

Brooklyn REAL boosts independence

For the last three years, **Ephrayim Levine**, 43, has attended the Brooklyn REAL Continuing Day Treatment Program. At JBFCS, REAL stands for Rehabilitation and Education in the Art of Living, part of a network of agency programs for adults who are living with mental illness.



Ephrayim Levine and Cristina Caroli

Brooklyn REAL is one of JBFCS' specialized day treatment programs to help adults learn skills for living independently in the community. The Bronx REAL Center also offers continuing day treatment and psychiatric rehabilitation treatment services, as well as intensive case management, apartments and a recovery program for clients coping with both mental illness and a history of substance abuse.

For Ephrayim, Brooklyn REAL has provided support through socialization groups and activities—and a connection to successful employment.

Through the help of his social worker **Cristina Caroli, LMSW**, Ephrayim prepared for two interviews before he was hired to work at the West End Brooklyn Copy Center two hours a day three days a week.

That was in addition to attending Brooklyn College where Ephrayim takes one course a semester toward an undergraduate degree in history. He began his college studies in 1993 and has completed 90 credits with 30 more credits remaining for graduation. He expects to complete his degree within the next few years.

Ephrayim's attitude toward college reflects the work ethic he showed on the job.

His credo?

"You have to be diligent, disciplined, optimistic, co-operative with people, ask specific questions if you need help, and be courteous and polite—always say please and thank you."

When Ephrayim learned about the job opening in the fall he

was interested because it meant extra money for incidentals.

"That comes in handy when I date women," he explains. "Also I haven't worked in many years, so this help fills the gap in my resume."

Brooklyn REAL has an ongoing relationship with the copy center and other clients have worked there as well.

"Our clients usually work there on a temporary basis for six to nine months to try out the working world," explains Cristina. "We have a waiting list. Usually by nine months the assignment ends so another client can have a turn."

Ephrayim and Cristina are now figuring out what his next steps will be, to continue to advance his treatment plan for living independently.

Brooklyn REAL is designed for clients who are 18-years-old and older who are living with mental illness and have a range of functional levels. For more information about the program, contact Svetlana Gritsko, LCSW, Director, at (718) 676-4260.