

Generations Find Opportunity Across Union Settlement Programs

Lately, it has become trendy to talk of the need for a “holistic” approach to social services, emphasizing the value of serving the needs and building on the strengths of not just an individual but the whole family. At Union Settlement, this idea is not new, and instead dates back to the agency’s founding more than a century ago. Looking across our programs, a common story emerges about the way generations come together here, whether the mother in our GED class whose son attends our Head Start program, or the credit union member, whose grandfather learned English here decades ago and today attends programs at one of our senior centers.

Janet Robles, a Harlem single mom, first came to Union Settlement nine years ago looking for day care for her youngest child. Now her three school-age children attend our after-school and summer youth programs. With her children at Union Settlement, Janet became involved herself. First, she volunteered in her daughter’s child care classroom, then she served on the parent committee and more recently she enrolled in Opportunity NYC, the city’s anti-poverty program, which provides cash incentives to families for achiev-



Nancy Nava Lupano with Olivia.



Janet Robles and her daughter

ing education, health or employment milestones. Thanks to our assistance, Janet is now in school earning a B.A. in marketing.

“I wouldn’t be able to work full time and go to school without the programs offered by Union Settlement. It is a safe environment for my children. There are computer labs and when the schools are closed for a holiday or summer vacation, Union Settlement is open with programs for children.” Looking around, she adds, “I love this place. I am raising my children here.”

It’s a similar story for Nancy Nava Lupano, who remembers Stephanie Irby, Director of Early Childhood Services, as one of her teachers when Nancy attended after-school programs. Today, Nancy sends her daughters, Olivia, age four and a half, and Isabella, age two, to the Union Washington Day Care Center. “I like the feeling at this center,” Nancy says. “It really is like a family and that is important to me.”

In fact, many participants across programs first found Union Settlement because their family members have taken part in our other programs, or they themselves were participants as children or younger adults. For example, local retiree Diana Vasquez attends our senior programs but she

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A Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends of Union Settlement:

This issue of our newsletter focuses on Union Settlement’s core mission of providing a wide variety of services to individuals of all ages—including often multiple generations living within the same household. For example, an unemployed mother looking to work will need child care services, but still might not be able to seek employment until we also find home care for her ailing mother. A sixth-grader struggling in school will benefit from our after-school academic assistance, but it might be the mental health counseling offered to her older brother that really helps stabilize the home environment and allows both children to start to excel.

The current economic crisis has had a disproportionately harsh impact on underserved communities like East Harlem, with individuals of all ages struggling to survive, and so our multi-generational focus is needed now more than ever. We help children as young as six months old in our Family Child Care Network, adults over

100 years old (almost as old as Union Settlement itself!) in our senior centers, and everyone in between. It is this comprehensive array of services that makes us so effective, and has allowed us to help literally hundreds of thousands of individuals who have lived or worked in East Harlem since our founding.

We believe deeply in this focus, in this mission, and in this community, and are so very proud that we have the opportunity to serve so many of our neighbors in this time of need

—David Nocenti
Executive Director

Families (Continued from page 1)



Diana Vasquez (center) and other Corsi members in their “Seniors on the Go” skit.

remembers going to Leggett Memorial Day Care in 1950 with her sister. Born and raised in East Harlem, she enrolled her now-grown oldest son in our Head Start program. Today, he’s a transit worker. About 15 years ago, she joined the Union Settlement Federal Credit Union.

Today, Diana lives in Jefferson Houses and is a member of our Corsi Senior Center. After retiring, instead of retreating, she’s found the center has given her a whole new world of activities. “I love the dancing because it’s fun and exercise,” she says, adding that sometimes she goes to Asphalt Green on East 90th Street as part of our Senior Fitness Program. “I’ve taken three computer classes. I use the transportation program to go to Walmart in New Jersey and other trips.”

These programs, as well as daily lunch in the center with her friends, are keeping Diana connected to the community while enabling her to remain active and cultivate new interests. Because all seniors who are able are asked to volunteer, Diana is also glad to help out at the senior centers, which becomes another means of engagement and connection.

In some ways, Diana’s current activities extend back to her original connection to Union Settlement. Back in 1950, she attended Leggett Memorial Day Care, Union Settlement’s oldest center, with her little sister, and later attended after school programs. “We lived four blocks away,” she says. “I remember we did a play about fairies and princesses with costumes.” Today, Diana has joined Corsi Senior Center’s theater workshop, performing just this December (*see photo above*) in a skit entitled “Seniors on the Go,” a full circle indeed, and a testament to holistic service, with Union Settlement’s long, constantly renewed tradition of serving whole families and serving families across generations.

A New Partnership for Youth Empowerment in East Harlem

Union Settlement and the Hunter College School of Social Work of the City University of New York are embarking on an exciting new partnership with the Isaac Newton Middle School for Math & Science, thanks to a three-year \$900,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to launch the *Bridges Youth Empowerment Program*. The program will address serious health risks faced by youth in East Harlem using an approach based on comprehensive personal development and education.



Director of Youth Services Steven Portericker and Lisa Nelson, Principal at Isaac Newton Middle School for Math & Science

Bridges is designed to improve health and educational outcomes by empowering students—many of whom have experienced personal traumas and face severe personal, economic and educational obstacles—to better meet life’s challenges and guide their own futures. The goal is to help students develop self-confidence, new skills and experiences, and a greater awareness of their own potential, while educating them about personal health and safety issues, including unintended pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and STDs, diabetes and obesity.

“The program is designed to offer a trauma-informed and resilience-oriented form of intervention, based on the particular conditions and poverty of East Harlem,” said Dr. Robert Abramovitz, M.D., Moses Visiting Professor of Social Work at Hunter and the project’s principal investigator. “Our focus will be on supporting academic success, encouraging higher education as a goal, and fostering an interest in careers related to science, technology, engineering and math.”

The year-round Bridges program will include: (1) a comprehensive after-school program geared towards building academic skills and personal development, including wellness workshops and personal counseling; (2) a summer program focused on science, technology, engineering and math; and (3) a comprehensive plan for family engagement through regular staff-parent contacts and a series of planned activities. The program will work with 40 students from the beginning of eighth grade through the end of tenth grade and will be staffed by personnel from Union Settlement’s Youth Services program, which serves more than 2,000 youth each year. Programming will predominantly take place at Isaac Newton Middle School, which serves more than 300 sixth to eighth graders, the majority of whom come from poverty-level households.

“We are tremendously excited by this opportunity to help the youth in our community to overcome the obstacles of their environment, learn skills, make healthy choices and gain experiences that contribute to more positive lifestyles,” said David Nocenti, Union Settlement’s Executive Director. “We look forward to using Union Settlement’s longstanding relationships in the community to bolster the program and affect positive outcomes for the long term.”

Thanksgiving on East Harlem Doorsteps

This Thanksgiving Union Settlement distributed more than 100 turkeys and hens with fresh vegetables and other fixings to needy families in our Early Childhood, Youth and Adult Education programs. Our Seniors program served more than 500 meals on Thanksgiving. These efforts were assisted by 80 volunteers, including, through Citymeals-on-Wheels, famed film and Broadway actress Kathleen Turner and her daughter, Rachel Weiss.

We thank Centro Geronotologico Latino, the Chapin School, Dallas BBQ, Dos Caminos Restaurant, Driscoll Foods/Metropolitan Foods, Holton Farms Produce, Park Avenue Foods, and Rouge Tomate Restaurant for contributing food and helping us to offer nutritious holiday meals to East Harlem families in need.



Community Members Honor Los Angelitos, the “Little Angels,” at 14th Annual Day of the Dead

Vivid flowers and iconic skeletons festooned a vibrant altar in Union Settlement’s gym for the 14th Annual Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) Celebration, the Mexican holiday uniting the souls of the dead with family and friends. Festivities were held on November 2, and were dedicated to children—Los Angelitos (“the Little Angels”).

More than 275 guests entered the gym to see the glorious altar, lovingly decorated by local artists Miguel Cossio and Margarita Larios, Adult Education students and local residents. Adorned with bright marigolds, papel picado (paper flowers), egg bread glazed with colored sugar and a moving collection of personal remembrances, the altar was the centerpiece of the daylong event. Children from the community created sugar and flower ornaments for the altar.

The evening program featured poetry, a discussion of the day’s rich traditions, skits with the El Huevo Productions and members of La Carpa Theater, colorful traditional dancing by the Ballet San Juan Diego, and joyous musical performances by Mariachi Real de Mexico and the students of Mariachi Academy of New York. The evening closed with a candlelight procession through Union Settlement’s community garden.

With each year, this celebration has become a more treasured community experience as well as a deeply meaningful one for East Harlem’s thousands of residents of Mexican descent.

Union Settlement would like to thank the New York State Council for the Arts for their ongoing support of this much-loved community event.



Ballet San Juan Diego dancer



A rising star from the Mariachi Academy performs with Mariachi Real



Ballet San Juan Diego performing dances from Jalisco.

A Harvest of Supporters at Union Settlement's Fall Wine Tasting

Supporters, staff and new friends filled the Astor Center on October 27 to raise their glasses and toast the hard work of Union Settlement. As guests enjoyed an array of wines and hors d'oeuvres from Latin America, they mingled in the glorious downtown space, with its vaulted ceilings and exposed brick walls, which were lovingly adorned with original art from children in our childcare and after-school programs.

More than twice the size of last year's fall wine-tasting, "Toasting Union Settlement" was a tremendous boon to the agency, raising sorely needed funds to support agency programs during a challenging year. At the same time, the evening provided an opportunity to introduce the work of agency to many new friends, with program directors answering questions about their services and most importantly the hardworking East Harlem families they work with every day.



Board Chair Maxine Rockoff, Adult Education Director Melissa Nieves, Senior Services Director Maria Alejandro, and Joanne De Simone Eichel from the New York Academy of Medicine



Executive Director David Nocenti with former governor Eliot Spitzer

"We were so happy to see many old friends and many new friends," noted Maxine L. Rockoff, Union Settlement's Board Chair. "In addition to being a terrific evening, the event was a great way to feature our various programs, giving guests an opportunity both to learn about our services and meet our wonderful program directors."

Union Settlement would like to thank the event host committee and all the generous supporters of this fall benefit, with special gratitude to the following event sponsors: Robinson Lerer & Montgomery, LLC, Amy Sherman, Tesoro Condo, Mac Caputo, Anne Perkins, Ellen P. Simon, Wells Fargo, and Ellen R. Werther.

Portericker Among Best and Brightest of City's After-School Educators Union Settlement's Director of Youth Services Honored as a 2010 PASEsetter

We are thrilled to announce that the Partnership for After School Education (PASE) has selected Steven Portericker, Union Settlement's Director of Youth Services, as one of their 2010 PASEsetter Award Winners. According to PASE, the five winners, who were selected from hundreds of nominees, exemplify the "dedication, innovation, and accomplishment that is the hallmark of the New York City afterschool field."

An East Harlem native, Stephen joined us in 2002 as an Attendance Improvement/Dropout Prevention Counselor and has been promoted to a series of higher-level positions over the past seven years. As his role at Union Settlement has expanded, he has remained committed to serving the youth of East Harlem through personal mentorship with participants while also tackling new challenges of management, staff development, fundraising, and program expansion.

Union Settlement Executive Director David Nocenti praised Steven: "Steven is a superb leader and mentor who has dedicated his career to helping youth both envision higher goals, and achieve them. Union Settlement is immensely proud of Steven and his many accomplishments, and the PASEsetter Award is a great tribute to his passion, hard work and commitment."



Rising Stars Participants Learn, Then Teach



More than 200 children in our elementary-age program displayed a summer's worth of learning during the Second Annual Rising Stars Showcase on August 25. Our hardworking children transformed Washington Houses Community Center into a Natural Disaster Museum as the culmination of their "Theme Teams" projects—multi-week literacy-building learning adventures that incorporate reading, research, writing, visual arts, teamwork and public speaking.

Working on the theme of Natural Disasters, each team spent the summer learning about earthquakes, monsoons and other phenomena through books, documentaries and computer research. Teams then chose a "disaster" on which to focus all their energies, building towards final projects to be unveiled at the end-of-summer presentation.

The day of the showcase, participants transformed their

classroom at Washington Houses into a mock Natural Disaster site or information area that demonstrated the team's combined knowledge and creative skills. Participants acted as docents, escorting family members, agency staff and other guests from room to room. In each elaborately festooned room, participants were in place to explain their displays, enact live demonstrations and answer any questions.



All Rising Stars Theme Team made substantial knowledge gains over the summer, with subject test scores rising 25 percentage points. They also greatly improved their reading habits. Ninety-seven percent read at least one book, 54 percent of whom read six or more books.

We would like to thank the Robert Bowne Foundation, the New York Community Trust, State Senator José Serrano and other generous supporters of our summer programming for youth.

Do you need child care?

Union Settlement Association offers quality early childhood programs at six convenient East Harlem locations.
For more information, call (212) 828-6052

Do you know someone who could benefit from home care assistance?

Union Settlement Home Care provides basic healthcare, companionship, and help with life skills, cooking, cleaning, and shopping.
Call (212) 828-6182 to learn more.

Free Tax Preparation Assistance

January through April 15

The Union Settlement Federal Credit Union,
in collaboration with V.I.T.A., offers
Free Tax Preparation Assistance

Union Settlement Main Building
237 E. 104th Street
(between 2nd and 3rd Ave)
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
12–7pm
Saturday 10am–4pm

SCAN/LaGuardia House
307 E. 116th St
(between 1st and 2nd Ave)
Monday–Thursday
10am–4pm
Friday 10am–4pm

To make an appointment, call 212 505-3482.
Services by appointment only at Jefferson
Houses Jobs Plus and Homebase at Palladia.

Free Arts Saturday!



Union Settlement teamed up with Free Arts NYC on Saturday, October 24 to match 80 children, including 52 members of our Rising Stars elementary age program, with 75 volunteers for a day of arts projects, including making murals, sculptures and masks. City Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito also dropped by. Free Arts NYC is a non-profit that provides underserved children and families with educational arts and mentoring program.

United to Stop AIDS: National Latino AIDS Awareness Day



Carlos Santos of MTV Tres and Mariela Lucas, Miss Dominican Republic 2009 (*above*), took OraQuick ADVANCE® rapid HIV tests in front of an audience of East Harlem residents during the National Latino AIDS Awareness Day health fair at Union Settlement. The day featured speakers and performers, all dedicated to HIV/AIDS prevention within the city's Latino community. New York City has one of the highest rates of Latinos living with HIV/AIDS in the nation. The event was co-sponsored by the Manhattan HIV Care Network, of which Union Settlement serves as the lead agency.

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UNION SETTLEMENT WISH LIST

- ◆ Business clothing (e.g., suits, ties, blazers, belts) for our *Reconnect and Rise* and *Fatherhood* programs
- ◆ A digital camera and camcorder for our Youth program.
- ◆ Beanbag chairs, floor lamps and books for our Youth Library
- ◆ Learning software, digital cameras and dictionaries for our Adult Education Program and scholarships for our GED graduates entering college
- ◆ Uniforms, physical fitness equipment and basketball backboards for youth programs
- ◆ Learning toys, art supplies, books, a digital camera and radios/CD players for our childcare and after-school programs
- ◆ Computers for our childcare centers
- ◆ Desks, a sofa, a fax machine, insulated food carts, microwave ovens and a new bingo system for our senior centers

SAVE THE DATES!

Our Ninth Annual Spring Gala

Honorees (to date):

**Mark Wagar, President & CEO,
Empire BlueCross Blue
Jeremiah A. Barondess, MD, President Emeritus
New York Academy of Medicine**

**Wednesday, April 28, 2010
Grand Hyatt Hotel
42nd Street and Park Avenue
6:30PM**

*For more information, email gala@unionsett.org or call
Karen Trella at (201) 461-3717.*

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Union Settlement's 18th Annual Ethnic Festival of El Barrio

**Saturday, May 22, 2010
East 104th Street
between 2nd and 3rd Avenue**

Live music and dance, arts & crafts, food, family fun

*For more information, contact Ivelize
Eatman, at (212) 828-6051 or ieatman@unionsett.org.*



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