

# breaking barriers

Summer 2009

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C.O.O.  
Message

page 2

Figures + Facts

page 2

Goldman Sachs  
Honors Mothers

page 2

V-Day Benefit

page 3

Calendar

page 4

## BFL's Supportive Housing Project

*Barrier Free Living's next big project is the creation of supportive housing for families in which the head of household is a person with a disability. BFL President/CEO Paul Feuerstein talks about his vision for the undertaking.*

### What brought about the idea for this supportive housing project?

This project is important to BFL because we found that 135 days of emergency intervention at our Freedom House Emergency Shelter—our program for survivors of domestic violence with disabilities or survivors who have children with disabilities—is often not enough time for a family to be able to take off and move out on their own after years of abuse. More often than not, the abuser of a person with a disability also plays a role as their care giver, giving that abuser even more power and control over the victim with a disability.

### How will this facility differ from Freedom House?

It differs in the amount of time a family can receive services. Supportive housing is a permanent housing model with supportive service on-site. A family can stay there as long as they need the support, whether that is a few years or a lifetime. When a person comes to Freedom House, s/he is given a thorough evaluation of his/her Activity of Daily Living skills: traveling, shopping, cooking,



money management and many others. We work toward meeting independence goals while a family is at Freedom House. Sometimes independence is an attainable goal while a family is with us. We are developing our supportive housing for the families that need the extra support for a longer period of time.

### What would this facility offer families?

A multi-disciplinary team would assist families with counseling, skills building and connection to community resources. It is our hope that we can bring families to the point where they no longer need us. Our supportive housing team would work with families to move into independent housing so that another family in need could take advantage of sustained support. We hope to have a unit of our non-residential program on-site as well so our residents can begin to build relationships with survivors living in the community and eventually come back to the center as survivors themselves.

### Where are you at with the project at this point?

We have already received a conditional approval for 50 apartments. We are working to make that approval permanent by getting site control of a piece of property on which we can build our building. We are presently working closely with New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development which has given us a commitment for the funds to build the project. We are exploring a possibility of developing a site in Central Harlem that is partially city-owned. The architect's rendering would be the building for that site. At the same time, we are looking at other options because we are not yet sure if we can buy the extra property we need to make the project a success.

### Any final thoughts?

This long-term care model is just what we need to provide a complete continuum of care for families that have been traumatized by abuse.

## A Message from the C.O.O.

Given the economic downturn, BFL – like all non-profit organizations, is experiencing financial belt-tightening. We are challenged yet committed to maintaining our consumer service levels and to retain our staffing integrity.



*Donald Logan,  
Chief Operating  
Officer*

To this end, we have reached out to all staff for ideas, input and participation in cost-cutting suggestions. To our great surprise (and relief!) many of our staff immediately began to provide us with ideas:

- Positive reinforcement concepts to help discourage food waste
- Limit distribution of utensils to “fit the meal”
- A Suggestion Box to serve as a medium for sharing ideas

Our staff’s participation and buy-in will be crucial to us as we weather the rough financial waters ahead and continue to break barriers in the areas of homelessness, disability and domestic violence.



## BFL & Goldman Sachs Honor Mothers

This May, BFL’s Domestic Violence Programs—Secret Garden and Freedom House—worked with volunteer members of Goldman Sachs to create two Mother’s Day related events.

BFL’s Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program Secret Garden held a “Celebration of Strength and Beauty: A Day of Self-Care.”

“We scheduled it near Mother’s Day so we could honor the hard work that our consumers do in caring for so many people in their lives, and to give them a chance to be pampered for a day,” said Molly Freyer, Assistant Director at Secret Garden.

Throughout the day over 20 participants, including mothers and their children, created sachets and homemade scented body lotion. There was also a journal writing/self-reflection workshop and the woman shared heart-felt poetry and performance with the Goldman Sachs volunteers.

BFL’s Freedom House Emergency Shelter event involved mothers and their children participating in arts and crafts activities.

## FIGURES + FACTS

**98** Homeless disabled served by BFL’s Transitional Housing program last year.

**60** Domestic Violence informational outreach/training sessions offered citywide by BFL’s Non-Residential Domestic Violence Program, Secret Garden.

**34** Awards given to BFL team members at this June’s Gala Staff Appreciation Awards ceremony.

# V-Day Fundraiser Benefits BFL & Women of Congo



Photo: Steven Ungar

*The Vagina Monologues* cast Members, Left to right: Dawn Elane, Tracey Stone, Brianna Seagraves, Galit Sklar, Ranessa Pitt, Lorree True, Lynn McCann, Adriana Giangregorio, Jenny Marie Lambert, Sonya Hamlin, Constance Reardon, Alexandra Devin.

This spring's V-Day benefit performance of Eve Ensler's award winning *The Vagina Monologues* raised over two thousand dollars in emergency funds for BFL's Non-Residential Domestic Violence program, Secret Garden. The two sold-out shows held at Manhattan's Theatre 3, also raised funds for the V-Day Spotlight Campaign, helping the women and girls of The Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Working on *The Vagina Monologues* as a V-Day fundraiser for Barrier Free Living was an amazing experience, especially having members of the BFL staff and consumers from Secret Garden in the audience, and getting the chance to meet everyone after the performances," said Jenny Lambert, who organized, directed and performed in the show. "I plan to look into volunteering opportunities for the future. Now that I've gotten involved with Barrier Free Living, I want to stay involved."

The 2pm show was accessible to Deaf and Hard of Hearing audience members, thanks to the generosity of Hands in Motion interpreting services.

"The V-Day event was an incredibly empowering experience for both staff and clients," said Molly Freyer, Assistant Director at Secret Garden.

In other V-Day related news, this spring, Eve Ensler testified on the topic of rape as a weapon of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo before a joint hearing "Confronting Rape and Other Forms of Violence Against women in Conflict Zones" of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on African Affairs and



Left to right: Ranessa Pitt & Brianna Seagraves.  
Photo: Jenny Marie Lambert

the new Subcommittee on International Operations and Organizations, Human Rights, Democracy and Global Women's Issues. Senators Barbara Boxer and Russell D. Feingold presided over the hearing. Ensler shared her experiences and knowledge of the issue, and provided recommendations for change.

To find out about our volunteer program, visit [www.bflnyc.org](http://www.bflnyc.org) or contact Volunteer Coordinator Aeilushi Mistry at [aeilushim@bflnyc.org](mailto:aeilushim@bflnyc.org)

## On the Calendar

**July 8**

BFL releases the second issue of its new E-Newsletter, Breaking Barriers In Domestic Violence. Monthly, team members share tips and information related to disabilities and domestic abuse including examples of our work with a disabled consumer. Sign up at [www.bflnyc.org](http://www.bflnyc.org)

**July 9-11**

The Extremity Games (right), a vision of extreme sporting competitions for individuals living with limb loss or limb difference, launches with a Wakeboarding competition on July 10 in Davison, Michigan. Games continue with a host of events from rock climbing to a special film festival. [www.extremitygames.com](http://www.extremitygames.com)



**August 27**

Overworked and out of time? Manhattan's Support Center for Nonprofit Management has a variety of summer workshops to ease the burden, including one focusing on Time Management. The full day event examines best practices in managing and organizing a busy work schedule. [www.supportcenteronline.org](http://www.supportcenteronline.org)

**Summer**

The Sixth Annual Cinema Touching Disability Film Festival ([www.ctdfilmfest.org](http://www.ctdfilmfest.org)) is accepting submissions for its Short Film Competition, deadline Oct. 1, 2009. The vision behind the CTD's Competition is to "empower emerging filmmakers by providing them an opportunity to create and express a multitude of images portraying people with disabilities in their most creative way." Call (512) 478-3366 or e-mail [wgreer@cotwd.org](mailto:wgreer@cotwd.org) for info.

**Support BFL at: [www.bflnyc.org/Contribute.asp](http://www.bflnyc.org/Contribute.asp)**

**Barrier Free Living is on Facebook (as Barrier Free Living). Friend us today.**

**Sign up for our new Breaking Barriers In Domestic Violence E-Newsletter at [www.bflnyc.org](http://www.bflnyc.org). A FREE SERVICE.**

## How to Donate

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