

# Changing Lives



## LOOKIN' GOOD:

### Senior Center offers resources and friendship

Ruby Bennett has a routine. Every morning after she wakes up, she puts on her powder, fixes her hair, looks into the mirror and says, "Ruby, you look good."

She's right. She does look good. The 88-year-old could pass for 70. Of course she does color her hair. "I don't believe in gray," she says.

But it's not just her carefully curled locks. Her skin is smooth and she wears pulled-together outfits—brightly colored shirts with matching jewelry. She is filled with wry jokes and advice, and she can only let one or two seconds go by without breaking into a smile or a laugh.

No doubt Ruby has something special inside her that keeps her so vibrant, but there's also an external factor that keeps her happy. It's the place that she gets all dolled up to visit: The Salvation Army's Freeport Senior Center.



SPARKLING LIKE A GEM RUBY BENNETT IN A CHARACTERISTIC DISPLAY OF ENERGY AND WARMTH

#### The place to be

"Live and let live" is how one senior describes Freeport Senior Center's philosophy. Not that the place isn't well

organized, or that it doesn't offer an abundance of structured opportunities.

Funded in part by The U.S. Administration on Aging, the New York State Office for the Aging, and the Nassau County Department of Senior Citizens Affairs, the center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Members can enjoy activities like quilting, as well as informational sessions such as how to get a library card and health assessments. Or they can choose not to participate at all—a beautiful

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## A MESSAGE FROM DIVISIONAL COMMANDER MAJOR GUY D. KLEMANSKI

In the previous issue of *Changing Lives*, you read about the wide variety of youth services the Greater New York Division offers to low income families and their children.

There is no doubt that it is a precious thing to help create a future for so many young people.



However, there is also a special poignancy that comes with helping adults adjust and create their own futures.

This edition of the newsletter paints a picture of the services we provide for those who are no longer just starting out—men and women living with HIV, individuals without homes, seniors without family, and immigrants who have come to a country where they do not understand the customs or the language.

Rather than become overwhelmed or slip into isolation, these individuals draw upon their inner strength and Salvation Army services to stay vibrant and connected. They are eager to gain joy from today and work for a brighter tomorrow.

As you read on, I hope you will join me in my admiration for this courage, as well as my gratitude to the donors, Salvation Army Officers, and staff that make our adult services possible.

My heartfelt blessings to you,

Major Guy D. Klemanski

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choice for some.

On a typical day, a glance into the main room might reveal someone leaning forward for a quick nap, a group of women showing each other ads and coupons from yesterday's mail, and dozens of others reading the newspaper, chatting, or simply sipping coffee or tea. Anything goes.

For many, the center is a way to get a reasonably-priced meal—breakfast and lunch are provided for the suggested contributions of \$1.25 and \$2.50.

"I think nutrition is one of the most important aspects of our program," said director Fran Petrone, who works with the full time cook and a representative from Nassau County to make sure she is offering a balanced menu.

Even beyond meals, it's an incredible deal. There is no membership fee and transportation to and from the center costs a suggested contribution of \$1.

This affordability is not only preferable, but necessary for most. Petrone estimates that two thirds of her members fit the county's definition of low income, which means they live on \$10,400 or less each year.

### Quality of life

With an overall membership of around 200, Freeport Senior Center is quite popular among the older set. Not because of food or classes, but because of the people.

"Some don't have children," said Salvation Army Captain Amanda Lumbila, who is friends with many regulars. "Or their children are far away, so the center is very important. It is human contact and greatly improves quality of life."

Interaction is especially critical for seniors, who often face deteriorating

health, a lack of obligations to keep them busy, and ensuing depression.

Petrone has seen great turnarounds in new members once they find their social niche—even those with very real ailments like joint problems and heart

disease. "There is a mind and body connection," she said.

It is hard to overstate the importance of the center to its members. Take, for example, Harry Tuthill, an impeccably dressed 74-year-old, who finds

joy in mowing his lawn and feeding the neighborhood cats, but says these things are not enough.

"In the military you had comrades," he said. "Before retirement, your time was consumed by employment and making a living. The Salvation Army now fills a big void."

Harry, who never married, finds himself living alone in the house that he's spent most of his life renovating and maintaining. Still, he doesn't hesitate to describe the Freeport Senior Center as his home. ■

PRECISION MARY YACOB WORKS ON THE LATEST OF DOZENS OF QUILTS SHE'S CRAFTED



### A TREMENDOUS RELIEF

In his last job, Marty Berliner transported auto parts for a Kia Suzuki dealership. In the one before that, he moved vending machines. He now has a new, very different vocation: senior center driver.

As part of his new duties, each day Berliner packs up hot lunches in a temperature-controlled bag and delivers meals to twenty-three Freeport residents who are unable to leave their homes due to severe medical problems.

He can already tell a little anecdote about each stop on his route like, "This is the lady whose dog shoots right out," or, "This lady says 'good morning' no matter what time of day it is."

"I think it is a tremendous relief," says Petrone of Berliner and Freeport Senior Center's assistance. "I don't think that they can get out and shop—and if they did happen to have food I don't think they have the strength and stamina to prepare it."

Even Berliner, who has the exterior of a hardened New Yorker complete with a Brooklyn accent, will admit, "You hope some day someone will do the same for you." ■

## ► About The Salvation Army's Adult Services

Growing older doesn't mean growing beyond needing help. The Salvation Army Greater New York Division offers much-needed support through its many adult services, which include:

- ♦ 3 homeless shelters for adults
- ♦ 21 soup kitchens
- ♦ 36 emergency food pantries
- ♦ Emergency assistance with bills for rent, utilities, and prescriptions
- ♦ Adult education classes: English as a second language, general studies, computer classes, and others
- ♦ 3 HIV/AIDS Services sites serving more than 300 clients
- ♦ 7 Adult Rehabilitation Centers for those struggling with addictions
- ♦ 7 houses for adults with developmental disabilities, home to 70 individuals
- ♦ Affordable outings, recreational activities, and events
- ♦ Senior centers and programs serving over 100,000

## LIFE, not the board game version. HIV Services Budget Management Program helps clients achieve balance in their budgets and perspectives

The group is gathered around the table, taking turns spinning the wheel and watching with anticipation to see how many spaces they will be able to move their plastic cars.

Unlike children, however, who play the classic board game LIFE to imagine making grown up choices, these players have already confronted very real life obstacles—this is an exercise for participants in The Salvation Army's HIV Services' Budget Management Program.

Launched in September of 2007 in the HIV Services' Belmont site in the Bronx, Budget Management was created in response to the great need for financial help that caseworkers observed among their clients.

Unable to work because of their health or debilitating anxiety and depression—sometimes side effects from medication—clients' average incomes range from \$11,000 to \$15,000. Most live on about \$300 a month after rent.

On top of that, most clients had never been taught even the most basic money management skills and were making obvious mistakes like borrowing from loan sharks, or filling out money orders incorrectly.

Many owed thousands of dollars to ConEdison, tens of thousands of dollars in rent arrears, and faced going without power and even eviction—something that is especially dangerous for men and women living with HIV or AIDS.

Budget Management prevents situations from escalating to this point



**LIFE LESSONS** HIV SERVICES' IDA RIVERA USES GAME AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL

through individual sessions in which caseworkers walk clients through paying their bills, as well as weekly groups with creative approaches like playing symbolic board games or making posters listing good spending habits.

Program Coordinator Ida Rivera says she sees a real difference in the 40 clients she's worked with, not only in their attitudes toward money but in their approach to life. "It allows them to focus on what is really important," she said. "Their health increases. They feel more in tune with themselves."

Jo-Ann Ernest, a middle-aged woman with short dyed red hair and glowing light brown skin, who was diagnosed with HIV four years ago, is one of the clients who has benefited from the program.

For the first time in her life, Jo-Ann has opened a savings account and she is learning to shop for bargains. But her gratitude is as much for the atmosphere of welcome she receives from Budget Management as for the practical advice. "They help me to live," she said. "They accept me." ■

## Focusing on service: Franklin Women's Shelter a top scorer on city's annual performance review

Love. That was the reason Sophia Worrell left her home of Barbados to live in New York City.

The 44-year-old came to the United States to join her fiancé. But the romance Sophia found when she arrived was anything but storybook. For the first time in their relationship, her fiancé became abusive—going as far as holding a knife to her throat. "I think he used the fact that I didn't know anyone or know where anything was against me," Sophia said. "I was so scared."

After almost a year of living in fear, Sophia was able to gather the strength to leave, moving first into a domestic violence shelter and later to The Salvation Army's Franklin Women's Shelter in the Bronx.

Sophia's story isn't unusual for wom-

Successfully placing clients residing in the 200-person shelter isn't easy, but the team knows what it's doing.

In the recently released 2007 New York City Department of Homeless Services Performance Incentive Result Card, Franklin was ranked as the highest scoring adult shelter in the New York City shelter system.

In fact, Franklin achieved 76.74 % of its target goal—a score that takes into account things like number of clients placed, number of clients employed, etc.—in contrast to the average score of 30.4 %.

Program director Toya Coleman says the key to operating such a successful program is: treating each client as an individual, working as a team, and most importantly, viewing your occupation as a service instead of a job.

**"I WANT SOMETHING BETTER FOR MYSELF. I WANT TO TURN MYSELF AROUND. I BELIEVE I CAN."**

— SOPHIA WORRELL, CLIENT, FRANKLIN WOMEN'S SHELTER

en who turn to Franklin for help. Many of the homeless women who come to Franklin have histories of domestic violence.

Other clients suffer from mental illness, face documentation issues, or have substance abuse problems—many were once crack babies and use marijuana to calm their nerves.

The staff of Franklin is tasked with evaluating each client's situation and then identifying programs that will help them transition into independent living.

"When I wake up in the morning I don't get up for work," said Coleman. "I get up to help someone."

Coleman believes her program leads to new beginnings for clients. Take, for example, Sophia, who was recently placed in a third-way house.

Sophia plans on working towards a college degree with the hope of helping victims of domestic violence. "I want something better for myself," she said. "I want to turn myself around. I believe I can." ■

## Donor Spotlight

Donating technology is one of many ways IBM—a corporation that places a large emphasis on charitable giving—helps others.

In 2006, IBM donated 12 computers, valued at more than \$14,000, to the Adult Education Program at The Salvation Army's Jamaica Citadel Community Center in Queens.

"Our focus is on supporting education, workforce development, arts and culture, and communities in need through targeted grants of technology and project funds," explained Pamela Haas of IBM's Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs Department. "We were impressed with the job development component at the Jamaica Center."

"The computers IBM donated have been the backbone of our program and a lifeline for many," said Adult Education Program Director Kenny Mitchell, noting that computer access and knowledge of computer skills has helped several of his students transition from what he calls "cash in hand jobs" like day labor, to more reliable, higher paying employment.

The more than 50 students who participate in the center's ESL or basic education classes use the computers to compose essays, write emails, craft resumes, and conduct Internet searches. ■

# FROM COMPUTER PROGRAMMER TO LOCAL CELEBRITY:

## *Ray Yu creates place of joy for Chinatown adults*

**M**ost 27 year-olds don't have middle-aged groupies. Chinatown Community Center's Ray Yu is an exception.

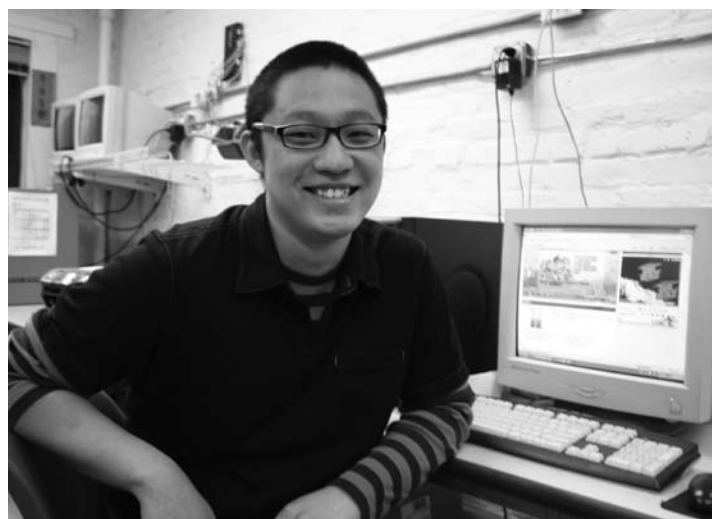
As Adult Center Director, Yu—who looks even younger than his relatively modest years—spends his time planning birthday parties and scheduling activities for a group of Chinatown residents, many of whom are more than twice his age.

▶ EACH ISSUE OF *CHANGING LIVES* BRINGS A GLIMPSE OF HOW SALVATION ARMY CONSTITUENTS—WHETHER OFFICERS, CLIENTS OR STAFF—ARE DOING ALL THEY CAN TO HELP.

He also teaches computer classes, which means standing in front of a room of his elders and trying to get them to be quiet. “Calm down,” he often tells them.

“Calm down, calm down,” they will then tell each other—mocking him. As a joke, Yu's colleagues call his students his fans.

Since he left his old job as a computer programmer a year ago, Yu has been working to create a refuge for adults in the Chinatown community who are not old enough to take part in senior programs.



RAY YU IN HIS COMPUTER SKILLS CLASSROOM

Residents in this age bracket have spent much of their lives working physically demanding jobs in clothing manufacturing warehouses or restaurants. Now that they have retired—whether due to injury or kids helping with the bills—these men and women find themselves in a country that is still very foreign, with little fulfillment.

“When they were young, their whole life was going to the factory,” said Yu. “Now they don't know what to do. They have not learned English. It can be very isolating.”

At the Chinatown center, for only \$30 a year, a rate that is reasonable for a predominately low-income neighborhood, adults ages 35 to 59 can take classes like ESL and photography, as well as spend time with new friends from similar backgrounds.

Judging by Yu's popularity—he's gotten multiple requests to become members' godson—and the feedback he receives, his work seems to be paying off. “They tell me that it makes them feel happy, like high school students again,” he reports. “That is the best part.” ■

## MANY FACES MANY NEEDS ONE FAMILY

THE SALVATION ARMY GREATER NEW YORK DIVISION IS A LOCALLY-BASED UNIT OF AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION THAT SERVES 115 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE. OPERATING OVER 140 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT THE FIVE BOROUGHS OF NEW YORK CITY, LONG ISLAND, AND THE HUDSON VALLEY, THE SALVATION ARMY IN GREATER NEW YORK HELPS 600,000 OF THE REGION'S

MOST VULNERABLE RESIDENTS EACH YEAR—AND VALUES EVERY ONE OF THEM AS MUCH AS A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY. FOR A MORE COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT OUR SERVICES—WHICH RANGE FROM SHELTERS, TO ADULT EDUCATION, TO AFFORDABLE DAY CARE, AND ARE DEVELOPED ON LOCAL LEVEL TO ADDRESS EACH COMMUNITY'S MOST PRESSING NEEDS—PLEASE VISIT [WWW.SALVATIONARMYNEWYORK.ORG](http://WWW.SALVATIONARMYNEWYORK.ORG).