



## Councilmember Reynoso Visits CFH Health Center

Brooklyn Councilmember Antonio Reynoso joined CFH Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Regina Olatin, in touring our health center located at Peter Jay Sharp in April during our HIV Awareness Carnival. Councilmember Reynoso and Dr. Regina Olatin spoke about the health challenges that people experiencing homelessness face and what CFH does to address those challenges. Those efforts include a highly successful citywide Peer Outreach program that trains and employs currently or formerly homeless peers to locate unstably housed individuals not currently accessing health care services and provide them with the information and aid necessary to increase proper utilization. Councilmember Reynoso also took the opportunity to speak to CFH Staff, including our very own Peer Outreach Specialist, Crystal Santana, who spoke of the positive impact that the outreach program has in communities where people face incredible challenges accessing quality lifesaving services.



*CFH team with CM Reynoso at Peter Jay Sharp*



*CM Reynoso and CFH Chief Medical Officer Dr. Olatin*

At CFH we provide primary medical and mental health care as well as specialty services such as podiatry, dentistry, health education, substance abuse evaluation and treatment and case management. Our patients most often have dual chronic medical issues and require a coordinated approach to health care delivery. Our peer outreach workers are adept at finding and connecting with our target population. They can communicate and build trust that others are unable to duplicate. Our outreach model is for multiple contacts with each new potential patient, including following up to get them to appointments, helping them with preventative and ongoing health care, and accessing appropriate social services, activities and trainings.

Bringing vulnerable people into health care is not just the right thing to do, it directly addresses the three major healthcare concerns in our society:

- it provides access to people not accessing primary and preventative health care
- it improves health care outcomes
- and it saves public resources by decreasing emergency room utilization

Not to mention the opportunity to unlock human potential and improve neighborhoods and quality of life.

Last year, our Peer Outreach program was able to reach more than 1,000 unstably housed individuals helping them to access ongoing medical and mental health care services and thanks to the incredible work of our Peer Outreach Specialists we are on target to increase that number this year. We have also augmented our technological capabilities and have been able to create strong relationships in neighboring communities to increase the impact of our program. Our mission is nothing less than changing the health care culture of our potential patients for the rest of their lives.

For many people experiencing homelessness, appropriately accessing health care is the first step in transitioning out of homelessness. We want to thank Councilmember Reynoso and his staff for understanding the immediate need for appropriate health care utilization and the value that programs like the CFH Peer-to-Peer Outreach model brings to underserved communities in NYC. The CFH Policy and Advocacy team will continue to meet with Councilmember Reynoso and his colleagues at City Council to help develop and support city programs and policies to effectively fight, prevent and end homelessness. We look forward to continuing that work.

# Right to Counsel Success

One factor that has increased the number of people experiencing homelessness in New York City is the eviction of low-income tenants from their homes. Historically, a low-income tenant facing an eviction proceeding in Housing Court was at a serious disadvantage compared to their landlord because of one very important factor, landlords always had legal representation.

To counter this imbalance, in 2017, NYC became the first city to adopt the Right to Counsel (RTC), also known as Local Law 136, that established a right to free legal counsel in eviction cases. This major step forward in protecting low income tenants came after many years of advocacy by dedicated organizations and individuals supporting the rights of tenants facing the potential loss of housing. RTC provides tenants with household incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, \$50,200 annually for a family of four, with no cost access to attorneys. Legal representation for an individual facing an eviction proceeding helps to ensure a 'level playing field' for the tenant; something that was not available before RTC.



Source: <https://www.rtctoolkit.org/>

Recently, [the Community Service Society \(CSS\) published an analysis](#) of the first-year results of RTC. It concludes that the first phase of the program (with \$15M in funding for the first year) has been extremely successful. RTC initially targeted 20 of the City's 200+ zip codes. The 20 zip codes selected are high need areas of the city that have offered a clear picture of the impact of RTC. So the question is...Is having counsel important to protecting a poor tenant from eviction? The answer is a resounding YES! Navigating Housing Court procedures requires expert advice and understanding of often confusing and seemingly incomprehensible rules. Comparing RTC zip codes to non-RTC zip codes in just over one year has shown that **evictions declined more than five times faster in RTC zip codes** than in similar non-RTC zip codes. Legal counsel – a determinant factor. On top of that, the number of eviction cases filed in NYC's housing courts has started to drop--down almost 10 percent since 2014.

According to the City Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) – which oversees RTC, “56 percent of tenants facing evictions in RTC zip codes had attorneys...[and] of the approximately 22,000 New Yorkers represented by OCJ-funded attorneys in FY 2018, 84 percent were able to remain in their homes.” It is impossible to imagine that this result would have been possible without the presence of legal counsel protecting the rights of the households faced with eviction. Of course, other policies such as rent regulation, just cause evictions laws and code enforcement, etc. must be present in order to reduce evictions and increase housing stability, but RTC is a decisive step in preserving housing stability for low income tenants.

The Right to Counsel program is set to expand across the entire city by 2020. All told, it is predicted to potentially impact 784,000 households. The program's impact will be great and will be felt for years to come! In addition, the two principal sponsors of RTC, Council members Vanessa Gibson and Mark Levine, are fighting to expand the right to counsel to households with incomes up to 400% of the federal poverty level that would also include legal representation in appeal cases with Intro 1104. If you would like to take an even stronger stance in empowering tenants and preventing homelessness for New Yorkers struggling to afford the rising costs of living in New York City, join us in contacting your City Council representative to ask them to co-sponsor Intro 1104. You can find your representatives [here](#).



## Honoring New Yorkers Overcoming Obstacles

Join us on Thursday, June 20th, at Broadway Presbyterian, 601 West 114th Street in Manhattan, as Care for the Homeless (CFH), in partnership with Broadway Community, Inc., holds its sixth annual Summer Solstice Success Celebration recognizing the “success stories” of New Yorkers who have overcome incredible obstacles while experiencing homelessness. The celebration will start with a meal at 4:30 p.m. followed by the program at 5:30 p.m.

The event will recognize the achievements of New Yorkers who have obtained and maintained stable housing, overcome health obstacles and had outstanding advocacy achievements in the campaign for better policies to



## Honoring New Yorkers Overcoming Obstacles Cont'd ...



Councilmember Levine with Housing Success Awardees, Photo Credit: Steve Latimer

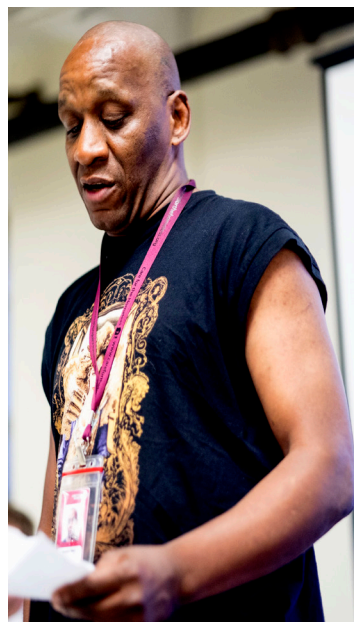
fight, prevent and end homelessness. We will also recognize our incredible CFH providers who have worked with our clients to achieve success. Also, the winner of CFH's annual Short Story of Success Essay Contest, will read their submission.

Join us for a celebration recognizing the success of our friends and neighbors. The celebration is free and open to all. It will feature a meal, musical entertainment and great times to be had by all. You can register [here](#).

If you want to learn more about the Summer Solstice Success Celebration and are interested in bringing the celebration to your community, please listen to a webinar we conducted with the National Health Care for the Homeless Council titled "From Darkness to Light: Honoring Success and Resilience at the Summer Solstice" [here](#).

## Tell Us Your Success Story

We are constantly inspired by the stories of real life heroes who have overcome obstacles in the fight against unstable housing. CFH is holding its sixth annual "Stories of Success" writing contest and we are looking for a 300-word story about success in overcoming a health challenge, in finding and maintaining stable housing or in advocating for better policies to fight, prevent or end homelessness. Contestants may also submit an essay about what they think success would look and feel like.



2017 'Stories of Success' Writing Contest Winner  
Photo Credit: Arthana

If you have a story of success – or know someone who does – please consider submitting it into our contest. All entries must be submitted with the author's name and contact information. Submissions may be e-mailed to [policy@cfhnyc.org](mailto:policy@cfhnyc.org) or can be mailed or delivered to Nathalie at, 30 E. 33rd Street, 5th floor, New York, NY, 10016 by Friday, May 31st. One winner will be selected by Care for the Homeless, will receive a prize and be asked to read their winning story at the CFH Summer Solstice Success Celebration on Thursday, June 20th at 5:30 pm at Broadway Community (601 W. 114th Street, Manhattan). Please find an informational flyer [here](#).

## The Busy Advocate's May Calendar

**Tue., May 7th, 11:00 a.m., Year of the Community Based Organization Rally**, to call attention to the vital need for investments in human services in the FY20 City budget, City Hall Steps, New York, NY 10007.

**Wed., May 8th, 1:30 p.m., NY City Council Meeting**, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

**Mon., May 13th, 9:00 a.m., House Our Future NY March**, the march will begin outside of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development building and end at City Hall steps, 100 Gold Street, New York, NY 10038.

**Mon., May 13th, 10:00 a.m., Executive Budget Hearing for the Housing and Buildings Committee\***, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

**Sun., May 19th, 9:30 a.m., AIDS Walk NYC in Central Park**, enter at 59th Street and 5th Avenue and follow the signs to the team tables.

**Wed., May 22nd, 10:00 a.m., Executive Budget Hearing for the General Welfare Committee\***, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

**Wed., May 22nd, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m., CFH Consumer Advisory Board Meeting**, 30 E. 33rd Street, 5th floor conference room, New York, NY, 10016.

**Thur., May 23rd, 10:00 a.m., public testimony at 2:00 p.m., Executive Budget Hearing for the Finance Committee**, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

**Mon., May 27th, Memorial Day.**

**Wed., May 29th, 1:30 p.m., NY City Council Meeting**, City Hall Council Chambers, New York, NY, 10007.

**Thur., June 20th, 4:30 p.m., CFH 6th Annual Summer Solstice Success Celebration**, celebrating the healthcare, housing, and advocacy successes of currently and formerly homeless New Yorkers. It will also feature live entertainment and a free meal. Broadway Community, 601 W. 114th Street, Manhattan, NY, 10026. You can RSVP [here](#).

*\*Please note that there will be no public testimony at these hearings.*

For more information please contact at: [policy@cfhnyc.org](mailto:policy@cfhnyc.org) or at [www.careforthehomeless.org](http://www.careforthehomeless.org)

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