



UPS COMMUNITY NEWS

News from Unique People Services - Established in 1991

1st Quarter Newsletter

OUR MISSION

Unique People Services, a New York-based not-for-profit organization 501(c)(3), aims to serve - holistically and without judgment - those who may have been denied compassionate and considerate treatment elsewhere due to their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, developmental level, health status, criminal history or substance abuse history.

Board Officers

Crystal E. Ward MPA
Board Chair

Jean E. Jeremie, CPA
Vice Chair

Desiree Thomas, MBA
Treasurer

Ellen K. Fong, MBA
Secretary

Board Members

John Zeltin, MA
Nathaniel M. Montgomery, MPA
Deborah A. Downing, MS
Polina Bakhtearov, MCP
Joana Ryan Bekerman

Executive Staff

Yvette Brissett-André
Executive Director/CEO

Lorna Thompson
Associate Executive Director

Aziza Anderson
Chief of Staff

Rosemarie Gooden, CPA
Chief Financial Officer

Everson Gibson
Admin Director of QA and HR

Betsy Pelsuo
Director of Human Resources

Ronald Tomlinson
Director of Facilities

From the Desk of the Executive Director



Every year as winter turns into spring; I take time to reflect. This year, I came across a profound quote from Rachel Naomi Remen, who said, **“When you help, you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole.”**

After much reflection, the quote reminded of the incredible value that comes with being of service to others. By embarking on the act of giving, I realize that it is something that we all have access to, no matter who we are, or what we do.

For 28 years, Unique People Services has been of service to others. I know from working with the amazing staff, board members, and partners that we all have our unique reasons for doing what we do, but collectively we serve to express gratitude, transform others' lives and our own hearts.

In this first quarter newsletter for 2019, we will share our recent accomplishments, but most importantly, provide insight into the UPS family expansion of the “We.” Nothing that we embark on at UPS is about “me” it always about the “WE”; much like the “WE” in our hashtag #WEAREUNIQUE it is about discovering that often, the most valuable gifts you have to offer are not always things at all. They may be intangible gifts like your **time, presence, joy, and attention.**

You will read about the **time** that was given to UPS by the Harvard Business School Club of New York (HSBCNY) Community Partners Volunteers Program to strengthen our organization's future. You'll also learn about our **presence** and advocacy efforts in Albany, NY during Legislative Day, where we spoke to elected officials about the need for supportive housing for those we serve. You'll read about the gift of blooming flowers we received from Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex that gave **joy** to our individuals and finally, you will learn about the loving **attention** and full range of resources that we provide to the amazing individuals that the staff of UPS selflessly serve.

...And as my reflection has come to light in the pages of this newsletter, you'll recognize as I did and I hope you do as well--- that the ability to give can manifest a heart of service in any situation. That “giving” blooms from a state of mind and spirit... and it's a glorious and powerful place to be.

Onward and Forward!

Yvette Brissett-André
Yvette Brissett-André



A little help from Harvard

Excellence as a practice---that is our goal as an organization.

Intrinsically, we are always seeking opportunities to strengthen and develop a realistic and solid plan for more significant impact. Our objectives

are to strengthen and build partnerships, prepare the organization for opportunities and challenges, cultivate trust with the public and most importantly, generate resources that benefit those we serve. This is what we are all about, and it's at the core as we strive daily to develop and scale high-performance innovations and our future direction.

In 2018, UPS sought assistance to create a solid strategic plan to ensure our long-term viability and build on our 28 years of service to vulnerable populations. Unique People Services applied for and was honored to be awarded the opportunity to work with the Harvard Business School Club of New York (HSBCNY) Community Partners Volunteers Program.

For the UPS project, the HSBCNY project team consisted of four team members with expertise in media, law and deep personal ties to the special needs community. During the first phase of the project, UPS collaborated with HSBCNY Community Partners to identify five key strategic areas. Once critical areas of enhancements were identified, UPS Executive Leadership and Board Members met over a span of six months with the Harvard team for introductory kick-off and mid-project meetings, as well as a final presentation, and final presentation of their findings in early 2019.

This strategic plan project enabled UPS to align our business model with actionable changes that would provide the requisite resources, build performance management systems that measure social returns for society, guide strategic decision-making; and scale our impact through strategies including balanced growth, solid collaborations, and policy influence.

"Every step of the project was amazing, stated Yvette B. Andre. We are in our 28th year of service to the greater NYC community, and as we move towards our 30th year, we knew that it was important to take a 360-view of the organization. Working with HSBCNY allowed us to thoughtfully measure our social impact and develop a body of knowledge that encompasses strengthening our leadership, strategy, and governance. With Harvard's own mission as a nonprofit educational and research institution, it was a perfect and rewarding fit," she concluded.

At UPS, we are committed to demonstrating excellence in our practices, with an overarching organizational commitment to fostering curiosity, equity, and innovation. We are looking forward to the next 30 years, and this incredible opportunity has allowed us to do so more fully.

The Harvard Community Partners Program: *The Board of Harvard Business School (HBS) alumni are committed to promoting public service and volunteerism with their alumni and this dictum governs The Harvard Community Partners Program. The projects that they select range from organizational growth and strategic planning to marketing and public awareness; from budgeting and financial planning to governance and general management; and from mission definition to program analyses. Each pro bono project is unique and is tailored to the needs of the nonprofit. To learn more about the program visit: www.hbscnycommunitypartners.org.*



Unique People Services hold its 2nd Trauma and Informed Care Conference

On March 18, 2019, Unique People Services (UPS) held its much-anticipated second Annual Trauma Informed Care conference at Hostos Community College.

More than 100 guests attended the one-day Conference. An informative panel discussion, a Q&A session, and other informational resources rounded out the half-day event. Health First and Ponce Bank generously sponsored the event.

The keynote speaker and panel moderator for the forum was renowned psychologist Dr. Jeff Gardere, better known as "America's Psychologist." Dr. Gardere is one of the most widely sought-after experts in the field of mental health and a respected academician and author.

The half-day panel discussion featured Celia Brown from the NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH); Veronica Williams from the NYC Administration of Children Services (ACS); Fernando Tirado of the Bronx Neighborhood Health Action Center; Brett A. Scudder, of the Scudder Intervention Services Foundation; Christina M. Senatore, Outreach Activist for TRU Entertainment Outreach Division; and Fabián



Sergio Wander, Director of the Health and Wellness Office at Hostos Community College. The Unique People Services Trauma Informed Care Team consisted of Andrea Porter, Victor Genao Jr., Michael J. Ealy, and Shawana McIntyre. The UPS team presented their journey and experience becoming TIC providers and the lessons they learned along the way.

UPS Executive Director Yvette Brissett-Andre stated, "Trauma-Informed Care emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional wellness for both consumers and providers, and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. Ms. Andre further stated, "The information and conversation shared during the day was invaluable to the community and all mental health providers."

The day was truly a success. As one participant shared, "I learned so much from today's forum. Events like this help us all positively respond and help our clients. I'm delighted I attended".



Unique People Services

Keeping the MLK Dream Alive

Serving New Yorkers with Unique Needs since 1991

#WeAreUnique



UNIQUEPEOPLESERVICES.ORG

The Neon LIGHTS are Bright on Broadway!

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Unique People Services launched our very special Times Square billboard to coincide with the 2019 celebration of the legacy of the civil rights leader.

The billboard featured a Unique People Services individual Ms. Chantae Jones. In bold letters over the New York City skyline, the billboard located at 42th Street and 7th Avenue (facing east) in Times Square read, "Keeping the MLK Dream Alive. Serving New Yorkers with Unique Needs Since 1991" #WeAreUnique. The billboard visually highlighted a smiling Chantae with wording that paid homage to the legacy of Reverend Dr. King and his principles of acceptance.

Unique People Services Executive Director Yvette Brissett-Andre reflected on Dr. King's vision of bridging barriers, creating solutions to social problems, empowering individuals, strengthening communities, and moving us all forward to a better tomorrow. Ms. Andre further stated, "Martin Luther King Jr. also valued justice for all, which directly mirrors our mission. Every day our organization serves-holistically and without judgment-those who have been denied compassionate and considerate treatment due to their individual emotional or physical challenges.

In addition, one of our organizational goals is to promote a greater public understanding of the unmet needs of individuals with special needs. This billboard allows our organization to proudly honor his life and teachings, by reminding everyone "We are all unique and deserve love, dignity, and respect," Ms. Andre concluded.

Because of them, we are...

Every month Unique People Services staff selects remarkable women and men from the pool of those we serve to celebrate their accomplishments and to amplify what life changes can happen when people are provided the resource-rich and caring service of UPS.

We are honored to highlight our first three 2019 Individuals of the Month. Please get to know these amazing individuals through their moving and triumphant stories that remind us daily that because of them #WEAREUNIQUE.

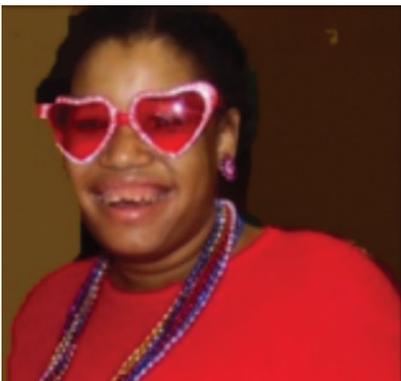


January Individual of the Month - Gerald Digilio

"Your beginning doesn't have to be your end."- Gerald Digilio

UPS program recipient Gerald Digilio has embraced the opportunity to start life anew.

[Read his story here!](#)



February Individual of the Month - Tahirah Temple

"See me for me and I will be all that I can be!"

[Read her story here!](#)



March Individual of the Month- Derrick Marable

After years of struggling, Derrick Marable knew something had to change.

[Read his story here!](#)



Employee Spotlight: Get to know the staff!

Please join us in welcoming Altya Henson, UPS' new Director of Developmental Disability Services.

Ms. Henson began her two-decade career as a direct support professional and is now a clinician and senior manager with years of experience supporting individuals in various community settings.

When asked what she loves about her work, Ms. Henson shares, "I take great pride in advocating for the individuals we support, their families, and all of the wonderful staff who are indispensable to the organization." She concluded, "I look forward to...Developmental Disabilities programming.

Altya will serve in the role of former DD Director Sonji Phillips, who will remain as a Clinical Consultant within Unique People Services (UPS). We wish her tons of success! Welcome to the UPS Family.



UPS Celebrated our AMAZING Social Workers during Social Worker Month

Each day, nearly 700,000 social workers nationwide work to elevate and empower others, giving them the ability to solve life's problems, cope with personal roadblocks and get the services they need.

UPS is very lucky to have some amazing social workers, and we understand and appreciate the crucial role they play in improving our society and empowering others so that they can live to their fullest potential.

For generations, social workers such as the dedicated social workers of Unique People Services have worked tirelessly to improve the wellness of our clients, our broader society, and have made our nation a better place to live.

Social workers are needed now more than ever as the nation grapples with serious issues such as homelessness, HIV/AIDS, mental health challenges, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, income inequality, rising suicide rates, ensuring access to good health care for all, as well as addressing the growing opioid addiction crisis now gripping the nation.



Executive Director Honored

Yvette Brissett-André inducted into The 2019 Women in Human Services Hall of Fame

On March 5, 2019, in Albany New York, Strong Non-Profits for a Better New York honored woman providing critical social services across New York.

Unique People Services Executive Director, Yvette Brissett-André was one such women and was inducted into the 2019 Women In Human Services Hall of Fame.



Please join Unique People Services as we congratulate Yvette and celebrate the accomplishments of all the honorees and how they all go above and beyond, exemplifying the importance of human services in New York's communities.

Here are a few excerpts from the selected nomination:

"As Executive Director of Unique People Services (UPS), Yvette Brissett- André truly exemplifies the purpose of the Women in Human Services Hall of Fame. She has dedicated her actions and activities to build a solid continuum of care for those the organization serves. Through her actions and dedication, she has woven a strong foundation, not only for the organization but also for all New Yorkers."

"Yvette is a fearless leader that has created a strong and nurturing work environment for her staff. She understands that the key to the organization's success is building from within. Additionally, a delightful antidotal story is that internally she is known as the "Oprah Winfrey" of the organization because she always generously gives to the staff during organizational events. Short of screaming, "You get a car! You get a car!" Yvette always creates ways to let the staff know they are appreciated and that her success is theirs."

"Yvette is a stellar example of a passionate, authentic, and strong leader. Her contributions and dedication to the NYC Human Services community are exampled through the reduction of homelessness; respecting the needs of and shining a bright beam on the importance of understanding and supporting NY's intellectual, developmental disabilities, and mental health populations. Her unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of New Yorkers is a true reflection of her character."

Once again, please join us as we congratulate Yvette!

Visit [Strong Non-Profits for a Better New York](#) to learn about the other 2019 honorees.



TIC Tip of the Week: TAKE A BREAK

From the research, it is clear that breaks are beneficial, but the ideal break and how to fit it into one's day will differ for each person.

Even though all of our work schedules are busy and it often feels like tasks are never-ending, working through lunch or after hours does not seem to have long-term benefits (even if you feel you will get more work completed).

Research suggests that not taking breaks has detrimental effects on our psychological health and satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential to take the time to enjoy small breaks throughout the day, especially lunch, as work will always be waiting for you when you return.

Black History Month and Annual Poetry Slam

In February, Unique People Services employees and individuals come together to celebrate Black History Month and Valentine's Day. The celebrations intertwine with the long-standing tradition of the Annual UPS-Black History Month/Valentine's Day Poetry Contest. This event is a collaboration of creativity dedicated to the expression of thoughts, feelings, and experiences through poetry...and of course, good old fun. This year's event was no different!

In its 7th year, the Annual UPS-Black History Month/Valentine's Day Poetry Contest was held at Haven Apartments. Director Michael J. Ealy orchestrated a fantastic event filled with love and excitement, as he read authentic creative poems written by staff and individuals of the agency. This year everyone out-did themselves with their submissions, as they all highlighted their uniqueness with original poetry submissions written from their hearts.

During the event, attendees were treated to delicious refreshments while the poetry was read aloud. Once all submission were read, the difficult task of selecting the winner was turned over to the capable hands of contest judges Etta Williams, Benny Jenkins, and Tomas Ramirez, all Haven Apartment individuals.

Over the years, the contest has allowed us to recognize the remarkable work of many writers and every year it gets harder to select a winner. After serious contemplation, this year's winners were finally selected. Join us as we congratulate the 2019 winners!

Unique People Services talented Individuals

- 1st place "As I Am" by Tomas Ramirez
- 2nd place "Rhyming Timeline of Black History" by Patricia Supreme Creator
- 3rd place "The Angel is Here" by James McKnight

Unique People Services talented Staff

- 1st place "Unique I Am" by Michelle Ramsay-Carr
- 2nd place "Unique People Arise" by Karen Laidley
- 3rd place "Midnight Blue Love" by Siobhan Anderson



Workplace Wellness The Biggest Loser

Unique People Services is always seeking ways to aid in the physical wellness of our employees. Last year we implemented the UPS Weight Watchers Program. The program was a success and assisted participants in achieving healthy and sustained weight loss.

So we thought we would do it again but this time we would “LEVEL UP” by creating our very own contest, and the “UPS BIGGEST LOSER CHALLENGE” was born!

To transform and improve employee health, the eight-week work-site-based program will include wellness, fitness and nutrition tips, healthy recipes, inspirational messages, and prizes donated by our partner Emblem Health.

Research shows that workplace wellness programs help to manage organizational healthcare costs, decrease absenteeism and increase productivity. Most importantly they help empower employees with life-changing wellness solutions, that help employees understand how good nutrition and simple changes can boost energy, support metabolism, improve focus, balance moods, and create health and well-being. We recognize that a healthy workforce is a strong workforce!

Black History Month and Annual Poetry Slam Continued

The staff first place winner received a cash prize and the individual winner received two movie tickets. All winners received a box of scrumptious chocolate candy. Enjoy the Winning Poem and an extra poetry treat from the author, because we just love her creativity!

Unique I Am Michelle Ramsay-Carr

Unique I am, unique I stand
Standing tall, perched and proud
Proudly representing my unique band
Banded in love, ringing out loud.

Unique I am, that's why I am an individual
Individual in mind body and soul
Soulful, delightful and super special
Specially formulated for unique goals.

Unique I am, so love me just like this
This is my life and I am no less
Less than any other with joy and bliss
Blissfully embrace me with a heart full of zest!

Love Me Today or Lose Me Forever Michelle Ramsay-Carr

Love lose me forever
Wait not for me to wither or be cast in stone
For today is all that matters when my heart ticks
with the clock
Inhale my every inch and swallow my sweet perfume
Water my rose lips with your succulent sap
Take my naked heart and mold it tenderly
Love me in all thy ways
Let no other fisherman snatch me as his catch
No promise is made for tomorrow
For I might not rise with the sun
So for today and everyday
Clench me tight and love me right
For if you wait and procrastinate
I (with all of my sweet love) could vanish FOREVER!

#DDawareness19

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AWARENESS MONTH



Development Disabilities Awareness Month

March is Development Disabilities Month and everyday UPS strives to redefine the stereotypes of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and amplify their UNIQUENESS in ways that magnify their talent, determination, and initiative.

One such way we do so is to advocate for individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

At UPS, we recognize that inclusive employment creates a solid workforce and our goal is to aid in the creation of equal opportunities and shine a light on the untapped pool of talented individuals who are determined, driven, and ready to work.

We encourage you to support an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities journey to job success. Consider hiring employees with diverse abilities, as it helps to strengthen business and drive innovation.

Most importantly, play a role in fostering a disability-friendly work culture and celebrate the many and varied contributions that an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities can make to the American workforce.

To learn more click here to [Get Involved](#) and enhance your workforce by hiring a person with a disability.

Everyone deserves an opportunity--It's a "win-win."

Our Proud Track Record

Here are some of the positions and hiring companies of the Unique People Services individuals that have successfully joined the workforce:

AMS Bowling Center

Cashier and Party Assistant

Brooklyn Technical College Bookstore

Inventory Associate

McDonalds

Greeter and Maintenance

Modell's

Inventory Associate

NYC Department of Transportation

Maintenance

Staples

Inventory Associate

Target

Inventory Associate

Walmart

Greeter



Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex Gave US FLOWERS!

Our Vyse Avenue individuals were over the moon at the recent delivery of flowers to their residence.

Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, had a baby shower in New York City and the floral arrangements were re-purposed by Repeat Roses and donated to Unique People Services. The baby shower was co-hosted by tennis great Serena Williams and included a notable guest list of celebrity friends who all made the floral arrangements themselves as a part of the shower festivities.

This was made possible through our relationship with Repeat Roses, an international sustainability business whose mission is to shift the paradigm in the event industry by reimagining the single-use floral arrangement concept to spread joy and ensure sustainability. As in the past, Unique People Services had the honor of being selected as a recipient organization.

“Every time we receive flowers from Repeat Roses and their generous donors and I see the joy they bring, I am always reminded that “Flowers always make people feel better---they are sunshine, food, and medicine for the soul,” UPS Executive Director, Yvette B. Andre beamed. “This generous gift speaks volumes, and my hope is that our selection is proof that we are truly making an impact! We are more than grateful-- we are humbled,” she concluded with a smile.

**It's been a busy few months and a great start to 2019.
Here of some highlights of our additional activities!**



We welcomed 2019 in with a Program Directors planning meeting. We have lots of plans and work ahead for to ensure UPS clients get the best support and services.



Unique People Services staff joined staff of other organizations in a meeting with NY Assemblymember Marcos Crespo to discuss the state's biggest budget needs for supportive housing.



Unique People Services staff participated in meetings with staff during the 2019 ACL Advocacy Day.

Participates engaged in productive conversations, which included the importance of wage increases and funding for more Supportive Housing for NY's most vulnerable populations.



Unique People Services' very own Tanzania Ellerbe wed Jose Rosato on Wednesday on January 17, 2019. We want to wish the happy couple best wishes for their future.



**BENJAMIN'S BIRTHDAY
AT UPS VYSE**

Benjamin's Birthday!

The more you praise and celebrate your life the more in life there is to celebrate"- Oprah Winfrey

Our individual Benjamin from Vyse Avenue Residence has had a wonderful Birthday Celebration. Staff and individuals surprised him with cake and balloons.



A thank you dinner for our outstanding staff members who were nominated for Employee Appreciation awards in 2018 was held in early January. Thank you Board Member, John Zeltin, for funding this initiative and to the Board members and staff who joined us. More pictures [here](#).



Our CEO Yvette Brissett Andre attended Legislative Leadership meetings in Albany in support of #Fair2DirectCare campaign.

The meetings were conducted to remind state leaders that the nearly 100,000 Direct Support Professionals who work for non-profit agencies, work on behalf of the state.



Unique People Services staff Iliana Lopez, Yovanna Figueroa, Karen Laidley, and Michael J. Ealy visit with staff in NY Senator Rivera's office in Albany during Lobby Days. The team advocated for a fair budget supporting staff and clients in social services throughout the State.



Unique People Services staff joined staff of other organizations in a meeting with NY Assemblymember Marcos Crespo to discuss the state's biggest budget needs for supportive housing.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

28th Anniversary Gala: Dancing with the UPS Stars!

Marina Del Rey Caters

Wednesday, October 23, 2019

2019 is going to be full of exciting and informational events!

Be on the lookout for more information on the following events:

May

- Lynn Wonsang, Street Naming- May 10th
- Lynn's Place Anniversary and State of the Agency – TBA

July

- UPS Night with the New York Liberty Basketball Team-July 20th

August

- The 10th Annual UPS Community Health Fair and Back to School Backpack Giveaway: August 22nd
- The UPS Special Olympics-TBA

November

- UPS Turkey Drive-TBA

December

- UPS Annual "Angel Wishes" Toy Drive-TBA

SAVE
THE DATE



Celebrate the many faces of Unique People Services!

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019

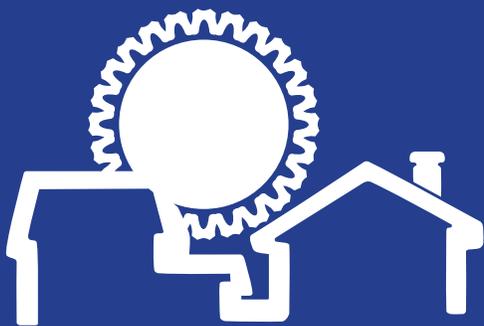
Marina del Rey Caterers | Bronx, NY

28th Anniversary Gala: Dancing With the UPS Stars

#WeAreUnique

#UPSGala19

For sponsorship information, please contact Constance at ConstanceB@Uniquepeopleservices.org



Unique People Services

Administrative Office

4234 Vireo Avenue
Bronx, NY 10470

Tel: (718) 231-7711

Fax: (718) 231-7720

info@uniquepeopleservices.org

www.uniquepeopleservices.org