



Brooklyn Community Services

BROOKLYN COMMUNITY SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019

151 Lawrence St. 4th Floor

Brooklyn, NY 11201

718.310.5600

www.WeAreBCS.org



A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

We are proud to bring you a report on our accomplishments during Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018 - June 30th, 2019). As we reflect on our 153rd year of serving Brooklyn, we look forward to recovery and rebuilding through unprecedented times.

BCS was founded on a deep conviction that neighbors should help neighbors - that the victims of the civil war, orphans, widows and families might thrive with appropriate support and opportunity in place. We have remained committed to our core values and continue to partner with people to empower them, including children, youth, adults, and families as they progress to overcome the obstacles they face on their path toward self determination.

As we look back on Fiscal Year 2019, we are particularly proud of our accomplishments in affordable housing, homelessness and housing services, and advocacy.

In 2019, we worked to bring more affordable housing options to Brooklyn. We partnered with Starret Companies to develop Sea Rise I, a fully-affordable building currently slated for 125 family units, with 72 units set aside for permanent supportive housing. I also joined a group of female leaders to break ground on the 1921 Cortelyou Road development which will feature 76 units of affordable housing for families, seniors, and young adult females, including women transitioning out of homelessness who will be supported by our program. Lastly, BCS is now a part of the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Housing Retention and Stabilization Services Pre-Qualified List, which is used by developers to partner with social-services providers.

To further enhance our commitment to addressing homelessness, we launched a project to bring a mobile-shower and outreach vehicle to Brooklyn. The Shower Bus will provide users with showers, clean toiletries, and assistance with access to social services programming.

One of my roles as Executive Director is to advocate strongly for Social Workers and Human Services Employees. This year, we worked closely with our partners and Board Members to lobby for increased funding for salaries, and more recognition for this field. Our work with the Human Service Council led to the adoption of an FY '20 indirect rate reimbursement program that will enable BCS to be reimbursed at a rate that aptly recognizes the cost of doing business on multiple City contracts. In addition, our ONE BK social media campaign featured our programs for the first time championed by local tastemakers and luminaries. Our social media engagement rate is rising daily and our analytics in general demonstrate a growing audience of Brooklynites and people around the world.

Readers, permit me to send a special thank you to our staff: We have come through so much since July 1, 2019! The world has much changed since then. BCS Staff, I hope that you know that I, and the Board Of Directors and all who benefit from your dedicated work are grateful for your service and appreciative of the positive impact that you make each and every day; Thank you.

Today, we face unprecedented times. Long term recovery from COVID-19 will be significant and painful, particularly for low-income communities. We know that the only way to thrive as we rebuild is for all of us to work together to overcome the challenges exacerbated by racism, inequity and lack that so many of us face.

Brooklyn Community Services stands in solidarity with the fight against systemic oppression, generational racism, and white supremacy. We have been on the frontline in the battle for social justice as a Human Services Provider for

over 150 years. Today, we realign ourselves with our mission: BCS is a Human Services Organization with a Social Justice mission. As we continue to partner with the community to provide services that foster individual, family and community self-determination, we will also seek to expose inequity and champion the communities we serve.









A handwritten signature in white ink on an orange background.

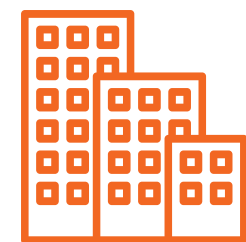
Janelle Farris
Executive Director



IMPACT

	BCS served 20,000 people in 2019
	500 people living with mental health conditions attended our programs and received support around recovery, job training, education and health
	5,000 young people were educated and empowered through our dynamic youth programs
	Over 3,000 people attended BCS community events or volunteer projects
	600 youth were placed in paid internships or stipend programs
	140 adults with disabilities were provided with job coaching or support and placed in paid jobs

WHERE TO FIND US



58
PROGRAMS



600
STAFF
MEMBERS



OUR VISION AND MISSION

Brooklyn Community Services envisions One Brooklyn Community where everyone can realize their full potential.

Our mission is to empower children, youth, adults and families to overcome the obstacles they face. Together we partner with our community to ensure opportunities for all to access an excellent education, jobs, safe and affordable housing, quality health care and wellness programs.

OUR STORIES

BCS is launching a Shower Bus, a mobile-shower unit and outreach vehicle that will roam Brooklyn, bringing the fundamental right of cleanliness to the hardest-to-reach members of the homeless population.

The project is modeled on a program that started in San Francisco. It has attracted the support of the Brooklyn Borough President, Eric Adams, (who contributed to its construction), the City Council (which has earmarked funds for its operation), Unilever (who have donated money and have created a line of high-end soaps to support it), but the bus's biggest fans are two young girls from Bedford-Stuyvesant, Serenity Dixon and Jada Warren.

In March of 2019, when the two were in fifth grade, they heard about the bus, which will have two

"I just feel like everyone has a right to have a shower, to brush their teeth, to have clean clothes." - Serenity Dixon

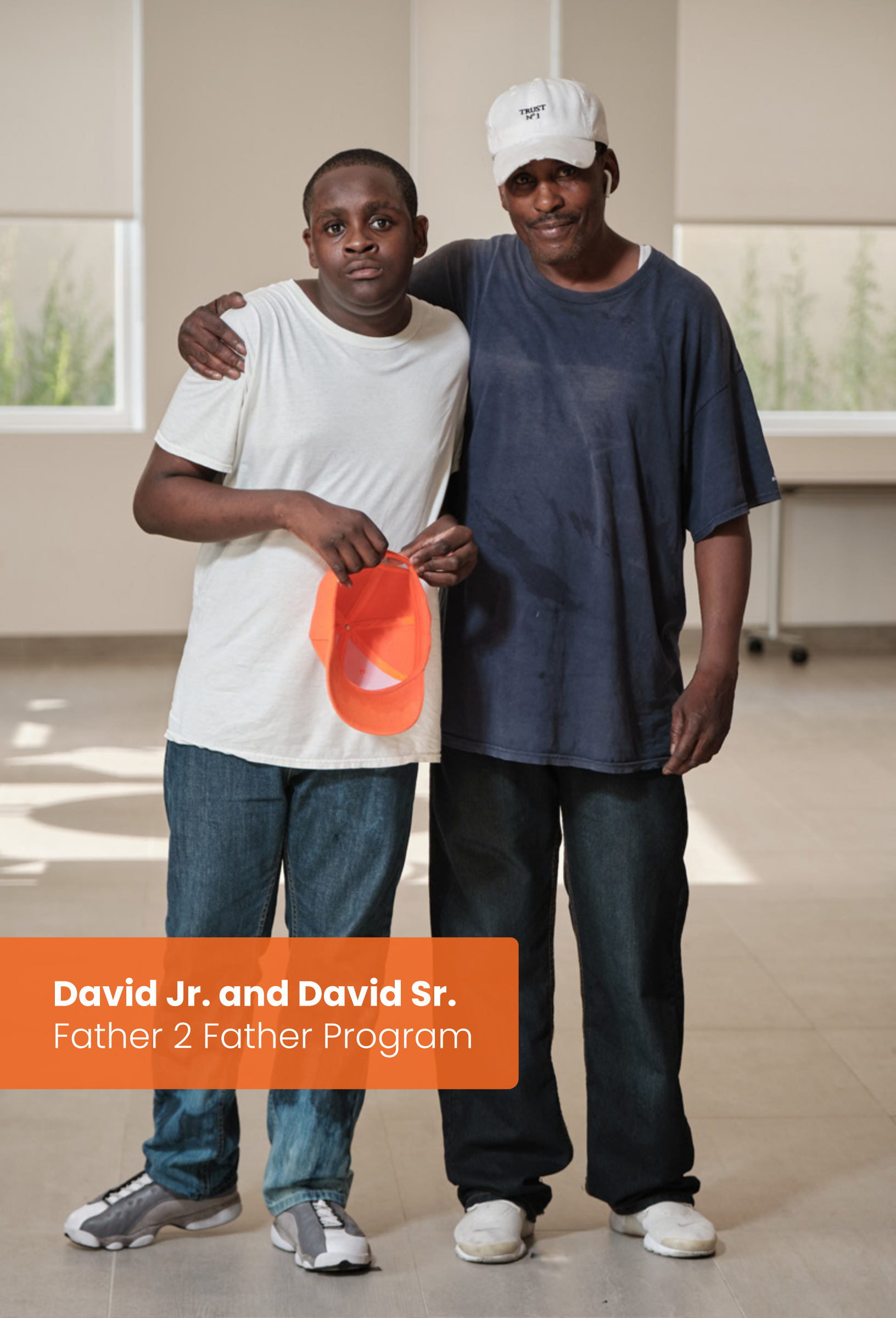
individual shower units, each with sinks, toilets, and benches. The custom-designed vehicle provides users with showers as well as clean towels, shampoo, shaving kits, soap, and more. The bus will also employ an outreach coordinator to assist

individuals in need with access to social service resources and programming to comprehensively address their full spectrum of needs.

Working with Cindy Van Petten, their teacher at PS 5, in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Serenity and Jada made the shower bus their 5th grade service project. They sought out the Borough President, wrote him letters encouraging him to rally behind the bus and were eventually invited to Borough Hall to meet him. Since then, they have gotten more commitments from other large name donors, done clothing drives and raised funds.

The two are now in their first year of middle school, and they remain dedicated to the bus. Serenity is excited for the work to continue with her elementary-school friend and with the new students. "Just as we learned to give back, they can learn to give back to make the community better," she said. Serenity and Jada are making flyers explaining that the school is collecting items for the program. She once told the Borough President when she met him, "I just feel like everyone has a right to have a shower, to brush their teeth, to have clean clothes."





David Jr. and David Sr.
Father 2 Father Program

David Jones found himself at BCS' Father 2 Father program, an initiative establishing healthy and supportive relationships between fathers and their children, after beating cancer and battling substance use and addiction.

David is a single father to his son, David Jr., who has autism.

When David Jones was younger, he enjoyed a career as an artist. From the age of 18, he worked in illustration. "I was born with the gift," he said. "My mother was an artist, and I have a nephew who is an artist." He did portraits, flyers, and even worked on two books "Manny's Magical Garden" and "The Education of Black Folks," he said. "Drawing is one of the most wonderful things in the world," he noted. "It opens up my mind, gives me space, and frees me. It relieves misery."



"Drawing is one of the most wonderful things in the world," It opens up my mind, gives me space, and frees me. It relieves misery."

- David Jones Sr.

David Jr. attends a special education program at PS 77K. In school, he uses a dynamic-display communication device (an iPad, with a special communication app program called "Proloquo2Go"), which allows him to interact with adults and peers. BCS was able to purchase the same technology to use at home through our partnership with the New York Times Neediest Cases Campaign. "He can't really communicate on his own," David said. "With this iPad at home, I can better find out what he thinks, what he wants."

David Jr. has a love for art like his father in cubism, graffiti, and portraits. "He can draw like anyone else," Mr. Jones said. "His stick figures are pretty good." At night, the two share time with the TV. "Cartoons like Elmo and SpongeBob, that's pretty much what we watch."

Today, David's focus is to maintain his physical health and to provide for his son's care and education. David is not only a graduate of BCS' Father to Father Program but recently enrolled in the BCS Health Home program, a Medicaid funded care-management initiative. David's BCS case manager is also arranging respite services so David can return to work and still know that his son is safe and comfortable.



Courtelyou Groundbreaking:

In November of 2018, a group of female leaders, including BCS Executive Director, Janelle Farris, broke ground on the 1921 Cortelyou development. The project is a partnership between the Mutual Housing Association of New York (MHANY) and The Baptist Church of the Redeemer. It will feature 76 units of affordable housing for families, seniors, and young adult females. This includes the 46 young women transitioning out of homelessness who will be supported by BCS and Turning Point programs. The church has a long history of enrichment in the Flatbush community and will also be getting a new facility.



Staff Highlight: Marcus Martir

“For me, this isn’t really a job, it’s my passion,” Marcus Matir said when talking about his role as Program Director of Turning Point Brooklyn’s Gateway to Health and Wellness. Marcus, who was born and raised on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, has been advocating for HIV awareness and prevention for more than 22 years.

He started his work in 1995 as a member of the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). SYEP placed Marcus at the Henry Street Settlement’s Adolescents against HIV AIDS program. He stayed with Henry Street Settlement for 16 years before moving to Turning Point Brooklyn (TPBK).

TPBK’s Gateway to Health and Wellness combines outreach and action to provide Brooklyn with HIV, Hepatitis-C and drug and alcohol prevention services. Their Mobile Outreach van parks in different locations around the borough and is equipped with 4th generation rapid point-of-care Alere Testing Strips. They even have an iPad with access to



Marcus Martir, Program Director of Turning Point Brooklyn’s Gateway to Health and Wellness

“For me, this isn’t really a job, it’s my passion,” – Marcus Matir

dating apps like Grindr, Scruff, Jack’d and Tinder, taking a more creative approach to their outreach efforts!

In the early days, Marcus’ advocacy melded easily with his personal life. “I was so involved in the gay scene that I would link with club promoters.” Through this, he would give out condoms and business cards, encouraging people to get tested.

Today, he is taking Gateway to Health and Wellness in a new direction. “Our program shouldn’t focus on mass testing. We are shifting the culture to patient navigation.”

Marcus asks his staff to be present for every “baby step” of the way. Clients get tested (about 580 per year), and are then walked through the available resources. If clients test HIV positive or are negative and would like to take precautions, they have access to free treatment, therapy and PrEP or PEP, regardless of their legal status in the country.

TPBK Gateway to Health and Wellness will continue its long-standing reputation of safe and trustworthy service for Brooklyn.

ONE BK Campaign:

Our ONE Brooklyn Community Campaign may have left subway stations, but we are always ONE Brooklyn Community.

We want to thank all of the local tastemakers, luminaries, investors and iconic natives who participated in the campaign. They made our 4th campaign special by posing with BCS program participants. The campaign was made possible with the guidance and work of creative visionary Michaela Angela Davis and Brooklyn photographer Erin Patrice O’Brien.

Why did we launch this campaign? Brooklyn is thriving and home to many affluent New Yorkers. But the fact is that 23% of our neighbors in Brooklyn live in poverty – many children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. We take care of each other through volunteerism, philanthropy, and community engagement. Our ONE Brooklyn Community campaign united our diverse borough voices and aimed to illuminate the issues that need attention from our community.



BCS ONE Brooklyn Community campaign features notable and diverse Brooklynites from media, arts and entertainment, fashion, cuisine, and activism. To learn more about the campaign participants and about BCS, visit www.WeAreBCS.org.
 Honored Name: Jacqueline Woodson, writer | Joe Miller, health & wellness consultant | Ethan Haytt, dancer & actor |
 Kids from BCS programs
 investorsBank



2018 Campaign Participants

- Victor Hsu, Founder of luxury sneaker brand Facto
- Matthew Morgan, Co-Founder of AFROPUNK
- Boris Ginet, Chef and Owner of Risbo Restaurant
- Keeth Smart, US Sabre Fencer & Olympian
- Paola Mendoza, Director & Author and Michael Skolnik, Entrepreneur and Activist.
- Justin Bazarich, Restaurateur & Owner of Speedy Romeo and Oxomoco
- Michelle Reid, Owner & Host of Bisou Bisou Restaurant
- Lucas Denton, Chef & Co-Founder of the Brownsville Community Culinary Center
- Curly Girl Collective, experiential marketing group that specializes in multicultural beauty.
- Michaela Angela Davis, Activist & Writer
- Joe Holder, Performance & Health Consultant
- Jacqueline Woodson, Author
- Debbie Hardy, Owner of Martine’s Dream Boutique
- Linda Sarsour, Activist & Community Organizer
- Yahdon Israel, Writer & Founder of Literary Swag
- Teresita Fernandez, Visual Artist
- Hard Hittin Harry, DJ & Producer
- Lorraine West, Jewelry Designer
- Debbie Hardy, Owner of Martine’s Dream Boutique
- Kimberly Drew, Writer, Curator & Activist
- Darnell Moore, Writer & Activist
- Abby Stein, Activist & Author

FINANCIALS

Consolidated and Combined Statements of Financial Position As of June 30, 2019 and 2018	2019	2018
ASSETS		
Cash, cash equivalents and restricted cash (Notes 2 and 14)	\$ 3,704,029	1,177,678
Accounts receivable, net (Note 2)	9,737,364	9,335,840
Contributions receivable, net (Notes 2 and 3)	164,375	51,450
Other receivables (Note 2)	8,152,192	13,538,775
Investments, at fair value (Notes 2, 4 and 12)	16,418,502	11,251,237
Prepaid expenses, deferred charges and other	5,710,571	592,059
Property and equipment, net (Notes 2 and 6)	8,892,719	8,507,746
Assets held by insurance trusts (Note 5)	52,509	62,221
Total assets	\$ 47,692,747	44,517,006
LIABILITIES		
Accounts and accrued expenses payable	\$ 1,475,371	\$ 1,828,241
Accrued payroll and related liabilities	1,262,005	1,272,202
Deferred rent (Note 2)	131,031	116,781
Deferred revenue/refundable advances (Note 7)	590,210	917,737
Lines of credit (Note 8)	6,877,232	6,797,985
Loan, mortgage, and note payable, net (Note 9)	4,912,341	4,589,337
Defined benefit pension plan payable (Note 10)	3,181,072	1,952,982
Supplemental retirement benefit plan payable (Note 10)	30,726	99,694
Total liabilities	18,459,988	17,574,959
Commitments and contingencies (Note 11)		
NET ASSETS (Note 2)		
Without donor restrictions		
Operating	20,985,971	17,562,886
Invested in property and equipment, net	10,281,677	10,309,928
Article XI Tax Incentive Loan	(2,215,028)	(2,215,028)
Defined benefit pension plan		
Pension related changes (Note 10)	(3,181,072)	(1,952,982)
Supplemental retirement benefit plan	(30,726)	(99,694)
Total without donor restrictions	25,840,822	23,605,110
With donor restrictions		
Time and purpose restricted (Note 12)	2,016,093	1,961,093
Held in perpetuity (Note 13)	1,375,844	1,375,844
Total with donor restrictions	3,391,937	3,336,937
Total net assets	29,232,759	26,942,047
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 47,692,747	\$ 44,517,006

Consolidated and Combined Statements of Activities For the years ended June 30, 2019	Without donor restrictions	With donor restrictions	Total
OPERATING REVENUES			
Public support:			
Special events revenue (net of direct expenses of \$175,867 and \$152,589, respectively) (Note 2)	\$ 210,724	-	\$ 210,724
Contributions			
Individual and corporations	190,518	100,274	290,792
Foundations and trusts	1,159,247	55,000	1,214,247
New York Times Neediest Cases	543,468	-	543,468
In-kind contribution - equipment (Note 2)	29,400	-	29,400
Investment return used for current operations (Notes 4 and 13)	291,790	96,309	388,099
Net assets released from restrictions (Note 12)	196,583	(196,583)	-
Total public support	2,621,730	55,000	2,676,730
Governmental support:			
Government fees and contracts (Note 2)	27,876,062	-	27,876,062
Government subcontractor	212,296	-	212,296
Total governmental support	28,088,358	-	28,088,358
Other revenue:			
Day care fees	307,287	-	307,287
Program Revenue	434,437	-	434,437
Sales - contract and other	4,663	-	4,663
Other	423,234	-	423,234
Total other revenue	1,169,621	-	1,169,621
Total operating revenues	31,879,709	55,000	31,934,709
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Childhood and Family Services	9,839,386	-	9,839,386
After-School Education	3,222,165	-	3,222,165
Education Center	1,047,240	-	1,047,240
Youth Development	4,172,538	-	4,172,538
Health and Housing	6,018,159	-	6,018,159
Workforce Development	1,893,687	-	1,893,687
Community Supports - Developmental Disabilities	2,789,017	-	2,789,017
Total program services expenses	28,982,192	-	28,982,192
Management and administration	5,014,702	-	5,014,702
Fundraising	532,287	-	532,287
Total supporting services expenses	5,546,989	-	5,546,989
Total operating expenses	34,529,181	-	34,529,181
Loss from operations before pension adjustment	(2,649,472)	55,000	(2,649,472)
Pension changes other than net periodic cost (Note 10)	(445,563)	-	(445,563)
Operating loss after pension adjustment	(3,095,035)	55,000	(3,095,035)
NONOPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Pension changes other than net periodic costs (Note 10)	(1,021,895)	-	(1,021,895)
Redevelopment revenues (including loss from building improvement write off)	5,625,000	-	5,625,000
Other income	-	-	-
Gain on valuation of property	-	-	-
Investment gain in excess of amounts used in operations (Note 4)	727,642	-	727,642
Total nonoperating activities	5,330,747	-	5,330,747
Change in net assets	2,235,712	55,000	2,290,712
Net assets - beginning of year	23,605,110	3,336,937	26,942,047
Net assets - end of year	\$ 25,840,822	\$ 3,391,937	\$ 29,232,759

Consolidated and Combined Statement of Functional Expenses

For the year ended June 30, 2018

2019

2018

	Program Services								Supporting Services			Total	Total
	Childhood & Family services	After-school education	Education center	Youth & community	Health & Housing	Workforce	Community supports - development disabilities	Total program services	Management & administration	Fundraising	Total supporting services		
Salaries	\$ 3,959,855	2,421,665	\$ 467,091	\$ 2,836,600	\$ 2,678,098	\$ 984,885	\$ 892,337	\$ 14,240,531	\$ 1,925,394	\$ 285,569	\$ 2,210,963	\$ 1 6,451,494	\$ 16,634,586
Payroll taxes and benefits	997,927	364,905	159,625	590,864	786,034	264,525	206,188	3,370,068	630,302	81,149	711,451	4,081,519	3,872,758
Total salaries and related costs	4,957,782	2,786,570	626,716	3,427,464	3,464,132	1,249,410	1,098,525	17,610,599	2,555,696	366,718	2,922,414	20,533,013	20,507,344
Professional service fees	438,389	160,325	94,090	218,055	570,268	78,016	132,585	1,691,728	546,323	31,447	577,770	2,269,498	1,543,222
Contracted services	81,342	5,795	145	94,799	215,772	16,332	10,995	425,180	169,768	3,129	172,897	598,077	704,966
Stipends & incentive	1,942,050	-	-	47,464	16,667	1,757	40	2,007,978	-	2,300	2,300	2,010,278	2,150,370
Supplies	55,673	13,888	16,110	28,942	73,324	8,915	5,998	202,850	45,357	5,642	50,999	253,849	266,704
Occupancy expenses - office	613,113	-	130,708	-	387,280	208,500	674,455	2,014,056	259,350	32,150	291,500	2,305,556	1,796,284
Utilities - office	231,803	6,051	91,895	28,345	245,722	85,527	61,461	750,804	107,698	11,133	118,831	869,635	899,431
Transportation	38,563	44,406	2,475	17,714	66,139	29,589	388,974	587,860	15,281	503	15,784	603,644	864,093
Equipment	249,023	3,533	7,892	26,072	30,181	1,970	8,358	327,029	52,150	6,977	59,127	386,156	267,317
Facility repairs & maintenance	204,254	-	35,726	14,388	92,650	2,512	21,325	370,855	29,554	1,527	31,081	401,936	298,246
Program expense	923,594	161,135	6,637	212,283	219,356	50,411	158,560	1,731,976	136,565	11,550	148,115	1,880,091	1,917,552
Staff expense	34,858	10,905	3,618	20,203	15,834	1,425	19,526	106,369	54,164	42,144	96,308	202,677	197,051
Depreciation and amortization	-	-	-	-	180,493	-	6,472	186,965	161,787	-	161,787	348,752	213,385
Insurance	62,133	28,907	14,925	36,629	60,265	18,998	29,245	251,102	96,437	6,284	102,721	353,823	345,473
Reserves & finance fees	4,275	-	-	-	310	68,863	7,845	81,293	469,425	10,783	480,208	561,501	467,259
Bad debt	-	-	13,242	-	378,067	71,362	153,931	616,602	135,418	-	135,418	752,020	78,131
Other expenses	2,534	650	3,061	180	1,699	100	10,722	18,946	179,729	-	179,729	198,675	47,545
Total expenses	\$ 9,839,386	\$ 3,222,165	\$ 1,047,240	\$ 4,172,538	\$ 6,018,159	\$ 1,893,687	\$ 2,789,017	\$ 28,982,192	\$ 5,014,702	\$ 532,287	\$ 5,546,989	\$ 34,529,181	\$ 32,564,373

Consolidated and Combined Statements of Cash Flows For the years ended June 30, 2019 and June 30, 2018	2019	2018
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Change in net assets	\$ 2,290,712	\$ 5,026,608
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash used in operating activities		
Depreciation	348,752	218,772
Disposal of property and equipment	72,868	173,500
Gain on valuation of property	-	(6,115,851)
Gain on investments	(489,465)	(571,449)
Bad debt	752,020	53,245
Subtotal	2,974,887	(1,215,175)
Changes in operating assets and liabilities (Increase) decrease in assets		
Accounts receivable	(1,153,544)	523,774
Contributions receivable	(112,925)	537,743
Other receivables	5,386,583	(154,250)
Prepaid expenses, deferred charges and other	21,002	(165,867)
Assets held by insurance trusts	9,712	4,788
Increase (decrease) in liabilities		
Accounts and accrued expenses payable	(352,870)	(300,666)
Accrued payroll and related liabilities	(10,197)	272,911
Deferred rent	14,250	55,280
Deferred revenue/refundable advances	(327,527)	(272,209)
Defined benefit pension plan payable	1,228,090	(356,180)
Supplemental retirement benefit plan payable	(68,968)	(85,871)
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	7,608,493	(1,155,722)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchases of property and equipment	(806,591)	(231,676)
Tenant security deposits refunded	-	-
Purchases of investments	(12,042,774)	(5,565,963)
Proceeds from sale of investments	7,368,068	5,594,767
Net cash used in investing activities	(5,481,297)	(202,872)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Change in due to related party	-	-
Proceeds from line of credit	5,519,482	4,240,181
Repayments of line of credit	(5,440,236)	(2,755,000)
Proceeds from loan and mortgage payable	426,957	208,022
Principal repayments of loan and mortgage	(107,048)	(268,743)
Net cash provided by financing activities	399,155	1,424,460
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents	2,526,351	65,866
Cash and cash equivalents - beginning of year	1,177,678	1,111,812
Cash and cash equivalents - end of year	\$ 3,704,029	\$ 1,177,678
Supplementary disclosure of cash flow information:	\$ 145,112	\$ 160,181

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Spotlight on Volunteering with BCS:

"The first time I went into a shelter, I had a certain expectation. I thought that it was going to be like what I saw on TV," said Janelle Anderson, Director of Outreach and Volunteerism at BCS, "But I walked into this building on the Upper West Side, the colors were bright, the staff was nice, I didn't have to go through a metal detector to get in. I found out very quickly that what I thought wasn't true and until you experience it, I don't think you know."

Janelle started her career working for a Help USA shelter, overseen by NYC's Department of Homeless Services. Today, one of her many tasks as Director of Outreach and Volunteerism is to find ways for the volunteer community to engage with BCS' homeless shelters: BCS Transitional Living Community (TLC) and Turning Point Young Women's Shelter.

BCS Volunteers make it possible for us to interact with our clients in ways that go beyond providing vital services. Janelle and her team have organized activities ranging from a playground build for our community centers, to holiday toy drives for the kids at our after-school programs, to free dance classes for our adults with intellectual disabilities. But volunteering at a BCS' shelters is a unique experience.

"When volunteering with this population, it is important to recognize that a lot of the women, specifically in our Young Women's Shelter, have had to set a lot of boundaries," Janelle said. "For many of them, it takes time for their walls to come down, but it's very quick for their walls to go back up. We, as a team, have to prepare our volunteers so we aren't re-traumatizing the women in the shelters."

In the past, volunteers have visited BCS shelters to discuss voting rights, reproductive health, and have even organized makeovers. Most recently, Man Nga Chan, a Civic Corps Member who coordinates service projects for BCS' volunteer department, organized a Ladies Brunch at our Young Women's Shelter. The event included catered food, tarot card

readings, making affirmation bracelets and more. For Man Nga, the experience proved the value of patience and open-mindedness.

"I am currently studying public health and we talk about this idea of enabling a population in order to help them. But, many of these young women have been through a really hard time," said Man Nga. "We saw this with the last volunteers. The more time volunteers spent there, the more comfortable residents got. Some of the women went from not wanting to participate to being fully engaged. So yes, you do have to enable them but first, you have to connect with them. Build trust."

With this in mind, volunteering at one of our shelters can bring immense value for our residents. Giving back doesn't always have to be tangible. Anything you can give to help someone achieve self-sufficiency is enough. This could be a pep talk, learning how to dress for an interview, knowing how to introduce yourself, or turning a hobby into a business.

"Do not underestimate the homeless population. One of my first clients had a master's degree and an extensive background in human services but she went through personal trauma that led to homelessness. At the time, I was 22 trying to help someone who could have easily been my boss," explained Janelle. "So be aware that you can learn from anyone in the system. Yes, you are coming to teach something but you can also learn something."



Janelle Anderson, Director of Outreach and Volunteerism at BCS

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