



# HEIGHTS AND HILLS

supporting brooklyn's older adults

81 Willoughby Street, Suite 302

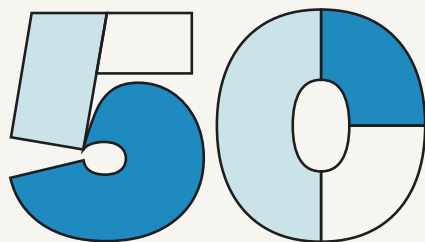
Brooklyn, NY 11201

718-596-8789 • [www.heightsandhills.org](http://www.heightsandhills.org)



Heights and Hills proudly meets all standards for charity accountability.

CELEBRATING



GREAT YEARS

## HEIGHTS AND HILLS 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY VIRTUAL CELEBRATION

Monday, June 7, 2021

Please join us for an inspirational evening to celebrate our past and highlight our future uplifting our clients, staff and volunteers.

Honoring **Judy Willig**, former Executive Director of Heights and Hills, for her 33 years of extraordinary leadership, who will engage in conversation with **John Leland**, *New York Times* journalist and author.

Also honoring **Jana and Tom Bergdall** with the Mary Ellen Critchlow Award for their outstanding volunteer service this past year.

Streaming begins at 6:45pm with  
e-Reception and Program at 7:00pm.

Registration is free at  
<https://bit.ly/HeightsandHills50>

SPRING 2021

# HEIGHTS AND HILLS

• AT HOME •



## Welcome to new Executive Director, Carrie Bloss



**I took it as  
a sign from  
the universe  
that this is  
where I am  
meant to be.**

I am honored to be writing to you as the new Executive Director of Heights and Hills following in the footsteps of Judy Willig and Betsy Smulyan.

Last fall, I was helping my parents while they were facing some health issues. My mom's situation was temporary, and she is now fully recovered. But she was the primary caretaker for my beloved stepfather who was in his final months of a long battle with terminal cancer. I was traveling from my apartment in Brooklyn to them in Manhattan every day or two for weeks – all while working full time, caring for my school aged kids and, like everyone else, dealing with the pandemic. My siblings were going as well, but I live closer so more of the work fell to me.

At my wits' end, I called a friend who runs a program for older adults to get his advice – we needed help and I did not know where to begin. He told me I needed to call Heights and Hills and that I could get support from the care-giver program. He told me about the quality of our services and

how it could help me. Little did he know, I had just applied for this job. I took it as a sign from the universe that this is where I am meant to be.

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead such a vital organization, Brooklyn would not be what it is without its older adults, and I believe it is our responsibility to help them age successfully in our community. They built and continue to be vital members of our community. I am humbled by the work of our staff and volunteers to support older adults maintain their independence. Despite the pandemic, our programs have thrived thanks to the creativity and resourcefulness of our team and as a result we are able to serve thousands of individuals with meals, classes, and human connection.

But we cannot do what we do without you. Thank you to our donors and volunteers for your partnership and commitment to our mission and to our clients for allowing us to be a part of your lives. I hope you can all join us on June 7th at 7pm for our 50th Anniversary Virtual Celebration!

Carrie Zwiebel Bloss  
Executive Director

### WELCOME FROM THE BOARD

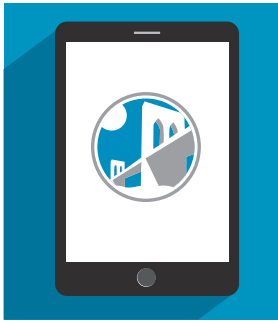
After an extensive search, the Board of Directors of Heights and Hills announced the appointment of Carrie Bloss as Executive Director of Heights and Hills, starting April 5. Carrie succeeds Judy Willig, who led the organization for 33 years, and Betsy Smulyan, who served as ED for a transitional period.

Carrie has dedicated her career to serving New York's most vulnerable people. She most recently served as the Executive Director of Project Hospitality, the largest social service non-profit on Staten Island. Prior to this, Carrie served as Vice President of Breaking Ground, a renowned provider of supportive housing and homeless services. Carrie received a Bachelor of Arts from Carleton College and a Master of Public Policy from Harvard's Kennedy School.

### HEIGHTS AND HILLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michelle Grasparil, *President*  
Shana Wertheimer, *Vice President*  
Stephanie Lazarus, *Treasurer*  
Ravi P. Ramchandani, *Secretary*  
Gwenn Cagann  
Alice Chen  
Amanda Chessa  
Bevin Cohen  
Brian W. Ecclesine  
Kurt Fields  
Ellen Goodman  
AnneMarie Gussman  
Tracy Jackson  
Scott Kleiner  
Kim Reed  
Shannese Sutton  
Aristaia Vasilakis  
Anne Zhu-Haley  
Carrie Bloss, *Executive Director*

## Heights and Hills launches the TECHNOLOGY PROJECT



**NYFE** NEW YORK  
FOUNDATION  
FOR ELDERCARE

In April, Heights & Hills began a project to connect our clients to the virtual world, thanks to a grant from the New York Foundation for Eldercare. The pandemic has made on-line engagement even more vital, to prevent loneliness and create connections.

Twenty-five clients from across H&H programs received free tablet computers with a year of unlimited data service (wifi not required). To ensure that participants learn the skills they need, Heights and Hills is partnering with Candoo, a technology service and training company for older adults. Participants define their own learning goals, such as telemedicine, video conferencing, email, online classes and more. Each person attends a one-on-one training session online, and then has unlimited access to Candoo's tech support services. Candoo will also provide monthly classes for H&H clients on special topics such as cyber security.

**I appreciate it very much. You guys are the greatest, and I'm looking forward to learning more on my laptop.**

*- Phillistine, a client who recently learned to use Zoom on her new device*

## CONNECTING through ART

at the PARK SLOPE CENTER FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING



▲ Above: Yasmeen Abdallah, art instructor at PSCSA, installing one of her works entitled "Tea Vines". Above right: Art work by a PSCSA client in Yasmeen's class.

Virtual gatherings have been the hallmark of Covid, but after almost a year, the Park Slope Center for Successful Aging (PSCSA) wanted to engage clients in a material way. So they shipped clients their own art kits to use in a visual arts zoom class.

Yasmeen Abdallah, the instructor, has an active art practice, primarily in sculptural works. She also has experience in painting and drawing, and has taught both students and older adults. In this class, she shows inspirational artworks as a basis, using them to teach techniques for blending and layering water colors, pencils and pastels. She described the class as a virtual studio setting, saying that "this group likes to work in silence...then they are open to sharing their work at different stages of the process."

Arlene, a student in the class, said that she loves the focus on technique. "Yasmeen critiques our work in such a supportive and educational way...she promotes freedom for complete creativity, but we always learn something from her."

**For class schedules and more information about PSCSA, please visit [heightsandhills.org](https://heightsandhills.org) or call Matt Abrams, Center Director at (718) 832-3726.**



## Volunteerism Blossoms!

This has been a big year for our volunteer program. Client need swelled and was met with an outpouring of support from our community. H&H re-configured volunteer opportunities to respond safely and with compassion. Our volunteers have delivered 13,000 meals and food bags, and 600 individual shopping orders in the past year. They made 5,500 wellness calls and spent 2,600 hours visiting with clients virtually and by phone.

Volunteer offers began pouring in right after the shut-down. "Helping others was a way for people to manage their own stress and fear," says Volunteer Programs Director Betsy Guttmacher. A volunteer named Mira talked about "how wonderful it feels to be part of purposeful work...the staff of Heights and Hills is so kind, gentle, loving and dedicated and it is an honor to learn from and with everyone I have met through volunteering."

One client said that volunteers delivering groceries is "like Santa bringing me gifts." Another said that "when governments ordered us to cover our facial expressions with masks so even babies and children did not see our feelings, it was good to see volunteers bringing food. They have been frequent reminders that we are still human."

► Right: A Zoom "breakout room" from Volunteer Appreciation Night. Usually, we celebrate in person, but this year, 50 volunteers joined us to celebrate virtually — with one-eyed zoom filters and virtual party hats!

**You get from it as much as you give – if not, more! These seniors have so much to offer in terms of life lessons and insights.**

*– Kathy, Heights & Hills volunteer wellness caller*



### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

updated weekly on [heightsandhills.org](https://heightsandhills.org)  
For more information, please contact  
Betsy Guttmacher,  
Volunteer Program Director,  
[volunteer@heightsandhills.org](mailto:volunteer@heightsandhills.org)  
or (718) 596-8789 x329

### CAREGIVER MEETINGS

All meetings are free of charge.  
For more information on caregiving webinars and workshops, please visit [heightsandhills.org](https://heightsandhills.org) or call Raquel Perlman, Caregiver Program Director, at (718) 596-8789.

## A LIFELINE for Caregivers

Caregiving can be an isolating and lonely experience to begin with, let alone during a pandemic. For many of our clients, connecting to other caregivers through virtual support groups has been a lifeline. These groups are unique, safe spaces where caregivers can be honest about their triumphs and tribulations, their fears and frustrations, and where they share the joy and meaning they find in caregiving. This winter/spring, the Caregiver Program has offered six different support groups with record participation.

Our new **Dementia Caregiver Support Group** focused on practical caregiving skills. In the final meeting of this 8-week session, one participant shared that by putting these skills into practice, he and his mother had a smooth and successful doctor's appointment, something that had seemed impossible prior to joining the group.

In the **Brooklyn Parkinson's Group**, a participant who is caring for her husband thanked the group facilitator for "creating a climate of harmony and understanding and uplifting us despite the heavy topics we discuss."

**Such important discussions happen nowhere else, even with closest friends.**

*- Brooklyn Parkinson's Group Participant*