, LCSW, Director of Social Services

## **Freedom House**

Myra Ricard, LMSW, Program Director

Cynthia Amodeo, LMHC, Director of Social Services

Akiba Solomon, Facility Manager

## **Barrier Free Living Apartments**

Thomas Obzrut, Program Director

Lenore Warren, LMSW, Director of Social Services

## **Barrier Free Living Executive Team**

Yueqin Li, Director of Finance

Aeilushi Mistry, Organizational Development Manager/HR

Laura Fidler, MPH, BFL Project Director OVW Collaboration

Scott Hess, Director of Communications

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**Contact Us: [info@bflnyc.org](mailto:info@bflnyc.org)**