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## **THE PARK SLOPE WOMEN'S SHELTER CELEBRATES 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL TREE-LIGHTING FESTIVITIES**

**THE CELEBRATION HONORS THE MANY COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS WHO DEDICATE  
THEIR TIME AND TALENT TO HELP THE SHELTER RESIDENTS**



The Park Slope Women's Shelter (PSWS) was transformed into a magical wonderland on December 8 as shelter residents and neighbors gathered for its 19<sup>th</sup> annual tree-lighting festivities.

"Peace for Humanity, Hope for Housing and Gratitude for Helping Hands" was the theme of the evening, as the community came together to enjoy cookies, hot cocoa, music and the holiday spirit. The tree-lighting ceremony is the shelter's way of giving back to the community and thanking them for their dedication, generosity and commitment to helping residents.

During the evening, Joanne M. Oplustil, CAMBA's President and CEO, welcomed the visitors. Speakers also included Emily Rentas, PSWS Site Director; Candace Bowen, Recreation Coordinator; and volunteer Alice Braziller and her resident poets.

Attending from the Department of Homeless Services were: Jody Rudin, Deputy Commissioner of Adult Services, and Bill Distefano, Program Administrator.

Shir Chadash: The Brooklyn Jewish Community Chorus and the Resurrection Park Slope Choir entertained the crowd of about 200 guests.

In a highlight of the evening, PSWS honored some of its many supporters and volunteers, including:

- **Sydelle and Stephen Gansl**, *PSWS Guardian Angels*: Among the Shelter's first volunteers, Sydelle and Stephen have remained tireless supporters, providing funding for move-out kits, arts and crafts groups, gifts, music and dance programs.

(More)

- **Alice Braziller**, *The Power of the Written Word*: Alice has led a writing poetry workshop with PSWS residents since 2009. She gives participants the gifts of self-empowerment, confidence and self-expression.
- **Ann Rosen**, *Captured in a Photo*: A retired art teacher, Ann has created portraits of PSWS residents. Her art transcends stereotypes, and she works with residents to create beautiful books to take with them to their permanent homes.
- **Resurrection Park Slope Church**, *Social Service*:\_Congregates have been volunteering for years, assisting in everything from mock interviews, to gardening to arts and crafts, baking and more. They are always willing to assist, no matter the need.
- **Youth Service Opportunity Project (YSOP)**, *Community Building*: YSOP provides many services from assisting with this year's tree-lighting to cooking meals and hosting a social event on a monthly basis for our residents. They invite PSWS residents into a welcoming community.

These are only a few of the generous community members who volunteer throughout the year to help the women at the Park Slope Women's Shelter. Among some of the many services volunteers contribute are: yoga, fine art and drawing classes, meditation, dance, theater workshops and onsite performances, dinners both on and offsite, writing workshop, donations of clothing and housewares, resume-writing, interviewing skills, hand-made quilts, a vegetable and herb garden and more.

Opened in 1996, the Park Slope Women's Shelter is operated by CAMBA and provides temporary housing, nutritious meals and comprehensive services to 100 women. The shelter enables women to stabilize conditions and move toward permanent and/or supportive housing.

#### **About CAMBA**

*Started in 1977, CAMBA is a nonprofit agency that connects people with opportunities to enhance their quality of life. CAMBA offers integrated services and programs in: Economic Development, Education & Youth Development, Family Support, Health, Housing and Legal Services. CAMBA serves more than 45,000 individuals and families, including 9,000 youth, each year. Learn more about CAMBA's life-changing services at [www.camba.org](http://www.camba.org).*

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