

Barrier Free Living Annual Report 2008



Celebrating 25 years of helping people with disabilities help themselves.

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(July 1, 2007—June 30, 2008)

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Our Mission

Barrier Free Living is dedicated to helping New Yorkers with disabilities live independently in the community. We provide a range of services and links to other community resources, enabling individuals to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of their living dignified, secure lives.

A Message from the President and Chairman of the Board



In these times of fiscal austerity, stories abound of businesses closing and people out of work. Our vocation is to raise up the issues of the forgotten New Yorkers who were struggling day by day before the financial crisis. We did a study this year of what average New Yorkers thought about people with disabilities. "Independence," "mobility" and "jobs" were at the top of the list—all worthy issues. No one



thought about our issues: domestic violence or homelessness.

Talk to women with disabilities and it's a different story. This past year, a national organization for wheelchair users did a survey of their female members. The number-one issue of women with disabilities across the country is domestic abuse. With 22 years in the domestic violence field, that is no surprise to us.

Barrier Free Living (BFL) has the largest domestic violence program for victims with disabilities in the country---and it's not big enough. We are committed to continue to expand the program to meet the needs of more families in distress. We have just started a partnership with the Urban Justice Center to fund a full-time social worker for our work in the Queens Family Justice Center which opened this year. The Mayor's office has asked us to be a founding partner for the Bronx Family Justice Center, which will provide comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence in the Bronx. We have made a commitment to that new initiative in the hopes that we find the resources to hire another full-time worker to provide services there.

At the same time, we are working with New Destiny Housing Development Corporation to develop 50 units of supportive housing for families with a disabled head of household. We plan to work with families that need more than the care we offer them in the 135 days they can stay at Freedom House. One such story shows the pressing need for our care.

Maria, a 27-year-old woman, came to Freedom House with three-year-old twins with congenital heart disease. She and her husband came from Trinidad for medical intervention for her boys. Maria was abused by her husband while one of her twins was hospitalized for a heart transplant. After successful surgery, she disclosed the abuse to a hospital chaplain. She and her boys found a safe haven at Freedom House, our domestic violence emergency shelter. Our clinical team worked closely to ensure the family's needs were being met and helped coordinate services outside of the facility.

When her other son fell ill and was in need of an emergency heart transplant, our childcare staff regularly stayed at the hospital with the children so Maria could return to Freedom House for rest and emotional support. The second heart transplant was successful. The children's health became stable, but they had to move to another shelter. Through our continued advocacy efforts even after they left us, the family received a permanent VISA and found an apartment for themselves. This was what her children had always wished for while in our shelter and in the hospital---a home of their own.

With your help, more families like Maria's can receive the care they need.

Paul. B. Feuerstein
President/CEO

Vincent Grenier
Chairperson

Programs



Left to right: Residents of Freedom House: Nicolyn Plummer, Secret Garden social worker, at the BFL Staff Appreciation Awards; a resident at the Transitional Housing Facility participates in a cooking class; Outreach Team member Tiffany Williams (right); members of the Occupational Therapy team.

Freedom House

Opened in 2006, Freedom House is the first fully accessible emergency shelter for disabled victims of domestic violence in the nation. Every part of the facility accommodates individuals who are mobility impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired. Services include safety planning; therapeutic and benefits counseling; legal advocacy; and children's parenting programs.

Transitional Housing Facility

BFL's Transitional Housing Facility provides safe shelter, case management services and occupational therapy to people with disabilities who are homeless. The mission: reintegrate residents into the community to live independently.

Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program

The Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program, also known as Secret Garden, offers consumers short- and long-term counseling and case management; advocacy within the

medical, mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, and criminal justice systems; and occupational therapy services.

Outreach Program

BFL's Outreach Program assists people with disabilities who are homeless, helping them gain access to permanent housing; public benefits; medical, psychiatric, and rehabilitative treatment; substance abuse treatment; and legal services.

Occupational Therapy Program

The Occupational Therapy Program provides dynamic living-skills groups and individualized evaluations. The program works with consumers to improve their ability to perform daily living tasks, offering assistance in areas related to employment and vocational training, continued education, financial management, parenting, and household management.

Working to Make a Change

- BFL served as a member of the NYC Task Force on Domestic Violence and Permanent Housing.
- BFL is a longtime member of the NYC Residential Domestic Violence Coalition and its Housing and Services Sub-committees and of the NYC Non-Residential Domestic Violence Coalition, working to ensure coordination of services for domestic violence survivors.
- BFL's president is the chair of Disability Network of NYC and is a board member of Homeless Services United.
- BFL initiated a Court Interpretation Task Force for Deaf Survivors of Domestic Violence, advocating for appropriately trained interpreters for court appearances.

In Their Own Words

In Her Own Words: Jana Foglia



With the help of BFL's Non-Residential Domestic Violence program, Jana Foglia is living free of abuse, and expressing herself as an artist.

I moved into Barrier Free Living's Transitional Shelter in 2000. I was a very angry person at that time. My social worker was Lauren Feldman. Lauren helped me a lot. I received a Section 8 certificate and moved into

an apartment in the Bronx, where I've lived for seven years.

While living in the Bronx, I became involved in an abusive relationship that lasted for six years. I again found help through Barrier Free Living, going to the Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program. It was there that I began to really work on my domestic violence issues. I have benefited from the program's individual therapy and the wonderful groups they hold. I recently participated in a Deafness Awareness benefit performance.

I work closely with the program's Assistant Director, Molly Freyer, looking at the power and control wheel, and my issues. I see that I've actually been dealing

with domestic violence for my entire life. That wheel has truly changed my life. When I got out of that abusive relationship, I was really able to begin to work on myself and live my life.

I now do a lot of art projects to express myself. Art is a very important part of my healing process. I'm not angry and a lot happier. In a lot of ways that's because of Barrier Free Living. In addition to my therapeutic artwork, I've started creating greeting cards, and hope to one day start my own greeting card and art company.



In His Own Words: Vladimir Gomez



Vladimir Gomez moved from homelessness to working as an Outreach Case Manager

with the help of Barrier Free Living's Transitional Housing Program.

I arrived at Barrier Free Living's transitional housing in February of 2007 feeling that my life was out of control. It was me against the world. Friends and family were tired of dealing with me. BFL gave me a warm place to sleep, three meals a day and life-skill building activities. I was soon able to

refocus my mind and body and see past my disability and become productive in my life again.

After four months in the program, I knew it was time to do what I always wanted to do: go back to school and find a place to live. With the help of my case manager, I moved out of BFL after 5 months, enrolled in a college program and moved into an SRO.

A year and a half has passed, and I am a proud graduate of Katharine Gibbs College with an associate degree. I recently applied for and got a job at Barrier Free Living, working with Angel Caula and the Outreach Team. My life has truly come full circle. Every day now I get up to go to Barrier Free Living, now to work. I see this is my time to give back.

Highlights of 2008

Over the past year, Barrier Free Living has continued to break through barriers in its work with homeless disabled adults and with disabled victims of domestic violence. A few of our many accomplishments are listed below.



- The Transitional Housing team sponsored its first annual “Graduation,” bringing back former residents now successfully living in the community to inspire and offer guidance to those still living in the shelter.
- BFL’s Outreach Program successfully provided information and referrals to over 2,000 homeless disabled adults in assisting them to access the services they need.
- Freedom House and Secret Garden collaborated to create the Deaf Outreach Committee, in an effort to improve information and service provision to the deaf community citywide.
- Joining Freedom House this year was Hayley Stoker (pictured above center), a tri-lingual, Gallaudet-trained social worker whose hiring provided the program with additional language capacity in serving deaf and hard-of-hearing survivors of domestic violence.
- During the summer of 2008, Freedom House was selected to be featured on NY1 as “New Yorker of the Week” in recognition of its unique status as the only fully accessible emergency shelter for disabled domestic violence survivors and their families.
- In response to an invitation by the Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence, Secret Garden began its participation at the Queens Family Justice Center, the city’s integrated service facility for domestic violence survivors, as the only program specializing in victims with disabilities.
- Secret Garden fielded over 4,500 hotline calls, serving as a critical resource for information, referrals and counseling. The program also initiated psychiatric consultation services to consumers unable to access treatment elsewhere.

Financials for 2008

Balance Sheet June 30, 2008

ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,453,897
Contracts and grants receivable	507,358
Other accounts receivable	749
Prepaid expenses	163,953
Other assets	975
Property & equipment (less depreciation and amortization)	7,857,552
TOTAL ASSETS	\$9,984,009
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Current portion of loans payable	143,709
Current portion of notes payable	20,000
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	563,422
Accrued salary & vacation payable	237,740
Due to governmental agencies	1,341
Funding advances	514,138
Loans payable	522,657
Notes payable	7,699,955
NET ASSETS	
Temporary Restricted	184,907
Unrestricted	97,481
Total net assets (deficit)	282,388
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$9,984,009

Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets Year Ended June 30, 2008

REVENUES	
Government contracts and grants	\$5,344,832
In-kind contributions	815,513
Contributions	742,701
Rental income	134,336
Interest income	20,746
Residence fees	6,000
Miscellaneous	1,401
TOTAL REVENUES	\$7,065,529
EXPENSES	
Program services	5,679,325
Supporting services	1,215,505
TOTAL EXPENSES	6,894,830
Change in net assets (deficit)	170,699
NET ASSETS (DEFICIT), BEGINNING OF YEAR	111,689
NET ASSETS (DEFICIT), END OF YEAR	282,388

Barrier Free Living graciously thanks our contributors and funders who have enabled us to continue serving thousands of people with disabilities in need through their financial support and grants.

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