



MEDIA RELEASE

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**UNION SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATION TO HONOR
DR. JEREMIAH A. BARONDESS, NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE PRESIDENT
EMERITUS, JOHN B. RHEA, NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN, AND
MARK L. WAGAR, EMPIRE BLUECROSS BLUESHEILD PRESIDENT AND CEO**

Mayor Bloomberg to Present Award to John Rhea at Spring Gala

Benefit Urges New Yorkers to 'Be the Solution,' Help Neighbors Achieve a Better Quality of Life

New York City – April 27, 2010 – The Solutions Benefit, Union Settlement Association's Annual Gala and Awards Benefit, which takes place on April 28 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, will focus on solutions to some of the biggest issues facing East Harlem. One of the oldest and largest social service providers in East Harlem, Union Settlement will honor three important New Yorkers in the fields of health and housing and encourage all the gala attendees to "be the solution," by helping their neighbors achieve a better quality of life.

The event, emceed by WNBC 4 anchor DeMarco Morgan, will honor three leaders who have made a lasting impact by advancing solutions to some of New York's toughest problems: New York Academy of Medicine President Emeritus Dr. Jeremiah A. Barondess, New York City Housing Authority Chairman John B. Rhea, and Empire BlueCross BlueShield President and CEO Mark L. Wagar.

Honoring New Yorkers Who Have Advanced Solutions

John B. Rhea, Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), will receive an award for his leadership of the nation's largest public housing authority, which provides decent and affordable housing for almost 30% of the residents of East Harlem and more than 400,000 New Yorkers with low and moderate incomes within the five boroughs.

"John Rhea has been a dynamic and innovative leader at the New York City Housing Authority, and his efforts have greatly benefited the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who live in public housing," said Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. "John recognizes how important it is that NYCHA residents have access to essential social programs, and he has demonstrated his commitment to working closely with social service organizations like Union Settlement Association, which has been serving the East Harlem community for over a century."

Mark L. Wagar, President and CEO of Empire BlueCross BlueShield, will be recognized for his leadership and dedication to the health and well-being of millions of individuals, families, and senior citizens in underserved communities like East Harlem.

“Through his leadership and dedication to community health and well-being, Mr. Wagar is helping improve the lives of low-income and immigrant New Yorkers in needy and underserved communities,” said David Nocenti, Executive Director, Union Settlement.

Dr. Jeremiah A. Barondess, President Emeritus of the New York Academy of Medicine, will be recognized for his leadership, which transformed the Academy into an internationally recognized engine of research to address and eliminate urban health disparities. Among other joint projects initiated during his tenure, the New York Academy of Medicine partnered with Union Settlement in a project on managing childhood asthma whose results are now used in hundreds of early childhood centers around New York City.

“Dr. Barondess has pioneered in the field of urban health and—through partnerships with Union Settlement Association and others—has demonstrated how to address the health disparities faced by low-income New Yorkers. Thank you, Dr. Barondess, for your vision and leadership,” said Maxine Rockoff, Chair, Union Settlement.

Gala to Seek Real Solutions for Hardships Facing the Residents of East Harlem

One of New York’s poorest communities, 44% of East Harlem households have an annual income of less than \$25,000, and 38% of residents live in households with incomes below the poverty line. Life expectancy in East Harlem is estimated to be eight years shorter than in the City’s wealthiest neighborhoods. Union Settlement offers the 125,000 residents of East Harlem the services and assistance necessary to lead healthy lives, reach their greatest potential, and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

The gala will raise awareness about the problems East Harlem faces, and ask attendees to “be the solution” by helping their neighbors achieve a better quality of life. The support of Union Settlement’s benefactors enables the organization to affect real change.

- **Fact:** 47% of East Harlem children live in poverty, and more than 40% do not meet reading and math standards
- **Union Settlement’s Solution:** Provide quality educational programs to 2,500 children and help more than 400 disadvantaged young people gain admission to college
- **Fact:** 33% of East Harlem seniors live below the poverty level and have difficulty accessing regular meals
- **Union Settlement’s Solution:** Serve 250,000 nutritious meals to needy seniors
- **Fact:** East Harlem has the highest rate of pediatric asthma in New York City
- **Union Settlement’s Solution:** Enroll and monitor 3,000 children in pediatric asthma early intervention and awareness programs
- **Fact:** 17% of area residents did not graduate from 8th grade and 27% are not proficient in English
- **Union Settlement’s Solution:** Educate 1,200 low-income adults in English, literacy, GED preparation, and job readiness so that they can achieve self-sufficiency and better care for their families.

About Union Settlement Association

Union Settlement Association has worked with and for the residents of East Harlem since 1895. A community mainstay, Union Settlement fosters leadership and self-sufficiency by helping local residents build better lives for themselves and their families. As one of East Harlem's largest social service agencies, Union Settlement responds to issues that affect the entire community, serving more than 13,000 low-income residents annually through effective programs in education, childcare, nutrition, senior services, counseling, the arts, job training, and economic development. A large local employer with programs operating in 17 sites, Union Settlement is an important contributor to the economic vitality of East Harlem.

Union Settlement gratefully acknowledges the support of Platinum Sponsors Empire BlueCross BlueShield and the Spitzer Family, Gold Sponsors Ruth E. Pachman & David Fallati and Maxine L. Rockoff & Wesley A. Clark, and all its gala benefit contributors.

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