



STEP UP FOR BETTER LIVING

Annual Report | 2017

*Helping families in need
achieve stability, wellness,
and self-sufficiency.*

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Director of Social Services

Andrew Thomas, Jr.
Program Director

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Contact Step Up for Better Living
at info@sublnyc.org to make a
donation or to volunteer.

Contact

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For more information about our services,
contact:

Twila Waters
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Who We Are

Step Up for Better Living (Step Up) is a 501 c3 non-profit that is dedicated to helping **low-income families** to remain in **permanent housing** while maximizing their opportunities for health and wellness and self-sufficiency.



Where We Are

Step Up provides services to families living in **New York City Neighborhoods**. 80% of the families we serve reside in the Bronx, in Community Boards 1-4.



What We Do

Staff conduct home visits, office visits, and telephone follow-ups to **ensure families remain connected to community resources**. Services include case management, counseling, eviction prevention, advocacy, information and referral and family activities.



Who We Serve

Our clients are formerly **homeless**, require **mental health and HIV services** and need assistance finding and sustaining **employment**. The average income of the families we serve is \$19,127.



Our Impact: By the Numbers

SENIORS

Seniors receive help with rental assistance from the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program and family reunification. Seniors who live alone and have no family ties are referred to Adult Day Care programs.

49

Number of Seniors Served

Step Up Connected

9

Seniors with SCRIE.

These seniors are eligible to receive lifetime exemptions from rent increases.

HOUSING

Of the 234 families that Step Up served in 2017, 178 families received housing assistance (60 families received eviction prevention services). **All (100%) families that received housing services remained permanently housed.**

Over \$50,000

Value of Rent Arrears Repaid

Number of Families Served

234

Percentage of Evictions Prevented

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Of the 234 families that Step Up served in 2017, 60 received health and wellness and mental health services. Families received referrals for medical insurance and Nutrition Counseling.

**Number of Clients
Connected to
Health and Wellness
Workshops**

60

DISABILITY

Step Up Connected

9

Clients with DRIE.

These clients are eligible to receive lifetime exemptions from rent increases.

100%

Recreational Programs



Trip to Yankee Stadium

On June 25, 2017, Program Director, Andrew Thomas, Jr. accompanied 18 fathers to Yankee Stadium where the Yankees hosted the Texas Rangers. One of the fathers was a 74- year-old

African American male who spoke with such emotion that it touched the heart of some of the fans sitting in the bleachers.

He said, ‘I thank you Mr. Thomas and Step Up for Better Living

for providing me with an opportunity to see my very first Yankee game.’ Some of the fans sighed and clapped. This event was well-received, and some fathers expressed thanks for the chance to take their sons to the event.

“Thank you for providing me with an opportunity to see my very first Yankee game.”

Trip to Coney Island

On August 10, 2017 Set Up for Better Living staff Twila Waters and Andrew Thomas, Jr. escorted 25 children (ages 13-17) to Luna Park located at the world’s famous Coney Island in Brooklyn. With the assistance of 3 parent chaperones, the group boarded a chartered bus that had entertainment such as movies and music!!! The movie for the ride was Spiderman.

When it was time to leave everyone rushed to get on the air-conditioned bus. After a head count, we boarded and away we were off. By the time we reached the Bronx every youth was asleep. As we were unloading many were asking- “when is the next trip?”



Client Story: Shennal Murray



Shennal Murray, Age 19

“ Let me start by explaining how Step up for Better Living and Ms. Waters actually changed my life.

It all started at the age of 11 when my actual building opened up. I met Ms. Waters who is my social worker now. I was going through a lot of family and personal problems and she explained to me about this program that she is working with that can help with counseling and negotiation between my family. I automatically declined the services because I've been in therapy and counseling which did not work at all for me and my family.

So, I pushed myself away from all services because I thought I did not need them. Everyone with the program made sure it was their job to keep up with me on a weekly basis to make sure my family and I were OK but most importantly that the services are always welcome to us when we are fully ready to use them.

They showed me love and kindness even when I thought I didn't need it.

Fast forwarding to a time I got pregnant at the age of 14 and not knowing what to do I went to talk with Ms. Waters about how I was feeling, and she gave me a peace of mind letting me know that I'm strong and that this is not the end of my life but a beginning of a new chapter. Everyone was so supportive from the

beginning of my pregnancy to the very day I had my daughter at the age of 15 and still in high school. At the time I did want to drop out of high school, but I pushed myself and used all the help that I can with their programs. They gave me the tools that I needed to push myself to further educate myself and graduate from high school on time at the age of 17.

Since the end of high school there has been a lot of times where I did not feel that I want to actually go back to school and that I had more important things to do like just get a regular paying job to pay regular bills but that was not an option with Step up for Better Living. They continuously advised me to go back to school and help me find programs

where I can still reach my career goal and still be able to take care of my daughter. I am now 19 years old and I have again graduated with my patient care technician license which comes with my EKG certification and my phlebotomy certification.

The people that work with the programs for Step up for Better Living have not given up on me and I have not given up on them and their services.

I continuously go to their women empowerment programs and take advantage of everything they have to offer now.

Thanks to this program I am now stronger, more educated and I am ready to push myself for a better living.

Voices from the Field

Step Up for Better Living Social Workers meet every day to help families in need.

Here are some examples of the challenges these families face.



I am on SSI. I have to use the check that my daughter receives from her father due to his retirement just to pay the rent. I am struggling to stay afloat. Need referrals to get help paying arrears that I owe on my rent that I can't pay.”

—51-year-old Female



I have severe pain in my back and legs. I'm living from check to check. My mother is in the hospital. She has had three strokes this year. I lost my father last year. I can't keep up with rent and Con Edison and Cable bill and my everyday living. I need help.”

—59-year-old Female

Message from the Executive Director

On March 6, 2017, homelessness in New York City was at near record highs with 59,910 individuals and 12,849 families in the New York City shelter system according to the NYC Department of Homeless Services Daily Shelter report.¹ It can cost \$3,600 a month, and sometimes more, to house a family in shelter. **To address this challenge**, Step Up for Better Living (Step Up) used several strategies to ensure residents retained permanent housing in their communities at less than half the cost to house a family in shelter:

- Our staff conducted **timely interventions** in all service modalities that we provided. Our aim was to intervene early before a crisis occurs.
- We encouraged families to **pay rent first** and to **be smart consumers**.
- Our staff were proactive in reaching out to clients to monitor their progress and to respond quickly when they experienced **economic hardship** or **mental health challenges**.
- We also assisted **seniors** to access all programs and services as soon as they qualified to enable them to stretch every dollar.
- We provided **children** with access to recreational activities throughout the year.

In 2017 we served 234 families. Moving forward, Step Up will develop a strategic plan that will build our capacity to serve more clients and expand services.



—Louis Rodriguez, Ph.D. MBA. MSW.



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In March 2017, there were **59,910 individuals and 12,849 families** in the New York City shelter system.

It can cost more than **\$3,600 per month** to house a family in shelter.

¹ <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf>

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Contact Step Up for Better Living at info@sublnyc.org to make a donation or to volunteer.

sublnyc.org

A copy of the latest Step Up for Better Living annual financial report may be obtained, upon request, from Step Up for Better Living or from the New York State Attorney General's Charities Bureau. Requests can be submitted in writing to Step Up for Better Living at 132 East 43rd street, Suite 201, New York, NY, 10017 or by writing to the Charities Bureau (Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, 19th Floor, New York, New York 10005).