



# STEP UP FOR BETTER LIVING

**2019** ANNUAL REPORT

**Step Up for Better Living (Step Up) spent 2019 planning for the future to create a roadmap for the agency to grow over the next three years.** This included the need to acquire more space and hire more staff to meet the growing need for client services. Other challenges were more strategic—how can Step Up develop a strategic plan for future growth? How can Step Up diversify funding and which funders should be approached? The following describes how Step Up addressed four key challenges which resulted in strategies that we will use to grow the agency.

**Acquiring New Office Space:** Our new office located at 424 East 147th street in the Melrose section of the Bronx is strategically located to provide services to people in need. In 2019, the agency acquired 3,011 square feet of office space which includes a community kitchen, conference room, and enough office space to hire additional staff. Step Up now has increased capacity to offer housing assistance to families facing eviction, crisis intervention, nutrition counseling, comprehensive services for Seniors who need access to social security, Meals on Wheels and more.

**Building Fundraising Capacity:** over a three months period in the Spring of 2019 the Step Up Board and staff developed an Individual Donor Cultivation Plan that was funded by a grant from the New York City Council. When the planning was completed, Step Up had improved fundraising capacity by developing Fundraising software and providing Board training that improved our capacity to recruit and retain individual donors.

**Conducting Strategic Planning:** In October 2019 the Step Up Board and staff engaged in a strategic planning process that culminated in the development of a three-year strategic plan. The new mission, helping people in need achieve and sustain stability, wellness and self-sufficiency will be the foundation upon which all new and existing programs will be developed. The Strategic Plan includes strategic objectives that will be the benchmarks for success. These benchmarks were designed to be measurable, specific and realistic and will be used by Step Up to guide decision making and to measure our accomplishments. Moving forward, Step Up is now better positioned to accomplish its operational and strategic objectives.

**Improving Technology to Increase Productivity:** With the addition of a new office and adding more staff, Step Up faced logistical issues which had to be addressed. This included the need to connect staff working at different locations, organize workflows to meet project deadlines and expand the program's capacity to communicate with external organizations. In December 2019 our new IT vendor developed capacity for staff to communicate and share information online. This provided staff increased flexibility in scheduling meetings and increased capacity to connect with community partners.



Louis Rodriguez, Ph.D. MBA. MSW.

## Each year Step Up helps low-income families struggling to make ends meet.

In 2019 Step Up increased its capacity to evaluate its data and we learned that more than three quarters (76%) of the families we serve were headed by single parent females who had an average income of \$15,321. The two greatest challenges for these families were the struggle to pay rent and to put food on the table. For the second consecutive year rent arrears increased among the families we serve. Many of the families we serve are rent stressed—they pay more than 30% of their income towards rent. Step Up social work staff provided assistance by helping families access emergency rental subsidies and by negotiating re-payment plans to pay rent arrears. To address the growing problem of food insecurity, Step Up expanded its onsite Nutrition program to teach families how to stretch the food budget and to make healthy food choices for adults and children. In 2020 Step Up will prioritize helping families who are a high risk of becoming homeless by conducting intensive monitoring and follow up to ensure these families have the supports and services they need to pay rent and have access to food.

76%

of the families served in 2019 were headed by single parent females

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\$15,321

average income of families served

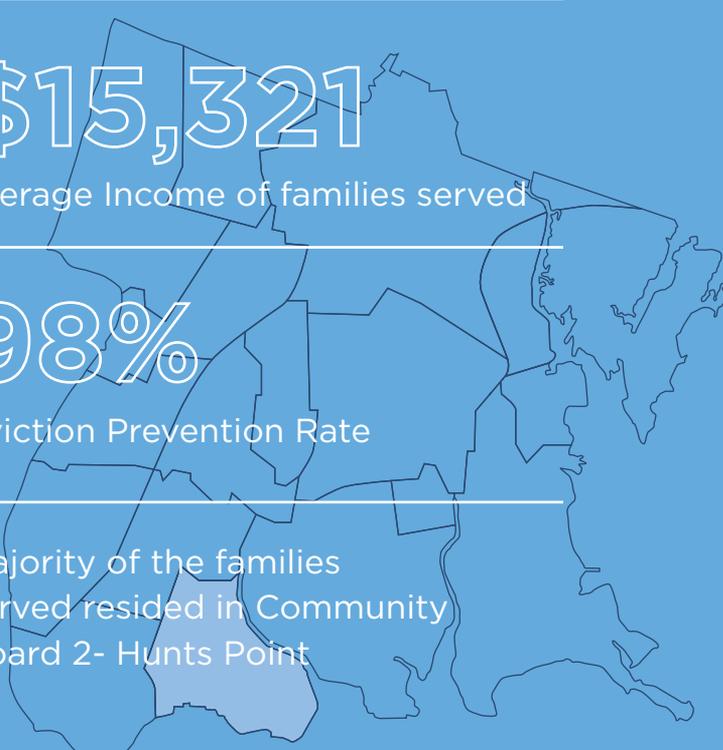
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98%

Eviction Prevention Rate

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Majority of the families served resided in Community Board 2- Hunts Point



OUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



368

total family members



85

number of clients receiving counseling



131

number of families receiving housing assistance



46

evictions prevented

\$190,772

in client arrears. Step Up assisted clients by helping them get one shot deals and repayment plans



125

clients participated in Cultural and Recreational activities

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70

clients participated in Nutrition groups

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50

clients participated in Holiday programs

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50

average age head of household

51

total number of seniors served



## STEP UP 2019 ANNUAL SENIOR TRIP

During the 2019 Holiday season Step Up took 21 Seniors on our Annual Senior Trip to see The Tantalizing, Terrific, Toe Tapping, Temptations on Broadway. The moment seniors entered the Imperial Theater they were very excited. The story line was about The Temptations' journey from the streets of Detroit to Motown to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. With their choreographed dance moves and their unmistakable harmonies, the Temptations rose to the top of the charts creating an incredible 42 Top Ten Hits with 14 reaching number one. One of our seniors stated, "the show was a smash hit." Another senior stated, "It was energetic and entertaining."



## A GAZILLION BUBBLES OFF BROADWAY

On November 9, 2019 Step Up took 40 children to see Gazillion Bubbles Off Broadway. The children were amazed by the spellbinding laser show which featured an entertainer who picked up laser lights and placed them at different locations on the stage to the beat of the music. The children were all fascinated when a gazillion bubbles started floating through the theater as the lights were illuminated off of them. One youth stated, "I'm in bubble heaven."



*I have just finished my second cycle of Nutrition and Health workshops with the adult participants at Step Up For Better Living (Step Up) located in the Bronx. It has been quite a rewarding experience. I have also had the opportunity to work with the youths during the summer months. What I loved most about working with the adult participants at Step Up was watching them go from making unhealthy choices, to being excited to share the healthy recipes, with their families. One of the participants, enhanced a recipe from the fruits and vegetables lesson that she enjoyed. The recipe consisted of, whole grains, vegetables, and beans as a protein. She decided to add a variety of vegetables to the recipe (which is what we at Cornell promote) and brought samples for the entire class to try at graduation. She was very proud of her new creation and everyone enjoyed it.*

**- Nedra Jones**

Community Educator



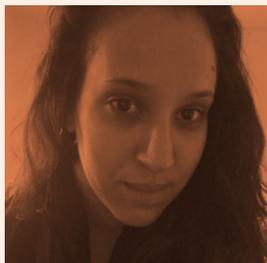
# RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS



Step Up For Better Living hosted a Board Game Event on December 23, 2019. The targeted group was for youths between the ages of 8 and 17. We scheduled the event during the Public School system's holiday break. The board games were Connect4, Trouble, Game of Life, Monopoly, Checkers, Candyland and Uno. The purpose of the group was to afford the youths a forum to interact with their peers without distractions from the television, computers and cell phones.

- **Andrew Thomas, Jr.**  
Program Director





*My name is Fiorella Telles, a mother of two and a current member of “Step Up For Better Living (SUBL)”. Since joining the program, I was invited to a nutrition class sponsored by Cornell University. The class was very informative and the instructor was friendly and relatable. I was able to take what I learned and actually implement it into my grocery shopping and cooking routine. Especially when you are on a budget but still want to eat healthy. I received a gift card to our local supermarket to buy fresh foods and put into practice what we learned—which was very helpful as I wanted to continue to eat healthier and stay on budget. We also prepared meals together and it was a pleasant experience socializing; getting to know some of my neighbors who I otherwise wouldn’t have met. Step up for Better Living is a program that has helped me in so many ways. I can count on Ms. Waters, Mr. Thomas, Ms. Campos and the rest of the staff to help with any of my management needs, food pantry and so much more. Especially, during this hard time we are all facing today. SUBL has helped me by sending me a monthly \$25 gift card and it has been a tremendous help.*

**- Fiorella Telles**

Age 33

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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## **OUR SUPPORTERS**

**Taproot Foundation**

**New York City Council**

## **STAFF**

**Louis Rodriguez, Ph.D. MBA. MSW.**  
Executive Director

**Twila Waters, MSW.**  
Director of Social Services.

**Andrew Thomas, Jr. QMHA.**  
Program Director

## **INTERNS**

**Franchesca Capellan**

**Jayliza Reyes**

Step Up for Better Living announces the creation of the **Step Up Emergency Food Fund Campaign** to raise \$5M to fight food insecurity in the south Bronx—starting with our \$500k contribution to local food pantries.

### **Help Us Reach Our Goal of \$5M to Fight Food Insecurity**

Nearly everyone is feeling the effects of Covid-19 now, but for those who were already facing food insecurity, the impact is especially harsh. The increased demand for food has been exponential. The organizations we surveyed reported up to a 50–200% increase in demand. Shortages of food, volunteers, and personal protective equipment (PPE) also continues to be a problem. As a result, long lines form around food pantries, and clients often wait hours to be served. Sometimes, food pantries do not have enough to meet the demand and have to turn away people seeking food.

### **The Step Up Emergency Food Fund for the South Bronx**

The Step Up Emergency Food Fund was created to immediately get food in the hands of families who desperately need it. Step Up's approach is to provide organizations access to funding to purchase food, add staff, and purchase PPE.

### **Give What You Can to Address This Dire Need**

You can help by contributing what you can to address this dire need by [donating through our secure portal](#). You can also contact me at [l.rodriquez@sublnyc.org](mailto:l.rodriquez@sublnyc.org) to learn more about the Step Up Emergency Food Fund. – **Louis Rodriguez**, *Executive Director*

# WWW.SUBLNYC.ORG



## LOCATIONS

MAIN OFFICE  
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## CONTACT

For More Information about  
our services, please contact:

**Twila Waters**  
(929) 928-3811

A copy of the latest Step Up for Better Living annual financial report may be obtained, upon request, from Step Up for Better Living or from the New York State Attorney General's Charities Bureau. Requests can be submitted to Step Up for Better Living at 424 East 147th Street, Bronx, New York 10455 or by writing to the Charities Bureau at Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, 19th Floor, New York, New York 10005.