

## JOIN US FOR THANKSGIVING DINNER

On Thursday, November 25th, Heights and Hills will host our 39th community Thanksgiving Dinner. A neighborhood tradition, the Heights and Hills Thanksgiving Dinner serves more than 250 people each year and is co-sponsored by Grace Church and Cobble Hill Health Center. Open to neighborhood senior citizens, diners can look forward to a traditional Thanksgiving meal prepared with love and care in our community.

Delicious turkey, stuffing and sweet potatoes are cooked by the Cobble Hill Health Center and transported to Grace Church on Thanksgiving morning by members of the 84th Precinct. Cranberry sauce, vegetables, bread, cider and other goodies are provided by Heights and Hills. In addition to event space, Grace Church supplies table settings, paper goods and coffee. Community members participate in the event by baking and donating desserts and volunteering with food preparation and serving. Transportation to Thanksgiving Dinner is provided to Grace Church by New York's Finest, our local 84th Police Precinct.

Originally designed to offer a family-like dinner for those who do not have family with whom to spend the holiday, Heights and Hills also delivers meals to approximately 75 home-bound senior neighbors.

A \$1 contribution is requested of each our guests to help offset a portion of the costs, but every neighborhood senior is admitted and served regardless of their ability to pay. Tickets are sold in advance and at the door.

If you are interested in purchasing Thanksgiving Dinner tickets, volunteering, making a donation, referring an older person who needs our services, or would like further information on Thanksgiving Dinner or any of Heights and Hills' services, please call us at (718) 596-8789.



## YOUR LEGACY FOR HEIGHTS AND HILLS

Please consider leaving a legacy for Heights and Hills by including us in your estate plans.

A bequest to Heights and Hills is flexible to your charitable wishes, whether you choose to leave a dollar amount or percentage of your estate, a bequest of specific property, the residual portion of your assets or assets that are contingent upon the needs of your family and loved ones left behind. While legal consultation is always advisable before you design any type of will provision, you should know that a bequest is the simplest way to ensure that Heights and Hills is able to care for current and future generations of older community members.

For more information on joining our legacy society by naming Heights and Hills in your will, please contact Pamela Poland at (718) 596-8789.



## HEIGHTS AND HILLS

supporting brooklyn's older adults

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# HEIGHTS AND HILLS

supporting brooklyn's older adults

## at home • Fall 2010



### MUSINGS . . . . .

*What doesn't kill you makes you stronger... The little engine that could... When the going gets tough, the tough get going...*

Take your pick. When I think about Heights and Hills and look back over the past few years, any of the above phrases come to mind. Clearly, we are in extraordinary times – with government and private resources shrinking drastically at the same time that the number of older people in New York City (especially in Brooklyn) continues to grow and threatens to overwhelm the existing service infrastructure. I suppose some would see this as a time to sit back, don't start anything new, hold on tight and wait for things to get better. Not us!

We used the past two and a half years as a time of reflection, analysis and mobilization. When the NYC Department for the Aging began in 2008 to restructure how they contract with community-based programs like ours and move to larger, more regionalized services, Heights and Hills responded by taking a good hard look at who we as an organization are – what do we

do well, what do we do not as well, why are we in business, what are our basic beliefs, etc. Sounds pretty simple, doesn't it? However, with a Board of Directors of twenty five, a staff of equal size, and a list of stakeholders that includes hundreds of seniors, and many more hundreds of community supporters and community leaders, this has proven to be a challenging but very interesting journey.

While we still have a ways to go and many challenges ahead of us, we move into our 40th year with renewed energy and excitement. By now you have probably noticed our new name – Heights and Hills – and our new logo. We also expanded geographically to bring our services to many more neighborhoods in Brooklyn.

Our new home (not so new anymore) on Willoughby Street allowed our staff to comfortably expand, yet be close to most bus and subway routes for easy travel to all of the communities we serve.

Our two newest programs, Caregiver and Community Empowerment, help to round out our portfolio of services to reflect our belief that the real service providers are families and communities, and our job is to help support these natural systems. You can read more about these two initiatives in the following pages.

Our Board of Directors recently finished adopting a new mission statement that more accurately represents our current values and our reason for being:

### Heights and Hills promotes successful aging in place.

Simple but accurate. This is why we are in existence, and this is what drives all that we do. Our mission statement is guided by the following beliefs:

- Older adults are assets to their communities.
- Older adults' skills, experience, and wisdom enhance our civic organizations and institutions as well as individual lives.
- Older adults are an economic asset to communities.
- Making communities livable for older adults benefits all residents.
- Older adults are entitled to live as independently as possible, with dignity and personal choice
- Professionally delivered home and community-based services for older people are essential.
- Support for caregivers helps bind generations and improves outcomes for all.
- Advocacy for issues pertaining to aging is critical.

As you can see, we enter this next chapter with a renewed and re-energized sense of hope and excitement. I hope that you will assist Heights and Hills in making our communities a better place.

Judy Willig, LCSW  
Executive Director

## HIGHLIGHT ON HEIGHTS AND HILLS' SERVICES

Each year, Heights and Hills serves more than 2,000 adults aged 60 and over and their caregivers throughout 18 neighborhoods in Brooklyn including:

Boerum Hill	Park Slope
Brooklyn Heights	Prospect Heights
Carroll Gardens	Prospect Lefferts Gardens
Clinton Hill	Red Hook
Cobble Hill	Remsen Village
Crown Heights	Sunset Park
East Flatbush	Windsor Terrace
Farragut	Wingate
Fort Greene	
Gowanus	

### Case Management

Our multi-lingual case managers help older adults better manage the activities of daily life that can become more difficult with age. We help older adults remain in their homes, feeling connected, safe, healthy and happy by:

- Arranging for in-home care and household chores, such as laundry and cleaning
- Scheduling clients to receive home-delivered meals
- Ensuring clients are receiving the correct entitlements and benefits
- Helping clients create a support system
- Answering questions about long-term care and planning
- Monitoring clients' well-being over time

### Caregiver Program

Our recently launched program for caregivers focuses on providing services to families who are caring for aging relatives and friends. Services include:

- Outreach to inform the community about available services for caregivers
- Information and referral assistance
- Individual counseling
- Support groups
- Training and educational sessions
- Respite services



DINA ZEMPSKY, LCSW

## SPOTLIGHT ON DINA ZEMPSKY AND THE HEIGHTS AND HILLS NEW CAREGIVER PROGRAM

Dina Zempsky, LCSW, a twenty year veteran in the field of aging, joined Heights and Hills in August as the Director of the new Caregiver Program. The result of a three-year contract from the Department of Aging, the Caregiver Program supports family and friends who provide care for elderly adults. Through the Caregiver Program, Heights and Hills will be providing information, referrals, support and counseling, support groups, and educational trainings to caregivers of older adults in 18 neighborhoods in Brooklyn. "The network of aging services is very complicated and very difficult for a caregiver in crisis to find his or her way. Our program will provide support and guidance to help them navigate that system," noted Dina.

A long-time resident of Park Slope, Dina grew up with two older adults who were significant influences in her life. "I find working with the elderly the most rich and interesting community to work in," she said. "Older people have a lifetime of experiences and stories that they bring to the work we do. They have very intricate relationships with the people around them. I also think they teach us a lot about who we are and what we want to become, and they contribute so much to our communities."

For years, Dina admired Heights and Hills for the quality of services it provides to the elderly community. "I've been familiar with Heights and Hills because of the great reputation the organization and Judy Willig have citywide," said Dina. "When I learned that there was a position to develop a program specifically directed at caregivers I knew I had to apply. It seemed like such a great complement to the case management work Heights and Hills already offers."

Nearly 40 years old, Heights and Hills serves 2,000 older adults annually, primarily through its case management program. The new Caregiver Program brings a whole new level of service to the community. It significantly expands the services Heights and Hills provides as well as expanding its constituency base. "Having a caregiver program rounds out the mission of Heights and Hills – to promote successful aging in place," noted Dina. "Our work with caregivers allows us the opportunity to incorporate the entire family in the work that we provide."

Supporting caregivers has been a goal of Heights and Hills for some time. The new contract for the Caregiver Program turned this goal into a reality. Dina is excited about heading this new program. She understands the special challenges that caregivers face and the difference Heights and Hills can make through supporting this community of people. "Being a caregiver can be very complicated and often bittersweet. For many of us it is not a role for which we feel prepared especially because of the complexity of emotions it often evokes. It can make us feel very vulnerable about our family members and for ourselves. To that end, Heights and Hills will be providing much-needed individual counsel and support as well as support groups out in the communities we serve."

In preparation for this expanded community, Heights and Hills is in the process of adding three new full-time staff members to round out Dina's team. In addition to Dina's role as Director, the Caregiver Program staff also includes a social worker – Adina Segal and an entitlement and benefits coordinator – Beverly Sealey. An outreach coordinator will be hired soon.

**Dina noted, "We know that the better emotional and administrative support caregivers get the better care the elderly receive and the longer they are able to stay autonomous in the community, which benefits everyone."**

One of the first items on Dina's list is communicating that Heights and Hills now provides these new services specifically designed for caregivers. Therefore, if you are a caregiver who is seeking information or help or you know a caregiver who needs help, please contact Dina Zempsky at (718) 596-8789 or by email at [dzempsky@heightsandhills.org](mailto:dzempsky@heightsandhills.org).

## GETTING AROUND WITH HEIGHTS AND HILLS TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Heights and Hills provides convenient and accessible transportation options for our neighborhood seniors. For persons aged 60 and over who live in the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights, Concord Village, Boerum Hill, Cobble Hill and Carroll Gardens, who are unable to use public transportation and do not have a car, Heights and Hills offers the following services:

### The Senior Shuttle: A Fixed-Route Transportation Program

The Heights and Hills' fixed-route shuttle van that runs according to a schedule that can be obtained by calling the Heights and Hills office. The Senior Shuttle runs four times per day on weekdays in a loop stopping at 32 designated locations within Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Boerum Hill, Concord Village and Carroll Gardens. The Senior Shuttle also makes three stops per day in downtown Brooklyn at the back of Macy's on Livingston Street. Also included on the Senior Shuttle's route are the Cobble Hill Health Center, Bishop Mugavero Center for Geriatric Care and Long Island College Hospital.

The suggested contribution for each ride is \$1 paid in advance through a ticket system. You must have a ticket to use the Senior Shuttle.

### Van to Selected Locations

The Heights and Hills' van service provides transportation from your own home to several locations throughout Brooklyn including Eileen Dugan Senior Center (daily), Pathmark on Twelfth Street on Tuesday (pick-up from 10:30 AM – 11:00 AM and returning from 12:30 PM – 1:00 PM) and Keyfood on Fifth Avenue on Friday (pick-up from 10:30 AM – 11:00 AM and returning from 12:30 PM – 1:00 PM).

### To Register for Services, Obtain a Schedule and Map, Order Tickets or Get More Information

Passengers of all transportation services must register with Heights and Hills. To obtain a registration form, obtain a schedule and map, order tickets or get more information please call us at (718) 596-8789 Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM or visit us in person at the Heights and Hills office located on the 4th floor of 57 Willoughby Street.



PATRICIA ROBAYO, MSW

## CLIENT STORY: EVELYN WITEK

Evelyn Witek lives in Windsor Terrace, one of the new neighborhoods Heights and Hills serves. Raised in Charleroi, a small Pennsylvania town, Evelyn moved to NYC in 1956. Throughout her work life, Evelyn held a variety of jobs including managing a concession stand at a movie theater, working in the stockings department for Abraham & Strauss and in directory services for a telephone company. Her last position with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York had her examining money for counterfeit bills and overseeing the destruction of currency taken out of circulation. After a long and diverse work career, Evelyn retired when she turned 60.

Now at 87, Evelyn has a number of health issues to contend with, including rheumatoid arthritis which has left her hands disabled and significantly inhibits her physical abilities. It makes even the simplest of chores, like getting up in the morning, trying tasks for Evelyn. She contacted Heights and Hills in October of 2009 to see if she could get some help.

**"I can help myself, but I need assistance," said Evelyn.**

Patricia Robayo, Evelyn's case manager, visited Evelyn to conduct an initial assessment to determine her eligibility for services. Patricia describes Evelyn as a cheery person with a positive attitude, someone with

a sharp mind who is well organized. Evelyn's challenges relate to her lack of functionality as a result of her health issues. "Evelyn has some serious medical issues but she doesn't allow them to stop her from being the person she is," said Patricia.

Found eligible, Patricia arranged for Evelyn to receive homeware service. For four hours a day four days a week homeware workers now help Evelyn to function in her home much more easily. They help her get out of bed, to clean and dress, to put on her surgical shoes, and to get down stairs to her living area. They help with household chores, accompany Evelyn to doctors' appointments and perform other helpful tasks. Evelyn considers this assistance "very important" to her particularly as she prides herself on being able to live independently, at home.

Patricia, who describes working with Evelyn "a pleasure," keeps in close contact with her to ensure the services meet her needs. When there are any major changes to Evelyn's routine, such as the recent reductions in services, Patricia takes the time to personally visit Evelyn to explain what is happening and the reasons behind it.

Many of Evelyn's family members live long lives, like her mother who lived until she was 99. In her mother's later years, Evelyn frequently traveled back and forth from NYC to Charleroi to visit and care for her. Evelyn's care giving was instrumental to her mother's ability to remain in her home until the last months of her life.



Today, Evelyn is committed to living a quality life at home despite her health issues. Along with her son, Joseph, Heights and Hills is committed to helping her do just that. Her situation embodies the Heights and Hills mission to promote "successful aging in place."

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PROJECT UPDATE

You may remember that the Community Empowerment Project is a project funded by a grant from the State Office for the Aging (SOFA), and one of only three awarded in New York City. The goal of the grant is to identify those characteristics that make neighborhoods livable as individuals age. What makes this grant unique is that it is a grassroots model, tapping into the knowledge, experience and perspective of older residents representing six contiguous and historic Brooklyn neighborhoods: Boerum Hill, Brooklyn Heights, Carroll Gardens, Cobble Hill, Gowanus and Park Slope.

The Steering Committee has been busy and has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the project. They worked long and hard to produce a comprehensive survey to capture the information about what exists and what is needed in the community in both an online (which can be found at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5XRYTDQ>) and hardcopy version. Over and above the grant, they participated in the

## TRIBUTE TO ROSE MINUTOLO FOR 20 YEARS OF SERVICE

Heights and Hills acknowledges with deep appreciation the 20 years of commitment and dedication Rose Minutolo has put into her role as our office manager and bookkeeper. Many thanks, Rose, for all that you do for the entire Heights and Hills community!

AARP street survey that documented the traffic patterns at some Brooklyn intersections because street crossings are an important element of walkability and a safety issue for seniors.

We are now soliciting survey responses from residents 55+ who reside in our target communities. To start this process, Heights and Hills has taken the survey to the annual Volunteer Fair at the Park Slope Armory and to a senior center in Carroll Gardens. More is in store for dissemination including planned postings on blogs and message boards.

To date, more than 375 people have responded to the survey and we hope to have several hundred more. A report of our work thus far has been submitted to SOFA. Our goal is to continue to reach out to seniors to gather as much input as possible.

**Hearing what people have to say about their neighborhoods and their quality of life in those neighborhoods is too important not to listen.**

If you would like to be involved in this project, please contact our project consultant Anne Perzeszty at 646.265.7835 or [anneper@verizon.net](mailto:anneper@verizon.net).