



ANNUAL REPORT

2023



STEP UP FOR
BETTER LIVING
"Believing People Matter"



CHERYL DENNIS

Executive Director



BRAD HAMBURGER

Board President

DEAR FRIENDS,

In the past 26 years, Step Up for Better Living has built a legacy of serving low-income families and other vulnerable populations in the South Bronx. Today, we continue this mission by working to end systemic generational poverty through financial literacy and economic empowerment programs and services. We are proud to declare that in 2023, you helped us respond to the needs of over 2,000 men, women, children, seniors, and families in our community.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- To improve our capacity to plan, implement, and deliver services to clients in 2023, Step Up underwent an organizational change. A new leadership structure was adopted, which moved away from a dual Co-Executive Director leadership model to a single Executive Director position. This streamlined leadership model has allowed me the opportunity and privilege to work even more closely with our board to promote the agency's mission and vision for the future.
- In response to the decrease in COVID-19 cases throughout the city, all Step Up positions transitioned from remote to in-person work as of February 2023.
- In 2023, Step Up for Better Living partnered with government assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), by expanding the program to populations who may be unaware that they qualify for the benefit (e.g., retired seniors, undocumented residents with U.S. citizen children). Step Up for Better Living reached out to over 1,000 new families in the community when we received a \$240,000 contract from the NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance to provide SNAP eligibility screenings and application assistance.



- Step Up for Better Living is addressing the root causes of food insecurity. We are addressing underlying issues such as poverty, unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and healthcare access, which can contribute to food insecurity. We are continuing our partnership with Cornell University to offer nutrition education programs to teach individuals, families, and youth how to make healthy food choices on a limited budget and maximize the nutritional value of their meals.
- We have implemented action steps to further support our residents who are at risk of returning to homelessness.
 - Action Step 1: All Case Managers now track their clients' rent ratio to determine which clients rent is 30% or paying more. Once we have identified our clients with rent ratios higher than 30 percent, we implement strategies to assist them with their income, such as applying for food stamps, applying for affordable/low-income housing, seeking employment, and returning to school.
 - Action Step 2: We obtained a \$50,000 eviction prevention grant from Wells Fargo to establish Homelessness Prevention Services. We offer emergency financial assistance and landlord mediation services to help individuals facing eviction stay in their homes. With the funding, Step Up for Better Living hired a staff member dedicated to ensuring that clients who are vulnerable to eviction maintain permanent housing and don't return to the shelter system.
- Virtual Programming: Since COVID-19, we have increased our counseling services through video conferencing. Clients are trained to use Zoom and Teams to communicate with these case managers. Our seniors are taught how to use email and texting, as Step Up for Better Living utilizes these methods of communication to get up-to-date information on the services we provide and our upcoming events.
- Expanding Community Partnership with S.A.V.E.D. 4 Life: S.A.V.E.D. 4 Life is a cancer awareness and cancer counseling organization affiliated with New York-Presbyterian Hospital. This partnership has allowed Step Up to provide free breast cancer screenings to the 700+ women of color we serve in the South Bronx. In addition, we collaborated to provide Mental Health First Aid to community leaders and stakeholders who share Step Up's objectives of improving the response to mental health emergencies in the South Bronx.

Step Up for Better Living is blessed with a generous community of donors, sponsors, board members, policymakers, and staff who partner with us to fulfill our mission. We take this time to thank you and honor you for your continued support.

Cheryl Dennis

Cheryl Dennis, MPA

Executive Director

Bradley Hamburger

Bradley Hamburger

Board Chairman



OUR MISSION

The mission of Step Up for Better Living is to help people in need achieve and sustain stability, wellness, and self-sufficiency. We believe people should be treated with dignity and respect and have access to opportunities that lift them out of poverty.



OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe in client choice. We understand that we are facilitating another person's process by helping him or her to achieve their goals through better problem-solving, decision-making, and goal-setting. Our approach is to deliver services in a way that is respectful of client's needs and which builds lasting relationships and trust.



OUR IMPACT

At A Glance



500

Total Number of
Families Served

31 Yrs

Average Client Age



1,394

families received crisis, individual counseling,
and health & nutrition counseling

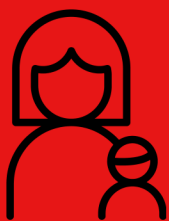


2,327

Lives impacted through direct client services,
including our backpack school supplies

98%

Eviction Prevention Rate



76%

Families served were headed
by single parent females

326

people registered to vote





Step Up for Better Living continued providing emergency food and expanded services to provide health education to individuals.

RENT RATIO

86%

of SUBL families pay 30%
of less of their income
toward rent

CASE MANAGEMENT

500

families served in 2023
received access to
Information & Referral,
Advocacy, and Concrete
Services

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

700

children received backpacks
& school supplies

FOOD INSECURITY

1,000

families applied for and
received SNAP benefits



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Step Up assisted 1,010 families and individuals apply for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in 2023. We were contracted by the New York State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) to disseminate SNAP information and provide application assistance throughout New York City. We went into the community and set up tables at various local food pantries, churches, public hospitals, and health fairs to inform the public about SNAP benefits and eligibility requirements.



MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING FOR THE COMMUNITY

Step Up reached out to the community and offered Mental Health First Aid Training. It was conducted by S.A.V.E.D. 4 Life in partnership with Step Up and Columbia/New York Presbyterian Hospital on November 28, 2023. The training was based on our community's need for increasing knowledge of effective mental health strategies in emergency situations; it included knowing the signs of mental health increase in symptoms, treatment options, and prevention methods. We had both community and staff participants. All attendees received a certificate in mental health first aid upon completion.





STEP UP 2023 HOLIDAY PROGRAMS AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Events are our pride and joy. Knowing and acknowledging that youth are our future, Step Up strives to nurture, educate, and broaden their horizons while having a little fun.

FAMILY DAY AT DORNEY PARK

On July 28, 2023, we escorted our young people to Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom in Pennsylvania, where they enjoyed amusement rides and swimming.



AUGUST 2023 ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH JP MORGAN CHASE

Many of the individuals we serve are in need of financial literacy skills, such as budgeting, saving, personal financial management, borrowing, credit reporting and taxation. To improve our clients' capacity to increase their skills in this area, we partnered with JP Morgan Chase to provide financial literacy classes for adults. During the classes, participants are encouraged to list realistic financial goals and develop plans to achieve their goals with a specific timeline. Clients were also encouraged to open a checking and savings bank account. Our goal for 2024 is to provide this program in a format specially designed for our children and youth.



BACKPACK GIVEAWAY BLOCK PARTY

Our Annual Backpack Giveaway Block Party was held on August 16, 2023. We distributed backpacks filled with school supplies to needy families. It was an experience of fun, laughter, food, games, music, and community participation. Thirteen community partners tabled the event and offered their services.



HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH SEP 15 TO OCT 15

Step Up honors the contributions and culture of Hispanic people during this month-long celebration of Hispanic culture within the community.



BROADWAY PLAY: *SOME LIKE IT HOT*

On October 18, 2023, 50 clients attended a showing of the musical comedy *Some Like It Hot*. Our Broadway play outing, exclusively for our “seasoned seniors,” is one of our most appreciated events. One of our seniors said, “Nothing beats watching a great show and getting to hang out with friends and staff in Manhattan.”





THANKSGIVING DINNER 2023 AND WESTERN BEEF GIFT CARD GIVEAWAY

On November 22, 2023, Step Up for Better Living held the annual Thanksgiving Dinner event. Staff decorated the community room at 941 Hoe Avenue and served food to all participants. Additionally, the staff gave a \$10 Western Gift card to all participants. About 50 clients enjoyed the event.



SENIOR APPRECIATION HOLIDAY DINNER AT CITY ISLAND

On December 12, 2023, we held our annual Senior Adult Appreciation Dinner on City Island. Forty seniors participated and were honored. The event was a wonderful event for our seniors to enjoy delicious food, socialize with peers, and celebrate their contributions to the community. City Island offers a charming waterfront setting with restaurants serving fresh seafood and other culinary delights.





STEP UP MEETS WITH SENATOR LUIS R. SEPULVEDA

We also had the honor of meeting with Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda, engaging in a fruitful discussion about our ongoing initiatives and exploring collaborative opportunities to further serve and uplift the South Bronx community.





CLIENT SUCCESS STORIES

In the pages that follow, you will find not just success stories but testaments to the human spirit's resilience and the power of dedicated support. From Robert's journey out of homelessness to Paula's mediation triumph, Shennal's progression to nursing, and Adam's academic achievements amid adversity—each narrative is a beacon of hope. These are the lives that have been uplifted through the unwavering commitment of Step Up for Better Living to provide not only essential services but pathways to empowerment and self-sufficiency. Their stories are our mission made manifest: a community uplifted, one success at a time.

Five years ago, Robert was in a dark place. He was homeless and didn't know how to get out of his situation. On March 26, 2019, he was referred from his shelter to a Step Up permanent low-income residence. Shortly after moving in, Robert was in rent arrears and had a pending eviction. While in our program, he was provided with help obtaining rental assistance, which was coupled with financial literacy and life skills.

"I am really happy I found Step Up and that they are helping me with housing by advocating for me, avoiding court eviction due to rental arrears."

Today, Robert is doing well and thriving.



"For three years I have been having issues with management and tenants in my building. Step Up for Better Living stepped in and showed that there was a misunderstanding. So far, I have had one mediation which was successful." - Paula



Shennal came to Step Up for Better Living when she was 13 years old. As a teenager, she had aspirations to become a nurse. When Shennal graduated from high school, she reached out to Step Up for assistance in obtaining her goal of becoming a nurse. She first became a Home Health Aide; shortly thereafter, she began training to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). As a single mother, Shennal struggled financially to afford books and tuition, so Step Up offered assistance. With our help, she completed the Certified Nursing Assistant program, and in 2023, she was accepted to the Montefiore School of Nursing program.



Adam became a client of Step Up at the age of 3 when his mother, Ana, began receiving our services due to physical, emotional, and financial stress following major surgery and divorce. Despite witnessing first-hand his mother's struggles, it did not deter Adam from pursuing higher education at SUNY Oneonta College in 2022. Step Up was proud to provide Adam with assistance in financing his first year of school. Adam is currently pursuing a BS degree in computer science and has a 3.25 GPA.



Board of Directors

Bradley Hamburger
President

Erinn Mallory Kolp
Vice President

Omid Tashayod
Treasurer

Patricia Bartos-West
Secretary

Brigitte Greene
Board Member

Jennifer Leadbetter
Board Member

David Crossen
Board Member

Alison Higgins
Board Member

Yesenia Quinones
Board Member

Staff

Cheryl Dennis, MPA
Executive Director

Twila Waters
Sr. Program Director,
Community Partnerships and
Engagements

Jesenia Clark-Arias
Executive Assistant

Vilma Camacho
Intern

Rosa Valdez
Program Assistant

Syeda Rose
Case Manager

Jacqueline Mena
Case Manager



We Thank Our Generous Donors

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Bradley Hamburger
Alison Higgins

\$1,000 - \$4,999

Wayne Phillips	Philip Altheim
Yesenia Quinones	Patricia Bartos-West
David Rottkamp	Mark Berman
Peter & Jennifer Schlactus	Brigitte Greene
Carol Soman	Jennie Leadbetter
Stephen Weiss	LinkedIn

\$100 - \$999

Hilary Agin	Jaime & Rob Echt	Steph Pariser
Jason Aptekar	Sal Fazio	Barry Prince
Molly Beal	Jill Goldberg	Ilene Provenzano
Scott Bermack	Helen Gordon	Stephen Ramerini
Jordan Burt	Loleeta Hebrank	Zena Rhoden
Hedy Cardozo	Linmarie Hirst	Amy Shanus
Rudy Ceres	Richard Impastato	Scott Sloves
Shari Cohen	Jeff Kabat	Ava Thompson
Natacha Cohen	Andrew Kaminsky	Ian Weinkselbaum
Ivy Cohn	Lisa Lambert	Elliot Weinstein
Brad Cooper	Chris Languilli	Gayle Weinstein
David Crossen	Erinn Mallory Kolp	Roger West
Stephanie Delgado	Mara Miller	Sabrina Wolkoff
Cheryl Dennis	Jeanette Morrison	RoAnne Zuckerman



STEP UP FOR BETTER LIVING

"Believing People Matter"

SUBLNYC.ORG

LOCATIONS

Main Office
424 East 147th Street,
3rd Floor
Bronx, NY 10457

941 Hoe Avenue
Bronx, NY 10459

CONTACT

info@sublnyc.org

For more information
about our services,
please call
929-928-3811

STAY CONNECTED



www.facebook.com/stepupforbetterliving



www.instagram.com/stepup4betterliving



www.linkedin.com/company/step-up-for-better-living



www.twitter.com/sublnyc

A copy of the Step Up for Better Living annual finance 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 or by writing to the Charities Bureau at Charities Bureau, 28 Liberty Street, New York, New York 10005.