

# Bronx Arts Center Renews Mission to Nurture Kids' Talents

- By: Erin Clarke



VIDEO (link above)

*A Bronx non-profit that changed the lives of young and old alike for decades is open once again following a multi-million dollar renovation. NY1's Erin Clarke filed the following report.*

The sounds of children falling in love with music are back, as are stories from young people who say they're better people because of what Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center taught them.

"I was shy and it has developed my speaking abilities, my confidence," said Shanika Brown, a student.

"I used to be heavy set, but this got me more active. I got into more activities and stuff, lost a lot of weight," said Paul Boney Jr., a former student.

After four years of renting a much smaller space, Mind-Builders has moved back into its original building, following a \$9 million gut renovation. It offers arts training, including instrument, voice, dance and theater classes to all ages.

The new space has air conditioning, an elevator, re-designed dance floors and, most importantly, the 500-plus students can now take classes on all four floors. Before the renovation only two floors could be used.

"The floor that's on the lower level where we have the cafe and what will be a recording studio and patio and all, we were never able to use that floor," said Mind-Builders Creative Arts Center Executive Director

Madaha Kinsey-Lamb. "A performance space on the second floor where we can have an audience of at least 100."

The improvements make a world of difference for Gilbert Glenn Brown, whose resume boasts movie and TV roles. He's now a guest instructor at the center, where it all began for him .

"More spaces to do a lot of the things that we wanted to do back then that we couldn't do," Brown said.

But despite cosmetic change, the core of Mind-Builders remains an emphasis on affordable, quality training in the Bronx.

"Instead of going out into Manhattan where everyone thinks everything happens. It's being done in the outer boroughs," said Crystal Scalafani, a parent.

And there's the promise students won't be turned away if they can't pay.

"Work exchange that we still have where a parent can work three hours a week in exchange for their child taking a class," Kinsey-Lamb said.

It's been the center's model for about 30 years and one staff hope will take it to another 30 and beyond.