

University Neighborhood Housing Program Northwest Bronx Resource Center 2017-2018

In 2017-18 UNHP was able to solidify and expand our work to increase housing security and financial stability for low-income Bronx tenants. The addition of new partners and services at UNHP's Northwest Bronx Resource Center (NWBRC) has enabled us to provide direct eviction prevention and affordable housing services, in addition to the wide range of financial services already available at the NWBRC.

UNHP continues to partner with NYC Tenant Support Unit to offer twice monthly 1:1 assistance



to prevent eviction and UNHP staff meet twice weekly with low-income Bronx residents seeking to freeze their rent or apply for the NYC affordable housing lottery. In April 2017 UNHP was designated an HPD Housing Ambassador by HPD, this increased the number of people reaching out to us for help through the 311 system as well as our own local outreach efforts. The NWBRC is an NYC Financial Empowerment Site and offers

free 1:1 financial advisement with a coach, (Margarita pictured here) from Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners as well as a group financial education 4-session workshop known as Getting Ahead. 158 Bronx residents have worked with our financial coach for a total of 224 sessions from 10/17 through 4/18 and 85 Bronxites have participated in the English or Spanish language sessions of Getting Ahead.

- Working with our partners, Ariva and Fordham Bedford Community Services as well as over 80 Fordham University and Manhattan College student volunteers, UNHP provided free tax preparation for 1,419 low and moderate income Bronx residents. Fee-Free refunds for our program were over 1.9M and including \$758, 900 from the Earned Income Tax Credit. UNHP's tax clients were 20% Black, 67% Hispanic, 6% White and 2% Asian. 59% of our tax filers earned less than \$20,000 and 81% earned less than \$30,000. In addition to professional and fee-free tax preparation, UNHP also offers on-site services including, SNAP screening by our partner POTS, Housing Connect enrollment, NYC Rent Freeze screening, credit report print-outs and appointment scheduling for follow-up financial coaching and other services. Read more about our [program here](#).
- Worked with six local bank branches to provide a day of "Pop-Up services at the branch. UNHP assisted over 70 bank customers at these local branches, Amalgamated Bank, Ridgewood Savings Bank, Apple Bank for Savings, TD Bank, Capital One and Citibank.

Provided on the spot information and scheduled follow-up appointments for our housing (11) and financial services (19)

- Offered two community events in collaboration with [Ariva's Ready to Rent Program](#) and other local partners to bring our housing and financial services to the northwest Bronx neighborhoods of University/Morris Heights and Crotona. The two events held on June 6th and June 14th, provided attendees with access to NYC Housing Connect (the NYC affordable housing online lottery system), NYC Rent Freeze, 1:1 financial coaching, SNAP benefits and eviction prevention services. Ariva's Ready to Rent program was an important part of each event and is designed to provide essential financial coaching services to those applying for NYC affordable housing to ensure that they understand their household income, have a plan for savings and are ready to rent if the opportunity arises. Along with UNHP and Ariva, Part of the Solution (POTS), NYC Tenant Support Unit, NYC Department of Finance and staff from the Mary Mitchell Community Center, provided assistance to 69 people who attended the events. During these two events, UNHP created 49 new Housing Connect profiles, completed over 140 affordable housing lotteries applications, started 4 SCRIE/DRIE applications, and provided 20 financial coaching sessions and credit assessments via Ariva. Click [here for more information and pictures](#) on the Bank Pop-Ups and Community Events
- UNHP organized and held a 2017 and 2018 large affordable housing and financial services Resource Fair, branded as Bronxtober Fest. Between the two events UNHP assisted over 200 Bronx residents. Attendees had the opportunity to speak to legal representatives, bankers, counselors, advisers and program associates. On-site NYC Housing Connect, NYC Rent Freeze, and financial coaching available throughout the day-long events. Outcomes: 20 Credit pulls and brief review, 90 attendees enrolled in NYC Housing Connect and the Department of Finance assisted 11 seniors and people with disabilities with enrollment in the NYC Rent Freeze Program. Read more about our [2017](#) and [2018 Bronxtober](#) Fest events by clicking on the links.



Ready to Rent counselor, 8 met with the Tenant Support Unit, 2 met with Legal Aid

- In 2018 offered two special housing and financial events as part of our well-used free tax prep program. 44 Bronx residents attended the [January 17th Financial Fitness Open House](#) and were able to make a tax appointment, enroll in Housing Connect, meet with Ariva's Ready to Rent Financial Counselors and address rental housing issues with NYC's Tenant Support Unit. Of the 44 attendees, many used multiple services: 6 attendees met with a

Society, 25 came for general information and intake screening, 24 attendees enrolled in Housing Connect and 3 people came to schedule their free income tax preparation appointments. On Saturday, February 10, UNHP partnered with Fordham student volunteers to offer a [Housing Connect-A-Thon](#) during one of our tax days. The 12 students quickly learned how to use the online Housing Connect platform and assisted 29 Bronxites enroll in Housing Connect and another 5 senior citizens apply for Serviam Heights. The Ready to Rent counselor was on-site during the Financial Fitness Event, the Housing Connect-A-Thon and again in March seeing a total of 25 Housing Connect enrollees.



- UNHP did outreach and scheduling for twice monthly access to eviction prevention services offered by NYC Tenant Services Unit. TSU assisted 87 low-income Bronx tenants (May 2017-March 2018) with eviction prevention services including obtaining repairs, addressing landlord harassment, referrals to legal services

and access to Homebase rent arrears payment services. The TSU counselor, Fidel is bilingual and can assist Bronx tenants find the resources to remain housed.

- UNHP provided the outreach and scheduling and service provision for twice-weekly NYC Rent Freeze (SCRIE/DRIE) for seniors and people with disabilities and enrollment in NYC online affordable housing lottery, Housing Connect. In 2017/8 UNHP submitted 122 complete Rent Freeze applications or renewals to the Department of Finance.
- 70 Bronx residents attended at least one of two First-time Homebuyer Events held in May 2018. The events offered an opportunity for attendees to access their mortgage readiness and learn about the variety of grants and bank programs for first-time buyers. UNHP provided credit reports to attendees and many signed up for follow-up financial advisement to improve their credit and savings as they move towards their homeownership goals. [More information](#)

The NYC Rent Freeze can assist seniors and people with disabilities remain in their apartments despite limited incomes. To qualify, applicants must be 62 or older, pay 1/3 of their income in rent and be on the lease. DOF will freeze their rent and pay the landlord the future rent increases.

Andrea a retired hospital employee was thrilled that her NYC Rent Freeze came through thanks to UNHP. " They (NYC Department of Finance) told me this is the



rent you will pay forever - I used to worry how I could pay the rent after I retired, but now I can sleep at night." Andrea worked for 39 years at Bronx Lebanon Hospital and now enjoys spending her time with her rescue dog, Gisella.



Housing Connect

In April 2017, UNHP became an HPD Housing Ambassador, promoting our services to help Bronx residents enroll in Housing Connect, NYC's online affordable housing lottery. UNHP just heard from our first successful Housing Connect client, Audis Reyes, who came by our offices to show us his lease and keys to his brand new apartment in the Bronx. Audis is a long-time client of our partner, Ariva. Working with a Ready to Rent coach and Raniel from UNHP, Audis applied for a number of Bronx apartments through Housing Connect. Audis had been a construction worker for many years but was disabled after working around the World Trade Center after 9/11.

Audis signed a lease for a beautiful two bedroom that he will share with his daughter in the West Farms neighborhood. "I am so grateful and happy! The apartment is beautiful and right across from the train and a school."