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## NORWOOD NEWS

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### BRONX CONNECTIONS: THE HEALTH IMPACT Part 2 of 5

*The Norwood News, WFUV Radio, and BronxNet Television continue their five-part series on health-related struggles affecting residents of the Bronx.*

### Meeting the Demand for Dental Work in Underserved Communities

By MARINA KOPF of



Dr. Douglas York, CEO of the Union Community Health Center (UCHC) in the Belmont section of the Bronx, said the center's waiting rooms for a dental checkup are always packed. They're open six days a week and even some nights, hoping to get as many patients on their dentists' chairs so they can utilize their services sometimes at no cost.

There's a shortage of dentists in the Bronx, with 33 dentists per 100,000 people in the borough, about half the national average, according to data from the ADA and The Center for Health Workforce Studies. Dr. York said this creates problems for some patients. "There's a provider shortage, which means there's an access issue," he said.

It's common thought that dental care is just cosmetic, or non-essential to the point where it can be ignored. In ignoring dental hygiene, conditions could worsen over time and even present social barriers, such as obtaining a job.

"Someone's ability to get employment is critical often on how they look and how they may be perceived," said Dr. York. "If people don't have the financial resources to maintain oral health, and the cosmetic appearance of it, that could certainly impede their ability to be emotionally satisfied and financially successful."

The dental director of the Montefiore School Health Program, Dr. Debra Sperling, agrees on the social impact of dental care. "It affects self esteem, how people interact with others and peers, how they present on job interviews, [and] how they present in schools with their teachers," she said.

According to a 2015 study from the New York City Department of Health, 42 percent of Bronx residents hadn't had a preventative dental visit in 2014.



DR. ROBERT MARGOLIN (l) dental site director of Union Community Health Center, speaks with WFUV Radio journalist Marina Kopf on dental services offered at UCHC.

Preventative dental visits usually ward off development of even serious medical issues.

Dr. York said that annual cleanings and screenings are integral to keeping up with oral health, but "if you can't get in [for an appointment], you can't start this good preventative care that will prevent you down the road from having something more serious."

For individuals who don't have access to preventative annual dental checkups, the only time they address their oral health is when they end up in the emergency room. Dr. Robert Margolin, the dental site director at UCHC, said patients who go to the emergency room for most dental issues won't even receive, but over-the-counter pain medication that's followed by a dentist referral. Follow-up visits could present even greater barriers: traditional Medicare and Medicaid barely cover dental procedures.

Financing a dental visit comes down to whether a patient will sacrifice one expense for another. "Dentistry is not inexpensive and consequently people

don't access the care because I think they rather put food on the table than have a dental visit," said Dr. Joseph McManus, executive director of The Columbia School of Dental Medicine. Private, professional care is available to only those who can afford it.

To bridge the gap between some Bronx residents and their ability to receive adequate dental care, some health centers offer services at little to no cost to families. Many of these programs have developed creative ways to serve the Bronx.

According to Dr. Sperling, the Montefiore School Health Program goes into public schools and sets up clinics to treat children. "So many people in the Bronx are facing issues like transportation, caring for family members, job commitments," said Dr. Sperling. "It's just basically hard sometimes to find the time, so we're committed to finding easily accessible dental care right in the schools where the children are for the better part of their day."

Both the Columbia School of Dental Medicine and the Montefiore School

Health Program, have mobile dental units that service areas of the Bronx. Meantime UCHC—which provides patients with more complex dental work regardless of their ability to pay—is slated to open up. They visit community centers and schools to provide underserved areas with services such as dental cleanings, extractions, and screenings.

Dr. York said because of transportation issues and childcare needs, people may be unable to make it into the office. "We have individuals who are in housing units, senior centers, homeless shelters, and it's very important you try and meet them where you can so they can get state-of-the-art dental care as well," he said.

Even though these social safety net programs exist and help many different people, Dr. York said there is still an unmet need.

"Making sure there are funding streams for oral health programs in communities such as where Union serves is critical. It's absolutely critical," he said.

Image still by BronxNet Television

## El Especialito



## Está Transportando el Acceso a la Salud

*El centro de salud celebra con una ceremonia de inauguración y presentación especial*

**B**ronx, NY - Union Community Health Center (UCHC) lanzó su programa #TransportandoElAccesoALaSalud, (#DrivingAccessToCare) con la presentación de un centro de salud móvil de 35' con tecnología de punta, que funciona como el enlace de su creciente flota móvil de asistencia de salud. Concentrándose en poblaciones más vulnerables y en aquellas con mayor probabilidad de experimentar barreras para acceder a la atención médica.

"No hay duda de que el acceso a la atención médica de calidad es un factor determinante de la salud y el bienestar general", dijo el Dr. Douglas York, Director Ejecutivo de Union Community Health Center. "La incapacidad para acceder a la atención afecta la esperanza de vida, el empleo y la dinámica familiar. La Flota de Salud Móvil de UCHC ahora brindará servicios de atención médica vitales directamente a miles de residentes del Bronx. Nuestro objetivo simplemente ha sido ayudar a eliminar algunas de las barreras existentes para acceder a la atención".

Esta adquisición se pudo llevar a cabo gracias al donativo de \$475,834.00 para la Transformación de Instalaciones de Atención Médica del Estado de Nueva York que recibió UCHC en 2017, permitiendo llegar a más escuelas, guarderías infantiles, viviendas públicas, albergues para personas sin hogar y centros de ancianos. El vehículo con acceso para sillas de ruedas, incluye equipo de radiografía, y además de los servicios de atención primaria de salud, también se ofrecerán servicios de especialidades. "El programa Transportando El Acceso a la Salud (Driving Access to Care) de UCHC es un enfoque único y holístico que busca llevar los servicios de atención primaria y de salud mental críticos a las puertas de los vecindarios más desamparados de nuestro condado", dijo el Senador Estatal Gustavo Rivera, Presidente del



(De Izq. a Der.) UCHC Broad Member, Ms. Bernice Williams, Odis Guerrero, Community Affairs Director for Assembly Woman Nathalia Fernandez, Senator Gustavo Rivera, Assembly Member Victor Pichardo, Dr. Douglas L. York, CEO UCHC, Sofia Zayas, Bronx Rep., Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Laura Perloff, Senior Director, Advocacy & Strategic Alliances, PhRMA, John O'Connor, Deputy Vice President, State Advocacy at PhRMA and front right in Black, Leydis D. De La Cruz, UCHC Director of Mobile Health Service.

Comité de Salud del Senado.

"Felicitó al CEO, el Dr. Douglas York, al personal y a los profesionales médicos por el lanzamiento de su programa #DrivingAccessToCare. Union Community Health Center se ha convertido en un elemento fundamental en mi distrito a medida que continúa mejorando la salud física y mental de mi comunidad. Estoy orgulloso de trabajar con organizaciones comunitarias como UCHC para mejorar el bienestar de mis vecinos", dijo el asambleísta Víctor M. Pichardo (Bronx - D).

Además, a través de su programa de patrocinio corporativo, UCHC ha recibido el apoyo de Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA). "Apoyamos las innovaciones en la expansión del acceso a la atención, y nos enorgullece apoyar a UCHC en sus esfuerzos por ampliar su alcance y responder a las necesidades que no han sido cubiertas en la comunidad", dijo Laura Perloff, Directora Se-

nior, Defensa y Alianzas Estratégicas en PhRMA.

### ACERCA DE UNION COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

Union Community Health Center (UCHC) es un Centro de Salud Federalmente Calificado sin fines de lucro que facilita aproximadamente 180,000 visitas cada año a aproximadamente 40,000 pacientes individuales de sus seis ubicaciones en todo el Bronx. La misión de UCHC es servir a la comunidad con servicios de atención médica informados, innovadores y orientados a los resultados, diseñados y brindados para mejorar la salud de los residentes del Bronx. A nadie se le niega atención debido a la incapacidad de pago y UCHC brinda servicios a todos, independientemente de su edad, raza, origen étnico, orientación sexual y religión. Para obtener más información sobre Union Community Health Center, visite [www.uchc-bronx.org](http://www.uchc-bronx.org).



UCHC CEO Dr. Douglas L. York, Ph.D.



Mobile Unit Exam Room w/ Med Tech Mariela Quintanilla.



Mobile Unit.

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### Shaking off the Sugar

#### NYC bans sugary drinks from kids' meals

By Gregg McQueen

Posted by: Postmaster | In Local, News | April 11, 2019 | 0 Comments

Down the drain.

The New York City Council has voted to ban restaurants from including sugary drinks in children's meal menus.

The bill, known as Intro 1064, passed on March 28<sup>th</sup> and will require eateries to serve water, low-fat or nonfat milk, or 100 percent fruit juices with children's meals, eliminating soda and other sugar-saturated drinks.

"This is going to have an impact on 24,000 restaurants across New York City that have children's meals. It's going to be the new normal," said City Councilmember Ben Kallos, who sponsored the latest version of the bill.

Restaurants can still serve sodas or other drinks to children if requested by customers, but businesses caught including the sweetened beverages on menus are subject to a civil penalty up to \$200.

The law will go into effect in one year, and will be enforced by the Health Department.

Dr. Vanessa Salcedo, Director of Community Health and a practicing pediatrician at **Union Community Health Center (UCHC)** in the Bronx, said the legislation signaled a major victory in the fight against childhood obesity and health issues, noting that sugary beverages are the number one additive of sugar to a young person's diet.



obese, and more than half of all adults in New York City are overweight or obese.

The legislation has received the backing of the American Beverage Association (ABA).



"We're working on a grassroots level to implement these changes," said Dr. Vanessa Salcedo, **UCHC** Director of Community Health.

"It's not cookies, not candy," she said. "A lot of parents are unaware of that. This new bill really reinforces our message that these drinks are bad for you."

Salcedo said that many parents give their children fruit juices thinking that they are healthier than soda, while in reality, the juice drinks contain loads of added sugar.

"Parents think they're doing the right thing, but they don't realize how much sugar is in many of these juices," she stated.

According to the city's Health Department, one of five children enter kindergarten

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A companion bill has been introduced in the New York State legislature.

Though the bill was first introduced by former Councilmember Leroy Comrie in 2011, the concept of curtailing sugary drinks took a while to gain momentum.

Salcedo attributed much of the acceptance to an abundance of research linking sugary beverages to diabetes and heart disease. "The evidence is there – there's no debate about it anymore," said Salcedo, who testified at a Council hearing in favor of the bill.

"We've really seen a change in culture where people are a lot more accepting," Kallos said. "We've seen private industry start to adopt this."

In 2013, McDonalds removed soda from the Happy Meals section of its menu board. As of November 2017, more than half of Happy Meals served in the U.S. included water, milk or juice instead of soda.

"That's a big deal," remarked Kallos, who said the bill should be low-impact for New York City restaurants, which simply need to update their menus to reflect removal of the sugary sips. He said the city should easily be able to enforce the bill.

"In terms of enforcement, it's just a matter of walking into a restaurant and looking at the menu," he said.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), children in the U.S. currently drink enough sugar per year to fill a bathtub.

"It's really frustrating as a pediatrician to routinely see these kids with health problems due to sugary beverages," said Salcedo, who noted that the Bronx has the highest rates of diabetes and heart disease in the city.

She explained that she has met child patients who began drinking soda at six months old.

"I had to send a 10-year-old for a liver biopsy. We see teens and middle schoolers who are diabetic or pre-diabetic," she remarked. "We have no way to fight it except for behavior change."



The bill bans restaurants from including sugary drinks in children's meal menus.

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On March 25, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Heart Association (AHA) issued a joint policy statement endorsing a range of public health measures, including excise taxes, limits on marketing to children, and financial incentives for purchasing healthier beverages – all designed to reduce children's consumption of sugary drinks.



Councilmember Ben Kallos sponsored the latest version of the bill.

"Over the past decade, the American Heart Association has been advocating for this and other policies that will help to reduce the consumption of added sugars, especially by NYC's youth. As our mission states, we aim to be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. Thoughtful strategies like this, that establish healthy beverage choices as the simpler option for families, are vital to the effort to improve heart and brain health in the city," said Robin Vitale, the AHA's Vice President for Health Strategies.

The policy statement pointed out locales that had increased taxes on sugary beverages, such as Chile. Sugary drink purchases there decreased 21 percent in the year after the tax was implemented. Since becoming the first U.S. city to implement a sugary drink tax in 2015, Berkeley, California has seen a 9.6 percent decline in the sales of those beverages.

"The sugar tax does work – is New York City next or New York State next? We hope so, as these are policies that have worked elsewhere," said Salcedo, who has been a crusader against sugary beverages for several years.

At UCHC, Salcedo spearheaded the creation of the Healthy Beverage Zone (HBZ) program, which eradicated sugar-sweetened beverages from the center's Bronx locations. The advocacy led to extensive buy-in from patients and staff, and the program has now been expanded across the Bronx.

"We currently have over 60 organizations that are partners in this," Salcedo said.

"We're working on a grassroots level to implement these changes. The little bit that we can do in terms of hospitals and schools and community-based organizations, to get them to realize other food options, is important."

***For more information on the Healthy Beverage Zone initiative, please visit [thebronxhbz.org](http://thebronxhbz.org)***

## BRONX VOICE



### Bronx Health Center is Now On Wheels

📅 March 1, 2019 🗣️ BronxVoice 📁 Uncategorized

#### Union Community Health Center Unveiled Its Mobile Health Center Will Bring Medical Care into Community

BRONX- Union Community Health Center (UCHC) launched its #DrivingAccessToCare program, with the unveiling of a 35' state-of-the-art, mobile health center, which serves as the nexus of their growing mobile health care fleet.

The program is an unprecedented, neighborhood-targeted, mobile medical and dental delivery infrastructure that serves to improve health outcomes for Bronx residents through direct services and health education.

Focusing on the most vulnerable populations and those more likely to experience barriers to accessing health care, UCHC's dedicated mobile health team is estimated to engage 168 patients weekly throughout the Bronx, conducting 7728 care visits during the 46 week care year; enabling the Center to further provide comprehensive-high quality, affordable health care services without the boundaries associated with traditional brick and mortar settings.

"There is no disputing that access to quality health care is a major determinant of overall health and wellness," said Dr. Douglas York, CEO of Union Community Health Center. "The inability to access care impacts life expectancy, employment, and family dynamics.



"The UCHC Mobile Health Fleet will now bring vital health care services directly to thousands of Bronx residents. Our goal has simply been to help to eliminate some of the existing barriers to accessing care."

Thanks to a \$475,834.00 New York State Health Care Facility Transformation Grant UCHC received in 2017, the health center was able to bring that goal to fruition and invest in a program that will extend its reach to more schools, day care centers, public housing developments, homeless shelters and senior centers.

The wheelchair accessible vehicle is equipped with the latest in mobile health technology including x-ray, and in addition to primary health care services, specialties services such as rheumatology, gastroenterology, podiatry and cardiology will also be offered.

In line with UCHC's collaborative care model, the mobile medical unit will integrate behavioral health services into each primary care visit, which has statistically proven successful in

identifying undiagnosed depression in patients reluctant to seek care from mental health professionals and connecting them to treatment and care.

The holistic integration of behavioral health services in a primary care setting has also proven effective in addressing the high rates of co-morbidity linked between mental health and chronic physical health conditions.

"UCHC's Driving Access to Care program is a unique and holistic approach that aims to bring critical primary care and behavioral health services right to the doorsteps of our borough's most under-served neighborhoods," said State Senator Gustavo Rivera, Chairman of the Senate Health Committee. "It is critical that we continue investing in innovative solutions, such as UCHC's state-of-art mobile medical unit, if we are committed to make quality and affordable healthcare more accessible to all New Yorkers. Together we can work towards eliminating the unacceptable health disparities that continue to plague our borough."

Dr. Douglas York thanked State elected officials for their ongoing commitment in helping FQHCs expand access to affordable, high-quality primary and preventive health care in high-need areas of the state, such as the Bronx.

"I commend CEO Dr. Douglas York, staff, and medical professionals on the launch of its #DrivingAccessToCare Program. Union Community Health Center has become a staple in my district as it continues to improve the physical and mental health of my community. I am proud to work with community based organizations such as UCHC to better the wellbeing of my neighbors," said Assemblymember Victor M. Picardo.

In addition, through its corporate sponsorship program, UCHC has received support from the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), which represents the country's leading innovative biopharmaceutical research companies. "We support innovations in expanding access to care, and we are proud to support UCHC in their efforts to broaden their reach and respond to the unmet needs in the community," said Laura Perloff, Senior Director, Advocacy and Strategic Alliances at PhRMA.

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Posted by: Postmaster in Local, News May 2, 2019 0 Comments

### Motivation Mission

#### *Wellness program focuses on young men*

By Gregg McQueen

Photos by Cristóbal Vivar

If it were up to Ralph Batista, he'd be burning up the video game console – not calories – all day long.

Instead, the eighth-grader had the opportunity to take part in a push-up challenge with college football players, hear about the legal system from members of a national law firm, and learn about healthful meals.

"It was a lot of fun," said Batista. "I learned to make sure what you're putting in your body is good."

Over the spring break for New York City's public schools, **Union Community Health Center (UCHC)** hosted a wellness and activity program dubbed Bronx Teen Fit, which was aimed at a hard-to-reach population: teenage boys like Batista.

The mission at hand was to provide an inclusive and safe space for the young men to try new activities and be engaged specifically when they were out of school and likely to be less active.

Dr. Vanessa Salcedo, a pediatrician and **UCHC's** Director of Community Health, said the program was conceived in part because many of her young male patients are at loose ends during spring and summer breaks.

"Some of the hardest patients to engage are teenage boys. A lot of times they like to stay at home, play video games, watch TV," said Salcedo, who was recently awarded the "Young Physician of the Year" recognition from the non-profit organization National Hispanic Medical Association.

"With rising rates of childhood obesity, we thought, how can we move them from the TV out to do exercise, be together as a group, have fun, and learn a lot of useful things for their wellness," she added.



Muscle movement.

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The wellness program is an initiative focused on male teens.

*Photo: C. Vivar*

From April 22 to 26, nine participants between 13 and 17 years old gathered at UCHC to work with a physical therapist to learn how to properly use exercise equipment. The curriculum also included behavioral health, nutrition and communication skills.

"Young guys are just reluctant, resistant to seeking out health care. It's a hard sell," said UCHC Chief Executive Officer Dr. Douglas York. "So, what we want to try to do is engage them in something

that interests them, so they can see not only the value in getting healthcare, but also enjoy it in the process."

York said that teaching youth how to exercise properly is important.

"Young guys are anxious to use the weight room for the first time, but [many times] nobody actually shows them how to use it," he remarked.

During the week, representatives from the city's Health Department spoke to the teens about topics including pregnancy prevention and sexual wellness; nutrition and healthful living; and concerns over vaping and drug abuse.

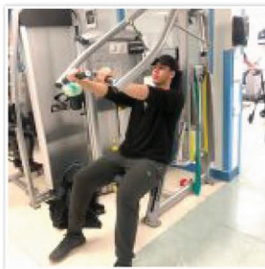
Fordham University football players C.J. Watson and James Biggs Frazier joined with their Rams coach Evan Durand to offer physical fitness tips – and also issued a push-up challenge.

The young men were also visited by attorneys from The Cochran Firm, who spoke to them about law enforcement and the judicial system.



"It was a lot of fun," said participant Ralph Batista.

*Photo: C. Vivar*



Muscle movement.



The teens were part of the pilot program.

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"Our commitment to youth is very important. It is a commitment to organizations such as this one that try to help people in our community," said Cochran Firm Partner Derek Sells.

The law firm, represented by Sells and fellow Partner Stephanie Correa, provided funding for Bronx Teen Fit during a check presentation on Thurs., Apr. 25<sup>th</sup>. The group has partnered with UCHC on other initiatives over the years.

"What's important for these young men is to know that there's a support team, and that's what Union is providing," said Wells. "It's critical for these young men to know that there's a whole network of people rooting for them, so they're not alone."

High schooler Steven Feliz said he liked getting to know other students and learning about communication skills.

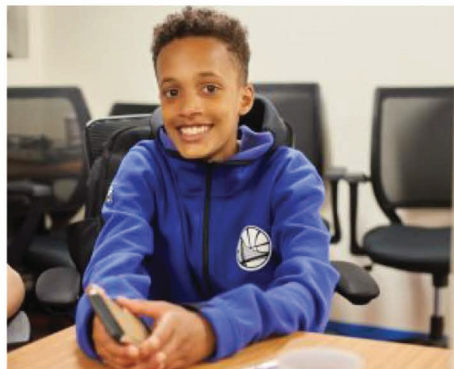
"I think it's really important because you can engage with others," he said. "Sometimes at school, you only engage with your own close friends, but when you have to converse with others you don't really know, it's challenging but rewarding."

Salcedo said the program was intended as a pilot, as UCHC hopes to expand it in the summer.

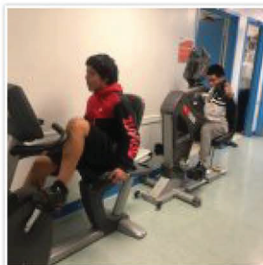
"Hopefully, in the future, we can open it up to other people in the community," she said.

"We want to increase the numbers," added York. "We've had programs for girls. We want to find more community partners, people who will help us. Certainly with the summer coming, we'll take this outside. We can go to parks [and] outdoor rec areas."

**For more information, please visit [uchcbronx.org](http://uchcbronx.org)**



"It was a lot of fun,"  
said participant Ralph Batista.  
*Photo: C. Vivar*



"Young guys are anxious to use the weight room for the first time, but [many times] nobody actually shows them how to use it," noted Dr. Douglas York.



Partners Derek Sells (left) and Stephanie Correa spoke about the legal system.  
*Photo: C. Vivar*



The wellness program is an initiative focused on male teens.  
*Photo: C. Vivar*

## ***BRONX VOICE***

### Targeting Teens to Make Healthy Choices

📅 May 10, 2019 👤 BronxVoice 📁 Uncategorized



Teen Health Program



Stressing the importance of physical fitness, mental health covering anxieties, depression, and communication (*at home and with peers with a focus on anti-violence*), policing in our community/legal instruction/know your rights (*safety and daily living*), and overall health inclusive of nutrition, sex education, and smoking/vaping prevention.