

Bronx Council on the Arts has Served Community for 50 Years

by Erin Clarke – 01/30/2013

People outside of the Bronx don't much think of it as a borough of the arts, but an organization aimed at raising arts awareness has been working to change that for 50 years and is looking towards the second half of the century as an exciting time for the Bronx arts scene. NY1's Erin Clarke filed the following report.

Decades ago, when the Bronx was making headlines for crime, an art gallery was established in an abandoned building in Longwood. It was the community's way of taking back their neighborhood.



"The Bronx Council on the Arts (BCA) provided subsidized or low-cost space studios for artists, and that's basically how Longwood Arts Project started, as artists' studios," said Juanita Lanzo, director of the Longwood Art Gallery.

Over the years, the arts community that began in Longwood has expanded. The Longwood Art Project has become the Longwood Art Gallery @ Hostos Community College, serving as a platform for Bronx artists. Their work there has catapulted many to national and international success.

"Everybody is building their own career, and at the same time, building this great resource here in the Bronx," said Deirdre Scott, executive director at the Bronx Council of the Arts. "But again, as the launch pad, it's normal and natural and encouraged that people come, grow, contribute, create, but evolve and move on."

The gallery at Hostos is what many people associate with the Bronx Council of the Arts, but the organization is so much more and has a reach that goes beyond neighborhoods in the south Bronx.

As BCA celebrates its 50th anniversary, staff look forward to a move into the organization's new home in a Westchester Square building donated by JPMorgan Chase and the city. The move to Westchester Square is about more than just a new space. For BCA, it enables the organization to continue its mission by connecting to more people in the borough.

"We want to connect north and south," said Anthony Meyers, Director of External Affairs with the Bronx Council on the Arts. "Actually, within our staff, we look at the Longwood Art Gallery at Hostos as BCA South."

BCA is well on its way to making that connection. The organization has already hosted programs at the new building and partnered with Westchester Square Business Improvement District members for events.

The goal moving forward is to use that momentum to transform the Bronx into a big name in the arts world. ■