

VNS Health Celebrates 20 Years of Nurse-Family Partnership with 127 Bronx Families

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From VNS Health

Community

Families, nurses and community leaders gathered in Morris Park as eligibility opens free nurse home-visiting support to more New Yorkers

BRONX, NY — Dozens of toddlers, parents and nurses gathered at Maestro's Caterers in Morris Park on Wednesday to celebrate the 20th anniversary of [VNS Health's Bronx Nurse-Family Partnership](#) (NFP) and recognize 127 Bronx families who completed the program this year.

The celebration brought together families and the nurses who supported them during pregnancy and through their children's second birthdays, marking two decades of VNS Health's Bronx NFP serving low-income families in the Bronx as part of the [NYC Nurse-Family Partnership](#) with the New York City Health Department. Since launching in 2006, VNS Health's Bronx NFP has served more than 8,000 families, including more than 640 this year.

NFP pairs families with specially trained registered nurses who make regular home visits during pregnancy and through a child's second birthday. Nurses provide health and parenting guidance, connect families with health care and community resources, and help parents navigate challenges and goals related to mental health, housing, education, employment and family life.

The anniversary comes as Nurse-Family Partnership enters a new chapter in New York City. Earlier this year, the NYC Health Department expanded eligibility beyond first-time

parents and began allowing families to enroll later in pregnancy, opening the free, city-funded program to more families across the five boroughs.

*“Two decades of commitment, partnership and impact [were] built day by day, family by family, nurse by nurse,” said **Dr. Sonia Mercado, Director of NYC DOH Nurse-Family Partnership.** “Your dedication has shaped 20 years of healthier pregnancies, stronger parents and brighter futures for our children.”*

*“I have seen the result that it has in mothers’ lives,” said **State Sen. Gustavo Rivera.** “Many of [the families] graduating today would not have had access to any of the information or any of the things that [were] provided to [them] by having these nurses in [their] lives.”*

Among those celebrating Wednesday were NFP alum Ayanna Blyden and Paula Reynolds-Chambers, Director of VNS Health’s Bronx Nurse-Family Partnership. Their relationship began more than 17 years ago, when Blyden was a 22-year-old first-time mother in Soundview with little family nearby and Chambers was her NFP nurse, regularly visiting her at home.

Today, Blyden’s oldest son is 17, has graduated from high school and is preparing for college. Blyden earned her bachelor’s degree in 2024 and now works as a care manager serving people with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Chambers now leads the same Bronx program that first brought them together.

“Nurse Paula has been a blessing since the moment that we met her,” said Blyden. “She came into the home, she was warm and motherly, and I just loved her. Nurse Paula became my village by always coming in, checking on us and making sure that not only he was good, but that I was good too.”

“Better worlds start with better parents,” said Reynolds-Chambers. “When you invest in the future of a family, you see the product of what it is today.”

VNS Health’s Bronx Nurse-Family Partnership and its nurses were also recognized for 20 years of service to Bronx families by **New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, U.S. Rep. Ritchie Torres, Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson, NYS Assemblywoman Yudelka Tapia, and New York City Council Member Amanda Farías.**

Nurse-Family Partnership is free and available to eligible families regardless of age, immigration status or gender identity. The NYC Nurse-Family Partnership serves all five

boroughs, with VNS Health operating the program in the Bronx. VNS Health also operates the Nassau County Nurse-Family Partnership on Long Island.

For more information about VNS Health's Nurse-Family Partnership, visit vnshealth.org.

About VNS Health

VNS Health is one of the nation's largest nonprofit home- and community-based health care organizations. For more than 130 years, we have helped people live, age, and heal where they feel most comfortable—at home, connected to their families and communities. More than 11,500 VNS Health team members serve over 100,000 patients, health plan members, and clients across New York State each day. Recognized as one of Crain's New York Business' 2025 Best Places to Work in NYC, VNS Health offers a full range of health care services, solutions, and health plans designed to meet the diverse and complex needs of the people we serve.

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