



# MERCY MATTERS

## COMMUNITY MATTERS

The small home in the South Ozone Park neighborhood of Queens seems like almost all the other houses on the block. Frank's Residence has been part of Mercy Home for 13 years. Set in a quiet neighborhood as diverse as any in New York City, the former two family home with a small yard houses eight men with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Every day, the men work together to create a comfortable space.

The mornings here are hectic, as in any home. Mercy Home staff support them as they dress, make breakfast, and ready themselves



for the day. Meals are based on each person's preference. \*Bob makes breakfast of eggs and corned beef hash for anyone who's interested. Everyone pitches in to assist with laundry and clean up.

After breakfast, transportation arrives and everyone goes to their day program where their skills and interests are cultivated. When they return in the afternoon, the men drift into activities of their choosing. Some help make dinner, by preparing vegetables, creating a salad, or setting the table. Stanley wipes down the counter, Freddie washes dishes, and Omi dries.

In the evening, they break off for activities like going to the Brooklyn Museum, playing miniature golf, seeing a free concert in the park, or going to the arcade. When they return, they get ready for the next day – selecting tomorrow's clothing and packing their lunch. At the end of the day, the men shower, grab a snack, or chat with the overnight staff.

Once a month, everyone sits down with the recreation calendar and plans their activities – when to see the latest action movie, go to a restaurant and even when to barbecue. Colleen Martindale, the Residence Manager,

likes the community setting of the house. "It's a pretty quiet neighborhood. The house has a huge yard and they have parties and barbecues back there all the time."

As in most homes, family is important. Billy looks forward to visiting Harlem over the holidays. Omi heads to Staten Island. John Atchinson, whose son Tarik lives there, says that "The caring, real home atmosphere of Frank's Residence is most helpful." Tarik's mother, Atitka McBarnett, is also very pleased with the direct support staff at Frank's. "They treat us and our son with respect (and are) always willing to help."

The men of Frank's Residence are very involved in their community. Rob loves to recycle. He collects cans and goes to the recycling center twice a month. Omar loves to work and currently volunteers at the pizza shop refilling salt and pepper shakers and napkin holders and wiping down tables. He also volunteers at the barbershop, sweeping up hair.

Like Mercy Home's 12 other residences, people's choices matter. Feelings are important, people's talents are nurtured, and

community plays a huge role. Because our programming is founded on seeing abilities rather than disabilities, each person is empowered to make choices, maintain good health, have relationships with family and friends, and be connected to their community.



\*Some of the men and women of Mercy Home work in local businesses around NYC. If you would like to learn more, please email, [info@mercyhomeny.org](mailto:info@mercyhomeny.org).

# COCKTAIL FUNDRAISING DINNER

We were pleased to be joined by many friends and supporters at our Annual Cocktail Fundraising Dinner at the Dyker Beach Golf Club. It was a wonderful gathering of friends to celebrate our innovative Creative Arts Therapy program. The dinner was emceed by Danielle Madden-Buck and joined by visits from Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President, and NYS Senator Martin Golden. We had raffle prizes that drew everyone's interest, like a flat screen TV, tickets to comedy shows, gift bags, art work and wine.

The event was graciously supported by Lamb Financial Group, James Slattery, Esq., Ridgewood Savings Bank, Sister Fran Picone, Father Michael Perry, and Donna Whiteford. We thank everyone who secured a ticket, supported the raffle, and made donations – because of you, we were able to reach our fundraising goal! **SAVE THE DATE** for our spring fundraiser on June 15th at the Brooklyn Grange. To secure your sponsorship and tickets, please visit our website at [mercyhomeny.org](http://mercyhomeny.org).



Senator Martin Golden with Janice Aris and Sr. Kay



Mercy Home Board of Directors



Mercy Home Cocktail reception sponsors Anthony Simeone and Domenico Ciaccio from Ridgewood Bank with Brooklyn Borough President, Eric Adams and Janice Aris



Casey Mck ee toasts the event

## SAVE THE DATE - THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 2017 UNDER THE BROOKLYN SKY

THERE ARE A LIMITED NUMBER OF SPONSORSHIPS AND TICKETS AVAILABLE.  
EMAIL [HSTEWART@MERCYHOMENY.ORG](mailto:HSTEWART@MERCYHOMENY.ORG) TO LEARN MORE.

# CELEBRATING DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

March was Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month and throughout the month we hosted events to celebrate the individuals at our homes and in our programs.

## A SPECIAL MASS

A mass was hosted to honor individuals with developmental disabilities on **March 21st** in the historic chapel. The mass was beautifully performed by Father Raphael Munday Kukana, a native of the Congo with a great zeal and knowledge of American Sign Language. The mass was attended by over 100 people.

Mercy Home's Janice Aris states that the liturgy honors them as people, "They have wants and dreams. The only difference is that they may be supported by staff to help them move from one task to the next."

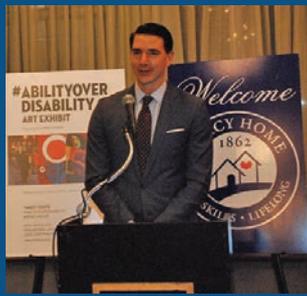
## PLANT-GROW-GIVE FUNDRAISER

On **March 23rd** we held an intimate fundraiser at Bruno's Ristorante in Howard Beach for Plant-Grow-Give which was hosted by Mercy Home supporter Donni Perri and staff member Angela Pionegro, Mercy Home's Director of ICF services.

## MELODIC SOUL

A small group of neighbors, residents, and friends got to experience another inspiring performance from our house band, Melodic Soul, on **March 28th** as they opened for pianist Ayako Shirasaki and her jazz trio. Melodic Soul is Mercy Home's performance band whose members sing, create original music, and perform for local organizations and at special events throughout New York City. The concert, held in our historic chapel, celebrated the important contributions of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

## #ABILITYOVERDISABILITY ART EXHIBIT



We were pleased to be joined by so many friends on Monday, March 13th, at the #ABILITYOVERDISABILITY art exhibit and reception in honor of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. The reception at the National Arts Club featured the artwork of James, Djanivka, and Katiuska and photography from Jahlel. Our dedicated Board Member, Frank Fellone III, hosted us at this historic location. Guests were greeted by Mercy Home's Executive Director, Janice Aris, and Board Chair Donna Whiteford.

Janice believes that giving our residents the opportunity to find their voice is vital. "Art is an essential component of Mercy Home, it heals the soul and provides an outlet for self-expression and creativity. The children, women, and men that we work with all benefit from its restorative power."

James, Djanivka, Jahlel, and Katiuska were all present and were honored to be recognized for their work. Each artist's work takes form in various ways. Each piece expresses their thoughts, feelings, and ideas. The work was created in Mercy Home's Gifted Artists program, the Creative Arts Therapy program or during the artist's day habilitation program. To see more photos, please visit our website at [mercyhomeny.org](http://mercyhomeny.org).



## BAC AWARD CEREMONY

In January, Jahlel from Littlejohn Residence won a Brooklyn Arts Council grant for his photographic project "Through My Eyes". This exciting project will continue his artistic growth as he captures moments of a changing internal landscape through photos of buildings and Brooklyn street scenes. He'll use his award for photography classes, supplies, and to create a collection of photos to be exhibited at our Gallery In the Garden on June 21st. He will also travel to photograph new places. His work has gained popularity for its sensitivity and attention to detail.

Jahlel's artistic talents were fostered in our Gifted Artists Program which provides art therapy for our residents who have an artistic inclination. JG Blackman: Through My Eyes is sponsored, in part, by the Greater New York Arts Development Fund of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, administered by Brooklyn Arts Council.

## MAKING MUSIC

Where words fail, music speaks. For those that have trouble expressing themselves at Mercy Home, the arts are vital. For Frantz, music has been a gateway for new skills. Frantz has been part of the Mercy Home family for 36 years, but in the past 10 years, he has really grown as the leader and drummer of Melodic Soul, the Mercy Home performance band.

As a child, he was shy and fearful around others. Today, he is an outgoing and friendly band leader, working the room at every performance. His signature song is Joe Cocker's "You are So Beautiful," which he loves to croon to a person he has selected in the room.

Since joining the band, Frantz' has become a leader and his public speaking skills have grown. "Frantz' confidence has gone through the roof." At every performance, he calls out the performers and introduces each member of the band.

Music has played an important role at Mercy Home, unlocking potential and providing a chance at new expression. The roots of music at Mercy Home go back to 1900 when the Sisters of Mercy and the Brooklyn Institute taught children to sing. Music

therapy is now one of the offerings of Mercy Home's Creative Arts Therapy program.

In the 1990s, our band was known as the Mercy Music Makers. The group really became a musical band in 2005 with better instruments and a stronger focus on performance and composition. There's now a focus on the individual and what they can bring to the band. "They each have their own musical taste and their own voice. To them, it's relatable, it's comfortable."

Jager loves reggae and hip hop, Frantz likes pop and rock, John likes country, blues, and folk. Lucy wants to sing Spanish music. Each brings their own interests and their own understanding of music. And for each new style that's added, they learn about the beats, instruments, and sounds of a particular culture.

Music engages their interests and allows them to compose songs based on their feelings. Once rehearsals are wrapped up, they take their show on the road performing around New York City.

# WHEN CHANGE MEANS OPPORTUNITY

Change can bring stress, but it can also bring with it opportunity. For Brian, 29, coming to Mercy Home for Respite services was a big change. He had been at his previous program at the Brooklyn Services for Autistic Citizens for 20 years where he would have fun in arts and crafts, going to the gym, and watching movies.

For Brian, the toughest part in coming to Mercy Home was missing his teachers. But overall Brian says that the change has offered a fresh start and an opportunity to try new things. "It felt good to start here actually because once I started here, it felt like a new beginning."

Mercy Home has offered Respite services for adults, youth, and children since 1994, but our program grew significantly last fall when expanded in size from 38 to 85 participants.

One of the questions we had was would the program experience change for the people who come every week?

Mercy Home staff works closely with each person and to give them creative choices in activities and things to learn. Brian enjoys movies, snacks, and arts and crafts. Brian also enjoys music therapy with Brian Pantekoek. "I like when he plays the guitar and the way he sings."

Respite Services provide a safe space for adults to explore educational and creative activities. The Creative Arts Therapy program gives participants an opportunity to find their voice through weekly art, drama, and music therapy sessions.

# MERCY HOME OUT AND ABOUT



Janice Aris, Executive Director, and Sister Kay



Emerging Leaders gather to plan spring events



New York Giants Linebacker Jonathan Casillas made a surprise visit to Mercy Home residents



Kathleen Irvin, Mercy Home staff with John Brophy

# MERCY HOME & YOU

Thanks to the work of our generous volunteers and supporters, Mercy Home's programs have soared. Donating time can be difficult, but rewarding. Within the past six months, Mercy Home has hosted volunteer events that have created special activities for residents and helped create playful spaces for our youth with special needs.

Volunteers come from all walks of life. On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we celebrated a weekend of service with employees from Ridgewood Savings Bank, Opperman Weiss, and Superfly. Everyone contributed their creativity, spirit and energy cleaning, painting and organizing our Creative Arts Therapy (CAT) rooms. .



## THANK YOU

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING CORPORATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS FOR YOUR RECENT SUPPORT IN OUR WORK!  
100 YEAR ASSOCIATION - BROOKLYN ARTS COUNCIL - CYPRESS HILLS CEMETERY - KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
HUDSON COUNCIL - NASDAQ - RIDGEWOOD SAVINGS BANK - RTS FAMILY FOUNDATION - SISTERS OF MERCY -  
STUDIO ONE - VOLUNTEER SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

# SAVE THE DATE

## JUNE 15 BROOKLYN UNDER THE STARS

On Thursday, June 15th, we look forward to celebrating our Plant-Grow-Give program with a rooftop dinner and party at Brooklyn Grange. Interested in buying tickets or becoming a sponsor? Email Helen.

## JUNE 21 GALLERY IN THE GARDEN

Our annual Gallery in the Garden celebrates the creative side of our residents and offers a chance for neighbors, staff, and gifted individuals to mix and demonstrate their interests and talents

## WAYS TO SUPPORT

### DONATE

Mercy Home is able to support our amazing program and services through the donations of friends and supporters like you. Contributions help improve the quality of life for our residents. You can support Creative Arts Therapy, Plant-Grow-Give, Melodic Soul, or our Gifted Artists Programs in a variety of ways. If you would like to become a donor, please contact Helen Stewart, Director of Development at [hstewart@mercyhomeny.org](mailto:hstewart@mercyhomeny.org) or via phone at 718.832.1075 x 121.

### DONATION OF STOCK SECURITIES

Appreciated stock gifts can reduce your tax liability while providing flexible funding for our programs. Please contact us for details on how to make a gift of stock or securities.

### WORKPLACE GIVING

Double the impact of your gift through your employer's matching gifts program. If you have any questions, please contact us at [hstewart@mercyhomeny.org](mailto:hstewart@mercyhomeny.org).

### JOIN THE LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

With a contribution of \$1,000 or more per year you'll immediately become a member of the Leadership Circle and will receive exclusive invitations to special events and receive the latest information and materials.

### PLANNED GIVING

A charitable bequest is a wonderful way to leave a lasting legacy that benefits children, youth, and adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. You may name Mercy Home for Children in your will, including our tax identification number (11-1666227), leaving either cash or securities.

A planned gift can also significantly reduce taxes, but it is best to discuss these benefits with your financial advisor.

**TO MAKE A DONATION, PLEASE RETURN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE  
OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [MERCYHOMENY.ORG](http://MERCYHOMENY.ORG).**