

SPRING 2025

HEIGHTS AND HILLS • at home •



DEAR FRIENDS,

In 1971, when Heights and Hills was first founded, there were 2.6 million people living in Brooklyn. Today, the borough is home to only about 40,000 more people, however, who makes up that population has changed tremendously.

- **Brooklyn has more older adults now than ever before.** Older adults represented about 12% of Brooklyn residents for decades, but they now make up more than 16% of our community.
- **More Brooklyn older adults were foreign born.** Over the past decade, Brooklyn's older immigrant population grew by 46%, while its US-born older adult population increased by 24%. And 35% of Brooklyn residents aged 65+ have limited proficiency in speaking English.
- **Older adults in Brooklyn are living longer and have a high rate of disability.** Over the last decade, Brooklyn's population of those 85+ grew by 19%. More than 35% percent of Brooklyn's 65+ population had at least one disability
- **Many older adults in Brooklyn live below the poverty line and even those who own their own homes face significant financial strains.** More than one in every five older adults in Brooklyn is living in poverty. Sixty percent of Brooklyn residents 65+ are renters, 2/3 of whom spend 30% or more of their income on rent. Housing affordability also affects Brooklyn's 65+ homeowners, 45.5% of whom spend 30% or more of their income on monthly owner costs.

We have seen the population of older adults grow and change in the five plus decades since our founding and have continued to adapt our services to meet their needs.

- **This summer NYC Aging changed the neighborhoods where we serve homebound older adults, but they asked us to serve more people in other areas. We have hired staff who focus on conducting outreach in the community** to ensure that older adults are aware of our services. Through this work, over the last 10 months we have been able to increase the number of homebound older adults by 20%. We have also focused our outreach on underserved neighborhoods. Over the last two years, we have conducted more than 100 presentations in those areas and have engaged 261 caregivers in services.

Our staff reflects the communities we serve. Thirty-three percent of our staff is multilingual. We have staff who can communicate in Spanish, Haitian Creole, Mandarin, Cantonese, Taiwanese, Bengali, French, Hindi, Urdu, and Yoruba. We work to connect with volunteers who speak the languages of our clients and are actively looking for volunteers who speak Spanish, Haitian Creole, Mandarin, Russian, and Yiddish.

Carrie Zwiebel Bloss
Executive Director



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

Heights and Hills hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Sip and Paint event to celebrate the dedication of our Friendly Visitors—volunteers who provide companionship and support to isolated older adults across Brooklyn. Held in a cozy, relaxed setting, the evening featured guided painting, refreshments, and plenty of laughter. **It was a wonderful opportunity for volunteers to unwind, connect with one another, and be recognized for the meaningful impact they make every week.** We're so grateful for their time, compassion, and commitment to building a more connected community for older adults.

ADVOCATING FOR OLDER ADULTS

Heights and Hills attended the Aging in Place 2.0 rally at City Hall to support council bills for stronger interagency coordination to support older adults across issues — greater meal options, more tech support to adapt to technological developments, new resources to educate older adults about common fraud schemes, and policies to lay the groundwork for universal elder care across the five boroughs.

OUTREACH INITIATIVE

At the **Downstate Cancer Disparity Health Fair**, we had the opportunity to address the unique challenges caregivers face while supporting their loved ones through clinical trials. The uncertainty of whether a trial will succeed can be a significant source of stress for caregivers. During the event, we provided valuable resources to help alleviate this burden, including information on one-on-one counseling, support groups, and workshops. These services are designed to empower caregivers and provide them with tools to navigate the complexities of their role while prioritizing their own well-being.

The Schneps Media Healthy Wellness Expo: This event allowed us to connect with caregivers and community members, providing valuable resources and information on maintaining wellness while managing caregiving responsibilities.



CLIENT STORIES



In May 2020, **Ms. M** was referred to Heights and Hills after a stroke. Case Manager Sarah quickly connected her to essential services like home delivered meals,

Mr. B is a 75-year-old man living alone in a private house he owns in Prospect Lefferts Gardens. He lives with arthritis, visual impairment, and a prostate cancer diagnosis. He values his independence and only uses basic case management (CM) services like home-delivered meals. During a winter check-in call in February, in advance of a winter storm, he reported not having enough dosages for two of his medications to last through the snowy weather forecast. Normally he walks to a nearby pharmacy, but early nightfall coupled with his vision issues made it unsafe. A local car service was unavailable, and he couldn't afford Uber, nor could the pharmacy deliver. He expressed anxiety to his Case Manager that he would not be able to safely get his medication before the storm. The CM team coordinated an Uber trip for the client to travel to and from his local pharmacy to pick up his medications and the program paid for the trip. **The client expressed gratitude for the assistance he received and that he was able to get his medications while supporting his independence.**

Medicaid homecare, and transportation. Born in Guyana, Ms. M also received financial support from other agencies, which helped cover rent and basic needs. Despite suffering additional strokes in 2022, Ms. M made a strong recovery and returned home. With Sarah's continued support, she became a U.S. citizen, received over \$10,000 in Social Security back payments, and accessed SNAP, SCRIE, and mental health resources. Sarah also collaborated with Adult Protective Services, CAMBA Legal Services, and others to guide Ms. M through the CityFHEPS rental assistance program, which approved her in January 2025. The program paid off \$36,000 in rental arrears and now covers most of her rent, allowing her a fresh start and lifting a huge weight off her shoulders. **Sarah's communication between all involved agencies and ongoing advocacy has ensured that Ms. M does not fall through the cracks so that she can age in place safely. Thanks to these collective efforts, Ms. M now enjoys stability and a better quality of life.**



AT THE PARK SLOPE CENTER FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING

In March, we celebrated National Nutrition Month - an important opportunity for the Park Slope Center for Successful Aging to promote the vital connection between good nutrition and healthy aging. At the Center, we understand that access to balanced, nourishing meals supports not just physical health, but also emotional well-being and independence. National Nutrition Month reinforces our mission to empower older adults to thrive through every stage of aging.



HEIGHTS AND HILLS

supporting brooklyn's older adults

81 Willoughby Street, Suite 302
Brooklyn, NY 11201

718-596-8789 • www.heightsandhills.org

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF HEIGHTS AND HILLS INVITES YOU TO THE

HEIGHTS AND HILLS SPRING BENEFIT

TUESDAY, JUNE 10TH 2025

6PM – 8PM

COCKTAIL RECEPTION & AWARD CEREMONY

GRACE CHURCH

254 HICKS ST, BROOKLYN, NY 11201

HONORING

GRACE CHURCH

Key founder and long-time partner in supporting
the well-being and social community of older adults

MARY ELLEN CRITCHLOW AWARDEE

BLAISE LATRANO

For his exceptional and impactful volunteer service

MAKE YOUR RESERVATION TODAY! HEIGHTSANDHILLS.ORG

HEIGHTS AND HILLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Shana Dunn
President

Ellen Goodman
Vice-President

Alice Chen
Secretary

Ravi Ramchandani
Treasurer

Amir Bozorghaddad

Kurt Fields

Anne Marie Gussman

Trivia John-Thomas

Stephanie McCormick

Betsy Smulyan

Sean Thomas

Shannese Sutton

Aristaia G. Vasilakis

Anne Zhu