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Union Settlement Helps Local Residents Respond to Economic Downturn

The national economic recession has had a severe adverse impact on the residents of East Harlem. Rising unemployment and a dramatic reduction in the number of job opportunities are only two of the challenges facing the neighborhood. Union Settlement is rising to the occasion to provide support and assistance to fill the increasing needs here in East Harlem.

In a new collaboration with Union Settlement Home Care and Seedco's Workforce Career Center, Union Settlement's Adult Education Program is now offering free, bilingual training for students interested in becoming home health aides.

Students attend two weeks of job readiness training at Union Settlement, followed by four weeks of home health aide training at the SKILL Center. Upon successful completion, students are linked to Union Settlement Home Care for job placement. Our first four students graduated in January and



we expect to train and employ 20 students by June. We hope that this collaboration will continue to grow, providing much-needed job opportunities for the local community.

"Not only are we providing local residents with job skills that they can use for a lifetime, but we are immediately placing these workers in jobs at Union Settlement Home Care, and they in turn are providing much needed health care services to homebound patients in our community," said Melissa Nieves, Director of Union Settlement's Adult Education Program. "We are very excited about this program, which is a win-win-win situation for the workers, for our Home Care program, and for our local residents who need these services."

Similarly, the Union Settlement Federal Credit Union (USFCU) is in the midst of a comprehensive new effort to provide vital financial literacy information to the community. Financial literacy is the ability of individuals to manage their personal finances responsibly. Last fall, USFCU launched a financial literacy workshop series for participants across Union Settlement's programs, including parents in our childcare program, senior center members, youth in our after-school programs and Adult Education students. To date, we have held more than 15 workshops, some in English and some in Spanish, on such topics as budgeting and money management, understanding credit and identity theft.

**Visit our website:
www.unionsettlement.org**

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A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of Union Settlement:

It is a true honor to write to you today, as I begin my service as the new Executive Director of Union Settlement Association.

I want to start by paying tribute to my immediate predecessor, Ellen Simon, who led Union Settlement for more than eight years, and who was so loved and admired by everyone at Union Settlement. We will all miss her leadership, support and guidance. Thank you, Ellen.

As you all know, the current financial turmoil has imposed particular hardships on the hard-working residents of East Harlem. Almost 40% of East Harlem's residents are living in poverty, about 50% of adults lack a high school diploma, and 46% live in households where English is not the primary language. Each of these factors creates a substantial barrier to employment, at a time when finding employment is so essential.

Our economic "safety net" is crucial at times like these, and that is why I am so proud to be here at Union Settlement, which provides so many essential services. Our childcare and after-school programs give parents the flexibility they need to find and retain jobs; our youth development programs give our young adults the skills and confidence they need to succeed both in school and in the workplace; our adult education programs provide the English and literacy training that is so essential for new immigrants looking to enter the workplace; and our senior services programs provide crucial food and socialization for so many seniors who cannot sustain themselves.

Union Settlement has provided services to the children and families of East Harlem through many economic downturns since its founding in 1895, and so we know that now is the time to redouble our efforts to assist those in need.

I want to thank all of the Union Settlement employees, volunteers, program participants and supporters who have helped welcome me to the Union Settlement family, and I look forward to working with all of you as we carry on our tradition of providing support and opportunity to the East Harlem community.

—David Nocenti
Executive Director

Taking It to the Dance Floor at Staff Recognition Celebration



*SCRIP Counselor Nitesha Hughes, Director of Youth Services
Steven Portericker and Michella Rivera, Education Specialist*

On February 12, Union Settlement held its biennial Staff Recognition Ceremony to celebrate its dedicated employees. Amid the splendor of Harlem's Alhambra Ballroom, the evening's program honored Union Settlement's exemplary employees.

Staff members received awards for years of service, while Associate Executive Director Laura Johnson was honored for an astounding 35 years of exemplary contributions to the agency. Time was also set aside for special tributes to two beloved members of the Union Settlement family who retired in recent months, Director of Budgets and Contracts Juanita Mathis and long-time Executive Director Ellen Simon. Other staff members were recognized for achievements in the areas of Outstanding Service, Innovation, Perfect Attendance and Congeniality.

The crowd-pleasing highlight was a *Dancing with the Staff* competition, which pitted staff members against each other in a battle royale that featured sizzling waltz, tango and merengue numbers. Stephanie Davis-Lee, Director of Childcare Services, and Joe Kelly, College Readiness Counselor, emerged victorious.

"This event amply demonstrates why Union Settlement is such a great organization," said Executive Director David Nocenti, "and why it is so wonderful for all of us to be part of the Union Settlement family."

Energy High for Upcoming Sounds of East Harlem Benefit

As the promise of spring draws near, Union Settlement is abuzz with excitement for the Eighth Annual Sounds of East Harlem Benefit. This year's event brings both a new Executive Director, David Nocenti (*see article on p. 2*), and a new venue, the Prince George Ballroom, for what promises to be an exhilarating evening as well as an important one for Union Settlement, as it shepherds East Harlem through these tough economic times.

This year's benefit will honor Universal Business Solutions and Hope Knight, COO of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ), a government initiative that seeks to revitalize distressed communities by using public funds and tax incentives to spur private investment. Ms. Knight is also a former VP at Morgan Stanley and a longtime Union Settlement supporter. Universal Business Solutions has rapidly become one of Union Settlement's most generous supporters, serving as a sponsor for last year's benefit, including offering a revenue-boosting challenge grant, and demonstrating a genuine commitment to the agency's mission.



World Famous Harlem Gospel



Honoree Hope Knight, COO of UMEZ

The setting of the festivities will be the glorious Prince George Ballroom, which was recently restored to its early 20th-century glory thanks to its owner, Common Ground, the supportive housing agency. Attendees will enjoy cocktails and a silent auction in the neo-Renaissance space, featuring plasterwork garlands and acanthus leaves, herringbone oak floors, goldleafing and a dramatic 23-foot-high ceiling. After dinner, there will

be a stirring performance by the World Famous Harlem Gospel Choir. The benefit will joyously mark agency and community achievements, while raising critically needed funds for Union Settlement's programs and services.

The guests of this event will be essential players for ensuring a bright future for East Harlem families. Funds raised will help thousands of area residents continue to take English classes, enroll their children in childcare and after-school programs, become members of our credit union, prepare for the GED, help their children reach higher education, join our thriving senior centers and much more.

The Sounds of East Harlem Benefit will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 21 at the Prince George Ballroom, 15 East 27th Street (between Madison & Fifth). For more information, contact Karen Trella at karentrella@verizon.net or (201) 461-3717.

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Youth at Union Receives Grants from Two Foundations to Expand Services



Principal Lisa Nelson, MetLife Multicultural Director Mack Rice, Director of Youth Services Steven Portericker, Executive Director David Nocenti, MetLife Civic Affairs Director April Hawkins, outgoing Executive Director Ellen Simon, College Readiness Director Charmaine Massiah, School Outreach Coordinator Verneda Johnson and Middle School Coordinator Joseph Cruz

Thanks to generous grants from the MetLife Foundation and the Teagle Foundation, Union Settlement's Youth Services department will get more students involved with their schools through the Legacy Program and prepare them for college through the organization's partnership with Drew University in Madison, New Jersey.

With the grant from the MetLife Foundation, Union Settlement was able to launch the Legacy Program, a new community service initiative for students at Isaac Newton Middle School for Science & Math, as part of the organization's 2008 Out-of-School Time Initiative. The year-round leadership and team-building program is designed so students begin by developing projects in their school, expanding to communitywide efforts and ultimately larger issues of national or international concern, such as hunger, the spread of AIDS or global warming. Extending

through the summer, participating students will also create a special orientation program to welcome incoming seventh graders to the school and to recruit them to join the Legacy Program.

Meanwhile, the \$240,000 Teagle Foundation grant will fund a continued partnership between Union Settlement and Drew University to give underserved high school and middle school students in East Harlem a vital awareness of the challenges and rewards associated with higher education. "Summer College" at Drew University gives students the chance to take part in classes taught by university faculty that emphasize the benefits, challenges, pressures, and opportunities of being a college student and a college graduate. Additionally, Drew University students travel to East Harlem twice a month to tutor middle schoolers attending Union Settlement's Saturday Academy and to lead SAT and Regents test prep for high schoolers in this program.

Union Settlement is very grateful for the highly valued support shown by MetLife Foundation and the Teagle Foundation through these grants.

A Rising Star and Scholar

Congratulations to Daniel Yearwood, a participant in our Bridges Middle School Program, and to program staff. Daniel has received acceptances from two of the city's most selective and competitive high schools: the prestigious Bronx High School of Science and Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. Admission to Bronx Science is based solely on the results of the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT), while acceptance to LaGuardia is based on academic records and an audition, at which Daniel dazzled the committee with his drumming.

"Hard work truly pays off," Daniel says. "I'm proud of my dedication and my family for pushing me to be successful in life."



Daniel Yearwood

Junior “Top Chefs”: Middle Schoolers Don Aprons for New Fun Food, Smart Food Program

Our Bridges Middle School Program participants are taking part in an exciting new project that just might nurture a few future “Top Chefs.” A culinary arts and healthy eating program, *Fun Food, Smart Food* engages our middle schoolers on a 12-week journey during which they learn culinary skills, explore different food and food traditions, share healthy eating practices with friends and family members, and become knowledgeable eaters and conscientious consumers.

The class is led by David Nuss, a professional chef from Natural Gourmet Cooking Institute and Michelle Rivera, Bridges’s Education Specialist. All participants learn to prepare dishes that are both healthy and tasty. Classes are supplemented with discussions on issues such as sustainability, the impact of food advertising and media, and how to read nutritional labels and ingredient lists. Every three weeks, students are given a bag of groceries and a copy of a recipe so they can cook for their families. Students also visit to the farmer’s market Union Settlement hosts in order to discover firsthand the variety of local and seasonal fruits and vegetables available and to talk to farmers about their growing methods and the importance of buying local.

Fun Food, Smart Food is made possible thanks to a rich collaboration among New York City Department of Youth & Community Development, the Children’s Aid Society, and the National Council on Women’s Health.



Bridges’s Top Chefs

Response to Downturn (Continued from page 1)

“Financial literacy is always important, but it is even more important in difficult financial times like these,” said Audia Williams, USFCU’s Chief Executive Officer. “With money so tight and jobs so hard to find, it is crucial that individuals understand the importance of establishing a household budget, avoiding unnecessary high-interest debts, and maintaining a good credit rating.”

USFCU’s financial literacy program has served more than 255 residents ranging in age from 17 to 85. We also have opened 50 new credit union accounts. Participants are linked to USFCU’s many services, including free tax preparation and access to financial counseling to assist them in achieving their goals in these challenging economic times.

Feedback has been terrific and we have more such projects to come in 2009.



We are very grateful to the New York Credit Union Foundation and its Smart Money Grant Program for support of this effort.

UNION SETTLEMENT WISH LIST

- ♦ Computers and air conditioning units for our Youth Education Center
- ♦ Beanbags, 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
- ♦ Office furniture, learning toys, art supplies, books, a digital camera and radios/CD players for childcare & after-school programs
- ♦ An agency backup system, servers and interns for our Technology Department
- ♦ Desks, a sofa, a fax machine, insulated food carts, microwave ovens and a new bingo system for our senior centers

SETTLEMENT EVENTS

April

Our Eighth Annual Sounds of East Harlem Benefit

Tuesday, April 21, 2009
6:30PM

Prince George Ballroom
15 East 27th Street

For more information, please contact Karen Trella at karentrella@verizon.net or (201) 461-3717.

June

Union Settlement's 17th Annual Ethnic Festival of El Barrio

Saturday, June 20, 2009
11 a.m.-6 p.m.

East 104th Street
(between 2nd and 3rd Avenues)

Live music, arts & crafts, food, family fun, face-painting, games, dance, health information, raffle prizes and much more.

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



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