

FALL 2021

HEIGHTS AND HILLS

• AT HOME •



LETTER FROM CARRIE BLOSS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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I remember coming home from work on March 20, 2020. Governor Cuomo had just announced the NY PAUSE order. As I crossed the bridge into Brooklyn, I called my husband and asked him to get to the store as soon as possible. It was scary and stressful, but he was easily able to get what we needed. We could afford to stock up and he is physically capable of carrying bags of groceries back from the stores and up the stairs to our apartment.

But the story was different for too many older adults in our community.

Twenty one percent of older adults in Brooklyn live under the poverty line and are unable to cover their basic needs - including healthy food. And even for those who have sufficient income and/or SNAP benefits (food stamps), physically going to the store, carrying groceries home, and preparing meals can be too difficult or even impossible.

These were challenges long before the COVID-19 pandemic. Since our founding 50 years ago, Heights and Hills has always worked to address these food insecurity challenges. The majority of the 1,200 homebound adults who participate in our case management program receive daily prepared meals from Meals On Wheels. Before this crisis, we provided nearly 12,000 congregate meals over the course of a typical year at the Park Slope Center for Successful Aging where lunches were served five days per week.

Neither of these meal services are enough to feed someone full time, rather they are part of a patchwork of assistance for those facing food insecurity. And that piecemeal system became even more tenuous once the pandemic began.

Once Heights and Hills was forced to close our doors, we quickly pivoted to working with volunteers to provide meals to members in their homes. But that only supported those who already relied on our meals. It could not address the needs of the hundreds of people who were newly contacting us for assistance. Because Meals on Wheels was forced to stop taking referrals from May of 2020 to until September of 2021, our social work staff had to find new sources and ways of supplying food to our clients.

We created our Shopping Squad which dispatches volunteers to shop and deliver food and supplies selected individually by our clients. We partnered with Camp Friendship whose volunteers delivered prepared meals and fresh produce to clients at their homes. Our staff and volunteers delivered hundreds of emergency food bags. And we referred several hundred people to Get Food, a NYC initiative which provided enough food for 3 days a week.

Unfortunately, some of these efforts do not have long term funding and have or will soon be ending. However, this fall we will start a pilot a project in partnership with St. John's Bread and Life to access to shelf stable food which we will make available to our clients and Center members. A smaller version of our Shopping Squad will continue this year thanks to private donors and volunteers.

And with your support we will continue to look for ways to ensure that older adults in our community have the nutrition they need to remain healthy.

Carrie Zwiebel Bloss
Executive Director

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IN-PERSON EVENTS RESUME AT PARK SLOPE CENTER FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING

PSCSA INFO

For weekly class schedules
and more information
please visit heightsandhills.org
or call Matt Abrams,
Center Director
at (718) 832-3726.

In early September, the Park Slope Center for Successful Aging (PSCSA) reopened for members for the first time since March 2020. Throughout the pandemic, PSCSA members met on Zoom for classes and group discussion as well as received meals delivered by volunteers. Now, PSCSA is open four mornings a week and in-person classes are being added each week. Attendance is capped at 25%, and all participants are required to mask and follow social distance requirements.

NEW CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

This spring the Caregiver Program presented two new virtual workshops for caregivers that touched on difficult and challenging themes that arise when caregiving – guilt and ambiguous loss.

Caregiver guilt is a normal emotion to the stress of caregiving. It can lead to depression and prevent caregivers from taking care of themselves. In the workshop ‘Guilt and Caregiving: Naming and Reframing’ thirteen participants attended via zoom to discuss guilt feelings that often go along with caregiving. Suggestions were provided to help name those feelings and learn how to work through them.

Ambiguous loss, coined by Dr. Pauline Bloss, describes a loss that is either physical or psychological but can't be concretely verified or easily resolved. And it differs from death which has finality. To some degree, many of us experienced ambiguous loss during COVID-19. Caregivers, experience psychological absence with physical presence, especially those who are caring for loved ones with dementia. Sixteen participants learned what ambiguous loss is, discussed personal experiences and explored how to honor the grief they feel with all loss.

CAREGIVER MEETINGS

All meetings are free of charge.
For more information, please visit
heightsandhills.org
or call Raquel Perlman,
Caregiver Program Director,
at (718) 596-8789.

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VOLUNTEER NEWS:

Art and Music at Home

This past summer our Friendly Visitors and their friends were able to enjoy music and art with each other and from the comfort of their own homes. **The Metropolitan Museum of Art** in partnership with **Citymeals** created and distributed Art Boxes to each Friendly Visitor and their older adult friend. These themed art boxes were designed to inspire conversations about art, history, nature, or something else.

In other news, **The Brooklyn Conservatory of Music** introduced **Singing through the Seasons** to our caregiver and friendly visitor clients via video or phone. Each session featured a trained music specialist from BKCM and participants were encouraged to sing along, ask questions or just sit back and enjoy.

And in the words of a volunteer...

Mira, one of our friendly visitors shared her experience with us.

"I just had the most wonderful start to my day! Mary, (my friendly visiting friend) and I had a little concert with Christine and it was such a treat!

The music was wonderful, Christine was so thoughtful about her musical choices and so inviting to us. And Mary!!!! She was singing along like I didn't even know she could!

I just spoke with her after our little concert, and she was so joyful and uplifted and thankful!

We both are! What Heights and Hills does is such a huge gift to this world and I don't have the words to describe how deeply being a volunteer and being connected to this community has touched me!

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything that you do!"

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▲ Contents from one of the Met's "Art Boxes" distributed to Friendly Visitor Volunteers and their older adult friends

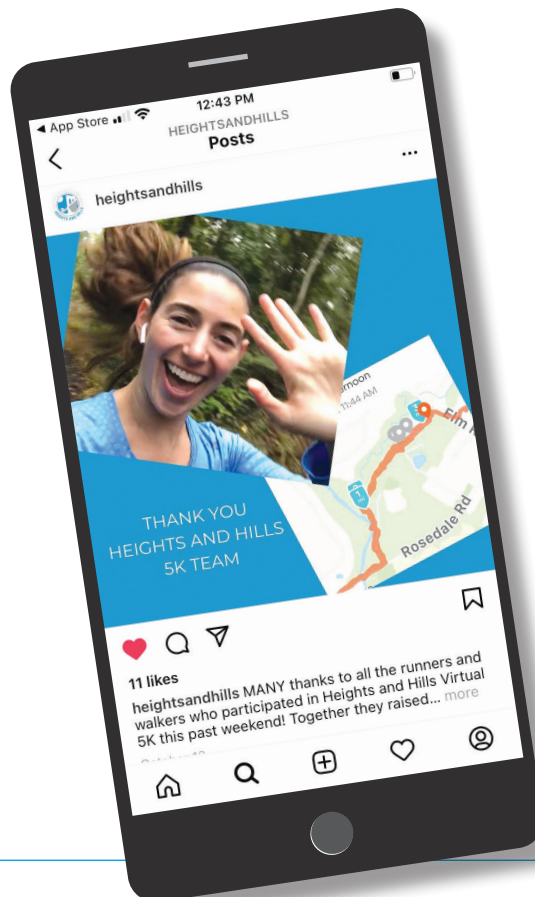
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

updated weekly on heightsandhills.org

For more information, please contact

Adina Matos,

Volunteer Program Director,
volunteer@heightsandhills.org
or (718) 596-8789 x329



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on **INSTAGRAM**
@heightsandhills
and **FACEBOOK!**

◀ A recent post featuring a photo of Raquel Perlman, Caregiver Program Director and member of the Heights and Hills 5K Team.

Keep up to date with all of our latest news and programs!



HEIGHTS AND HILLS

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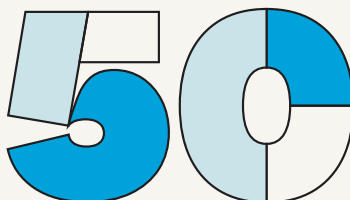
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Heights and Hills proudly meets all standards for charity accountability.

CELEBRATING



GREAT YEARS

HEIGHTS AND HILLS 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Our 50th Anniversary Celebration was an inspirational evening that celebrated our past and highlighted our future uplifting our clients, staff and volunteers. We honored **Judy Willig**, former Executive Director of Heights and Hills for her 33 years of extraordinary leadership. As part of the program, Judy engaged in conversation with John Leland, *New York Times* journalist and author. We also presented **Jana and Tom Bergdall** with the Mary Ellen Critchlow Award for their outstanding volunteer service this past year. Other highlights included musical guests Meshell Ndegeocello and The Scooches who provided uplifting entertainment and mixologist Estelle Bossy, who demonstrated how to make The Brooklyn cocktail. Please visit heightsandhills.org to view the full program.

**THANK YOU to our sponsors and supporters who virtually celebrated with us in June,
for 50 years of promoting successful aging in Brooklyn.**

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*Many thanks to Elle Oser for designing all of
our 50th Anniversary logos and graphics.*