

breaking barriers

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October is DV Awareness Month

In October, voices rise across the nation in recognition of Domestic Violence (DV) Awareness Month, and events range from a Bridal March Against DV in NYC's South Bronx to education campaigns in workplaces countrywide.

At BFL's two DV programs—Freedom House Emergency Shelter and Secret Garden, non-residential program—the agency's commitment to domestic violence survivors with disabilities is highlighted with workshops and a specially-planned performance.

"DV Awareness month should not be just October but all year," said Isa Martinez, Director of Freedom House. Freedom House, the first fully-accessible emergency domestic violence center in the country for men, women, and children with disabilities, was featured this summer as "New Yorker of the Week" by the city's acclaimed 24-hour news channel, NY1 (www.ny1.com).

As part of DV Awareness Month, Molly Freyer, Assistant Director at Secret Garden, will present



Former residents of Freedom House

"Serving Disabled Survivors of Interpersonal Violence and Sexual Assault" on October 2 at NYC's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (www.gaycenter.org).

"This month is an opportunity for us to honor survivors everywhere and to celebrate their strength," said Freyer. "It also allows us to raise awareness in the greater community regarding the often overlooked issue of domestic violence and disability."

Secret Garden, which

offers a range of services, including case management and short-and long-term counseling, will also hold a special theatrical performance on November 14. The event, which focuses on DV issues in the deaf community, is being organized by Secret Garden social worker Nicolyn Plummer.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month evolved from the first Day of Unity observed in October, 1981 by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. For more information, go to www.ncadv.org.

A Message From The President

“Breaking Barriers,” the name of our new newsletter, is what Barrier Free Living is all about. Many times, people assume that barrier free living is all about architecture or accessible transportation. We are neither architects nor city planners. We are advocates and community organizers. As has been mentioned recently, community organizers go to work when our civic leaders

have not addressed our issues.

Over the years, we have played an important role in breaking down barriers to transportation and buildings, but we have done it by addressing the underlying issues of ignorance or lack of concern about the needs of this country’s largest minority: people with disabilities. That continues to be our goal.



*Paul B. Feuerstein,
President/CEO*

Breaking News

Right On

BFL’s Occupational Therapy program (at right) is partnering with the city for an MTA bus accessibility workshop. Residents of BFL’s transitional housing program for homeless adults with disabilities will learn about their rights to an accessible ride, safety tips and more.



Toast Of The Town

This summer, NY1, New York City’s acclaimed 24-hour news channel named Freedom House “New Yorker of the Week”. The video, and a print version of the story, is featured at www.ny1.com.

On Board

Patrice Maher recently joined BFL’s Board of Directors. She is Corporate Treasurer-Global Treasury Coverage, Morgan Stanley, New York City.

Lead On

As part of the U.S. Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program, a group from Israel stopped by BFL’s transitional housing facility this September to learn more about accessibility and equality for people with special needs. President/CEO Paul Feuerstein met with the distinguished group for a tour and presentation.

Break Time



Team members from our four unique programs (BFL Transitional Housing, Freedom House, Secret Garden, Outreach) exchange ideas about the agency. In this issue, Molly Fryer, Assistant Director of The Secret Garden asks Yenely Gomez, Child Care/ Recreation Director of Freedom House about her work with children.



Molly Fryer, announcing winners at this year's BFL Staff Appreciation Awards



Yenely Gomez, at the BFL Staff Appreciation Awards.

Q At Freedom House, what inspires you when working with domestic violence survivors with disabilities and their children?

Q What led you to work with children?

Q How do you feel Freedom House is unique from other social service programs?

Q What is your favorite thing to do when you're not working at Freedom House?

A *I love working one-on-one with the families. I enjoy the direct interaction I have with the children and the parents. It's great to see the positive difference that we can have on someone's life when they are residing at Freedom House.*

A *My inspiration to work with children began when I did an internship with YAI/NYL (Young Adult Institute/New York League) and was working in a pre-school with children with different types of disabilities. To see a smile on a child's face because of the work we did together made my day. I enjoy helping people with disabilities because society isolates them in certain aspects and I want to work to help overcome that isolation.*

A *Our programs provide services to people with disabilities who are also domestic violence survivors. No other agency in New York city does this. We are the first accessible emergency shelter for people with disabilities in the nation.*

A *I like to spend some time with my family and my fiancé. I enjoy going to the movies or shopping.*

