



STEP UP FOR BETTER LIVING

Annual Report | 2018



Message from the Executive Director

Three-quarters of New Yorkers sleeping in shelters are members of homeless families, including 23,600 children.¹

This alarming statistic reported by the Coalition for the Homeless in its 2018 State of the Homeless Report underscores the need for programs like Step Up for Better Living (Step Up). In 2018 Step Up provided housing assistance and social services to 207 families at risk of homelessness to ensure their stability in permanent housing and to connect families to health and mental health services. The typical family had an average income of \$17,887 which is well below the 2018 federal poverty level (\$24,600)² for a family of four. Low income, unemployment and the need for health and mental health services are risk factors that can lead to family homelessness.

To address these challenges, Step Up implemented several initiatives to strengthen the agency's program model. A new client case management system was developed to improve data collection of at-risk families who experienced food insecurity, poor health or unemployment thereby informing how to prioritize outreach efforts. A new evaluation tool was developed to improve measurement of program outcomes (i.e. number of

evictions prevented) which enabled the program to conduct long-term monitoring of families at risk of homelessness. By tracking those families who apply for emergency housing assistance and who pay a high percentage of income towards rent, Step Up has the capacity to intervene early before the family falls too far behind in rent. The program model was also expanded to include more cultural and recreational activities that were designed to offer structured activities for adolescents and seniors. Nutrition services were added allowing the program to serve more adults and, for the first time, young adults also received nutrition counseling.

In 2018 Step Up engaged in several initiatives to plan for the future. These initiatives included Board Development, locating new office space which will enable the agency to hire more staff that will increase our capacity to serve more clients, developing a strategic plan which will serve as a roadmap for growth and improving fund development capacity. Step Up is committed to expanding its program so that more families at risk of homelessness can receive the help they need to remain in safe, affordable housing with access to opportunities that lift them out of poverty.



—Louis Rodriguez, Ph.D. MBA. MSW.

¹ <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2018>

² <https://obamacare.net/2018-federal-poverty-level/>



About Us

Located in the South Bronx, the Step Up service model features Housing Retention and Stabilization services for at-risk low-income families and seniors who are permanently housed and for homeless families transitioning from shelter.



These services included case management, advocacy to help families secure emergency housing assistance, individual and family counseling, helping seniors access Social Security, Meals on Wheels, Access- a- Ride, cultural and recreational activities and more. Our homeless prevention strategies are to provide early intervention to prevent evictions and to conduct long-term follow-ups to ensure families remain permanently housed. In 2018 Step Up worked with a consortium of 25 South Bronx nonprofits to provide community residents with back to school resources and by participating in the distribution of coats in the winter. This initiative helped Step Up to increase its presence in the community and created opportunities to increase referrals from other nonprofits.

Key Stats

80%
of the families served
live in Bronx Community
Boards 1-4

51
Average Age
Head of Household

100%
Eviction Prevention
Rate

Our Impact: By the Numbers

ITEM	METRIC
NUMBER OF FAMILIES RECEIVING HOUSING ASSISTANCE	139
NUMBER OF CLIENTS RECEIVING COUNSELING	94
AVERAGE AGE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	51
TOTAL NUMBER OF SENIORS SERVED	48
EVICTIONS PREVENTED	49

PROGRAM	ATENDEES
ADULT NUTRITION GROUPS	40
CHILD NUTRITION GROUPS	15
HOLIDAY PROGRAMS	45
TRIPS TO YANKEE STADIUM AND CONEY ISLAND	57
MOTHERS DAY AND FATHERS DAY CELEBRATIONS	40
SENIOR TRIP TO SEE THE LION KING ON BROADWAY	17
YOUNG ADULT TRIP TO RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT MUSEUM	50
ADOLESCENT ARTS PROGRAM	15

ADVOCACY

78

Families received case management assistance enabling them to retain benefits.

EVICTIONS PREVENTED

49

Families received eviction prevention assistance. Total arrears repaid equaled \$110,680.00

HOUSING PERMANENCY

139

Families received help renewing housing applications to ensure no interruptions in monthly rent payments.

CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

100

Clients participated in trips to museums, athletic events, Mother's Day and Father's Day celebrations and holiday programs.

CLIENTS

276

Total number of clients served

SENIORS

16

Seniors received help applying for SCRIE, Meals on Wheels, Access-a-Ride and senior housing.

COMMUNITY

200

Clients participated in back-to-school events that featured backpack and school supply giveaways in the fall and a coat drive in the winter.

NUTRITION

55

Clients learned how to make lifestyle changes by avoiding sugar and eating nutritious meals.

Cultural / Recreational Activities



November 2018

Step-Up Seniors trip to see the Lion King on Broadway. 17 Step Up seniors participated.

June 2018

Trip to Yankee Stadium—an intergenerational event shared between fathers and sons.



Summer 2018

Paint and Popcorn—15 children ages 12–14 participated in the Step Up Paint and Popcorn program. This program featured fun activities which included Arts and Crafts while teaching the basics of healthy eating.



December 2018

Trip to Ripley's Believe it or Not

On December 15, 2018, Step Up wanted to do something entertaining and educational with the youths.

The event we sponsored was to take 50 youths to see strange and unique artifacts, exhibits and interactive experiences at the **New York Times Square Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum**. We reserved a coach bus and loaded it with 50 youths and adult chaperones. As we neared our destination, the bus driver stated we were early and asked if we were up for a tour around Times Square. The youths got excited as they saw Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Hello Kitty, Power Rangers, Iron Man, The Grinch, Elmo and Cookie Monster. We disembarked, and the youths took photos with their favorite



Characters. As we entered Ripley's Believe It Or Not, there were "ooh's and aahs." We saw shrunken heads, Waldrow, the world's tallest man, a lady with many gold bands to stretch her neck, a train made out of millions of match sticks, a bearded lady, lizard man with the reptilian tongue, and vampire woman. The interactive experience they could not get enough of was the black hole, where their equilibrium was off, and they lost their balance. Another popular experience was the musical steps. As the youths went up and down the steps, the steps made musical sounds like a piano. Some of the items seemed so strange and unusual at Ripley's Believe it or Not, that some of the youths questioned their validity. At the end of the event I heard a youth say, "**I had a weird old time.**"

— Andrew Thomas, Jr. Program Director



Client Story: Altamese Jackson



Altamese Jackson - Age 38

The Step Up for Better Living (SUBL) program is a blessing to the community. The support staff is honest, open, helpful, empathetic, and proactive. They are action-oriented individuals who believe wholeheartedly in what they do, and it reflects in their work. Although I've met several members of the SUBL Family, I am most familiar with Twila Waters. She has been a great Social Worker and Friend to me over the

stay above water. Ms. Waters made it possible for us to weather this storm in our lives by being someone we could count on to help us stay safe.

SUBL does not just help with "common" issues like rent and food. They are about healing, growth, and development. They have programs to help teach you about healthy eating and smart shopping (one of my favorites). They celebrate all of us and recognize not just the hard-working mothers, but very-present fathers. They give us brunches for our special days and take the dads to sporting events in a show of brotherhood and solidarity. It makes a difference to them as community service workers that we as a community are strong and stick together. **We are all one big family brought together by Step Up for Better Living.**

Ms. Waters made it possible for us to weather this storm in our lives by being someone we could count on to help us stay safe.

years. When my husband and I were at one of the lowest points in our lives financially, she stepped in and helped us with everything! She advocated on our behalf to keep our home, provided valuable resources to keep food in our home, and even referred us to organizations that helped introduce normalcy and enjoyment into our lives to keep our spirits lifted. After our little girl was born, she worked even harder to help us

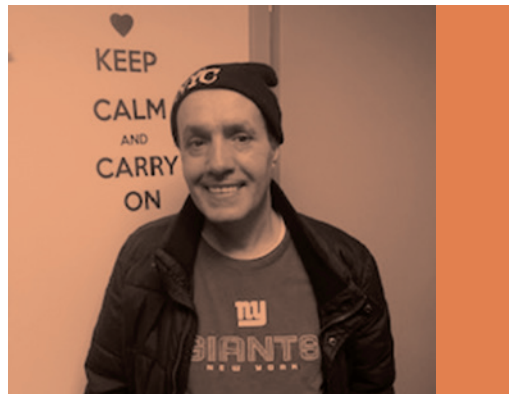
It's been a few years and I am nothing but grateful for having Ms. Waters and the SUBL family in my life. Her work and compassion saw me and my family through some of the toughest obstacles we've faced and even though we are doing much better, I know that her tireless contributions and assistance helped us get here. **Thank you, Ms. Waters, and the entire SUBL Family for being "beacons of light" in our darkest hours.**

A Voice from the Field: Hassan DeFrane

I am excited that I finally was certified for Section 8 housing. Mr. Andrew Thomas, Jr. worked diligently in explaining the process and assisting me and my family with obtaining all of the documents I needed to submit to Section 8.

I am thankful and I appreciate this because being certified allows me and my family to pay a lower portion of

my rent. This gives me an opportunity to do more things with my children like attending a sporting event, buying better clothing, and having more food on the table. Without this assistance our struggle would be harder. Thank you Step Up for Better Living and thank you Mr. Thomas, Jr.



Hassan DeFrane - Age 60

Get Involved



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

The Step Up Case for Support

Situation/Need



A severe shortage of affordable housing, rising rents and stagnating incomes has resulted in a **homelessness crisis in New York City** with an 82 percent increase over the last ten years.³



The average length of stay for a family in shelter can exceed eleven months.⁴ This lack of stability has a **direct impact on the educational achievement of children** and life outcomes.



Homeless children are less likely than other children to be on grade level and more likely to drop out of school. This **perpetuates a cycle of poverty** that can span generations.



The communities served by Step Up (Mott Haven, East Tremont, Morrissania and Hunts Point) have the **city's highest rates of rent burden**.

³ <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless-2018/>

⁴ www.nyc.gov/html/endinghomelessness/downloads/pdf/ch6_minimize_duration.pdf

Step Up's Response

Step up is dedicated to **stabilizing families** and helping to break the generational cycle of poverty. Step Up provides individualized case management services, educational workshops and youth programs, that are all designed to provide the community's most vulnerable residents (low-income families and individuals as well as senior citizens) with the stability they need to pursue economic independence and achieve an improved quality of life.

Step Up provides families with access to:



Housing Subsidies



Eviction Prevention



Crisis Intervention



Mental Health Services



Adolescent Counseling/Programs



Senior Services



Financial Management

g to make a donation or to volunteer.

Board of Directors

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Executive Director

Twila Waters
Director of Social Services

Andrew Thomas, Jr.
Program Director

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Tiffany Collier
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Jess Mott Wickstrom

Volunteers

Jaline Ortiz
Jamaira Paramo
Kaylin Rodriguez

Contact

424 E. 147th St
Bronx, NY 10455

1 (833) SUBL-NYC
info@sublnyc.org

sublnyc.org



For more
information
about our services,
contact:

Twila Waters
1 (833) SUBL-NYC

Andrew Thomas, Jr.
1 (833) SUBL-NYC

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 to Step Up for Better Living at 132 East 43rd Street, Suite 201, New York, New York 10017 or by writing to the Charities Bureau (Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, 19th Floor, New York, New York 10005).