From the Desk of the Executive Director

After a momentous year that included a spectacular 25th Anniversary celebration, the opening of three new community residences and one of our most successful health fairs to date, Unique People Services is gearing up for a 2017 filled with success, excitement and new chapters to write in our history!

We’re just months away from the opening of our first affordable housing complex, Lynn’s Place, named in honor of our late founder, Lynn Wonsang. This project will help ease the strain of rising housing costs for low income singles and families in the Bronx. On-site support services will improve the overall health, wellness, and quality of life as well as help to provide a safe haven for the mentally challenged individuals who will reside there.

While we embark on this historic endeavor - the next phase in our Continuum of Care - we’re certain that Lynn would be happy to know we are expanding her mission and continuing to transform the lives of even more New Yorkers in need. As an agency that has continually provided lifelines to formerly homeless individuals, we’re hopeful that Lynn’s Place will extend those supports by creating deeper impacts in the community.

A recent contract generously awarded by NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio’s office will offer us more opportunities in 2017 for further supportive housing initiatives at UPS and a new beginning for many. (UPS was one of only 11 agencies to be selected.)

This year, we will also be expanding our Developmental Disabilities (DD) Program, with our ninth residence scheduled to open in Queens in the Spring. Unique People Services’ continued growth would not be possible without the support of our wonderful donors and Board members. Their commitment to our exemplary care is critical for the important work that we do. Their generosity fills me with gratitude, along with UPS’ incredible staff whose nurturing and guidance makes a difference for each individual we serve.

I can’t wait for the life-changing roads that lie ahead in 2017. Thanks for accompanying us on our journey!

Onward and Upward,
Yvette Brissett-Andre
Yvette Brissett-Andre

Yvette Brissett-Andre Presents at 37th Annual ACLAIMH Conference

Unique People Services Executive Director Yvette Brissett-Andre was among a distinguished group of presenters discussing the Importance of Interior Design in Promoting Wellness and Recovery, at the 37th Annual Association for Community Living Agencies in Mental Health (ACCLAIMH) Conference.

The event, held November 1-4 in Bolton Landing, New York, brought together nonprofit agencies from across the state that provide housing and rehabilitation services to individuals living with psychiatric disabilities.

The panel presented critical aspects of interior design and space planning needed for successful health outcomes in residential settings. During the workshop, Yvette was joined by Tony Shitteri, Lead Architect, Urban Architecture Initiative (UAI), a vital contributor to the design of Lynn’s Place. Along with their fellow panel participants, Steve Wolff, Sharelle Hicks and Austin Ballin of Interior Resources, Inc. and Darcy McCourt of Abilities First, Inc., Yvette and Tony discussed key features for community residences that are instrumental to enhancing individuals independence, safety and daily living skills. Several design tools were also demonstrated, educating audiences about the latest technology available for state-of-the-art facilities designed to deliver extraordinary end results.

For more information about ACL, visit http://acnys.org/.
Moving Moments and Lasting Memories at Unique People Services’ 25th Anniversary Gala

Beautiful waterfront views, an inspiring awards ceremony and an exciting silent auction were just some of the highlights at Unique People Services (UPS) 25th Anniversary Gala at Marina del Rey Caterers, where 300 friends, family, staff and donors gathered in October to pay tribute to UPS’ rich history and a quarter of a century of high quality care.

Almost $300,000 was raised at the event (sponsored by Atlantic Tomorrow’s Office, Lamb Financial Group and Procida Construction Corporation), helping to enhance vital programs and services for individuals with developmental disabilities, HIV/AIDS and mental health challenges. WABC-TV Reporter A.J. Ross emceed the gala for the second consecutive year, as the many lives touched by UPS were on full display. December’s Individual of the Month Ann Concepcion performed a stirring rendition of the “Star-Spangled Banner” to kick off an emotional evening reception honoring seven honorees committed to fulfilling the vision of UPS’ late founder, Lynn Wonsang, who worked tirelessly to help New York City’s most vulnerable populations.

Our 2016 Honorees included Josh Lamberg, Principal, Lamb Financial Group (Community Award recipient); Peter Setaro, Area Sales Manger, Enterprise Fleet Management (Business Award recipient); Saundra Thomas, Vice President of Community Affairs, WABC-TV (Media Award recipient); New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverto (Champion Award recipient); Larry and Adam Weiss of Atlantic Tomorrow’s Office (Lynn Wonsang Award recipients), and Chantae Jones, UPS’ Individual of the Year, recognized for her outstanding achievements as a participant in the agency’s Bronx Day Habilitation Program.

Guests were moved to tears as Chantae thanked UPS staff and her loving father for accompanying her on a meaningful path toward increased independence and community inclusion. As she prepares to begin her new job at Marshalls, Chantae continues to inspire everyone she meets!

The gala also featured a Live Ask, led by Larry and Adam Weiss, encouraging attendees to Buy-A-Brick to support UPS’ programs for individuals with special and challenging needs. For $250 or more, guests had the opportunity to purchase personalized bricks to be placed throughout Lynn’s Place, which opens in September 2017. The Ask raised approximately $16,000, with bricks still available to anyone wishing to become a part of UPS history. Please contact Constance at ConstanceB@UniquePeopleServices.org to reserve your brick.

New York City Council Member James Vacca (D-Bronx) attended the celebration and presented Unique People Services with a Proclamation On behalf of the NYC Council, for 25 years of compassionate care and service to the community. To add to the festivities, we unveiled our new website and a nostalgic overview video showcasing the many wonderful faces of Unique.

It was truly A Celebration of Unique People, one that will be remembered for years to come!

Lynn’s Place Progress Soars Ahead of 2017 Opening

It’s hard to believe it’s been over a year since we broke ground on Lynn’s Place. In that time, construction crews have been digging, drilling and insulating as we approach a remarkable new chapter for UPS.

Soon, dozens of low-income singles and families will call 1060 Rev. James A. Polite Avenue their new home in the Bronx. Construction remains on track for Lynn’s Place’s fall opening - from apartment unit framing to elevator installation - to ensure the safest possible place for residents to call home!

Be sure to follow our blog for the latest updates on this truly special place.
UPS On Air and Front and Center at NYMRAD Event

On October 26, 2016, Unique People Services’ Executive Director Yvette Brissett-Andre was among a select group of nonprofit leaders who presented at New York Market Radio’s (NYMRAD’s) Community Leaders Day Meeting at the New York Marriot Marquis. The informative event, held quarterly, brings together news and public affairs directors from radio stations across the city to learn more about important issues affecting New Yorkers and the impact of organizations to provide solutions and improve lives.

During the discussion, Yvette spoke about UPS’ life-changing programs for individuals with developmental disabilities, HIV/AIDS and mental health challenges. She also touched upon the agency’s many supportive housing initiatives and UPS’ ongoing efforts to create safe havens for formerly homeless individuals facing insurmountable obstacles and challenging needs.

News directors displayed admiration for the social inclusion and increased self-sufficiency UPS provides to the developmentally disabled community. Yvette’s annual Thanksgiving visits to UPS’ residences and “hands on” style of leadership earned special kudos from many of the directors.

Following the presentation, Yvette was interviewed by Bloomberg Radio reporter Donna Wilson, further spreading the agency’s mission and history as it continues to impact the lives of hundreds of New Yorkers in need.

Bloomberg aired the heartfelt interview from December 30th through January 1st.

What an excellent way for UPS to start the New Year!

DD Program Expansion Spans Three Boroughs

Last fall, Unique People Services opened three new Developmental Disabilities (DD) Programs across New York City. Licensed by the NYS Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the new Individual Residential Alternatives (IRAs) are now home to 15 adults from various residential alternatives, including those who have aged out from residential schools inside and outside the city, as well as individuals who previously lived with their families.

The three IRAs - 112th Avenue (Queens), Lacombe Avenue (Bronx) and Sheridan Avenue (UPS’ first community residence in Brooklyn). Each residence provides essential services helping to enhance individuals’ independence, as well as their socialization and communication skills. Behavioral management, clinical care and other support services are also be provided to strengthen individuals’ health and wellbeing and ensure an increased quality of life.

On November 15th and 17th, UPS held open houses at the new residences, where families, referral agencies and community stakeholders were invited to celebrate the new programs and welcome individuals to the neighborhood. Attendees included UPS staff, Board members, Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) officials and members of the Brooklyn, Bronx and Queens DD Councils.

The opening of the three homes brings the total number of IRAs at Unique People Services to eight, while marking another chapter in a year filled with celebrations and milestones. Together, our first-rate staff remains committed to delivering the highest quality care and nurturing settings for individuals to thrive.

DD and OMH Programs Get a Special Visitor on Thanksgiving

Executive Director Yvette Brissett-Andre and her family joined staff and individuals for a Thanksgiving to remember at several UPS residences. The annual visits have become a heartwarming tradition at the agency, and an opportunity to give thanks for warm, safe, loving places to call home.

Individuals from UPS’ Developmental Disabilities (DD) and Mental Health (OMH) Programs enjoyed interacting with Yvette, displaying socialization skills that put a smile on many faces. Delicious meals while cherishing family and friends was a wonderful reminder of what the holiday is all about.

So which residences will be featured during Yvette’s 2017 Thanksgiving tour? We’ll have to wait and see!
Capping off a Successful 2016 in Style

On December 13, 2016, UPS held its annual holiday party at Eastwood Manor in the Bronx, where the agency paid tribute to 5, 10, 15 and 20-year employees who contribute to UPS’ mission of enriching the lives of individuals living with developmental disabilities, HIV/AIDS and mental health challenges. Each award recipient received a certificate of achievement, as well as $100 gift generously funded by Board member John Zeltin.

Games, prizes, a fabulous cocktail hour, dinner and dancing added to the festivities, as we looked back on a successful year filled with milestones, expansion and celebration.
A Warm Welcome to Our New Hires

The following employees joined the UPS team during the 4th quarter of 2016.

**NOVEMBER:**

- **Shantale Bramble-Donaldson** – On-call DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Jeremy DeJesus** – Administrative Assistant (DD Program)
- **Fatima Medley** – DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Madeline Nunez** – Health Care Coordinator (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Natasha Rowe** – Residential Habilitation Specialist (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Octavia Scouras** – On-call DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Anayisa Welch** – DSPI (Day Habilitation Program, Queens)
- **Christiane Noezil** – DSPI (Crowley Street)
- **Daughtery Reid** – On-call (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Jamar Flowers** – Pre-Vocational Supervisor/Job Developer (Pre-Vocational Training Program)
- **Keith Reneau** – DSPI (Hughes Avenue)
- **Priscilla Forde-George** – DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Shakierra Ginn** – DSPI (Day Habilitation Program, Queens)
- **Yahaira Oliver-Quinones** – DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)

**DECEMBER:**

- **Karen Laidley** – Front Desk Receptionist (John G. Hunter Apartments)
- **Dwan Nicholas** – DSPI (Day Habilitation Program, Bronx)
- **Rahmel Haynes** – DSPI (Hughes Avenue)
- **Alberta Boswell-Mason** – DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Cora Barnett** – Clinical Director (PWA-Scatter Site Housing Program-Bronx)
- **Jason Wilson** – On-Call DSPI (Crowley Street)
- **Melody Newborn** – Case Manager (Scatter Site Housing Program)
- **Emilie Francois** – DSPI (Sheridan Avenue)
- **Francoise Resigne** – DSPI (Sheridan Avenue)
- **June-Ann Thomas** – On-call DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Kimone Johnson-McClean** – DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)
- **Tanyetta Brown** – On-call DSPI (Vyse Avenue)
- **Yolanda Caldwell** – DSPI (Lacombe Avenue)

Additionally, **Yoko Arriaga** and **Mercelle Mason** were promoted in the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Division. Yoko is now Residence Manager of Lacombe Avenue, while Mercelle was promoted to Residence Manager of Hughes Avenue. 

**Annette Thompson** in the Mental Health Division was promoted to Administrative Assistant at John G. Hunter Apartments.

Congratulations to all!