

**In
This
Issue**

2

**In Memorium:
Councilmember
Phil Reed**

3

**A Farewell "From
the Director"**

4

Fall Wine Tasting

5

**Senior Beaders
Embark on New
Giving Venture**

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Record Turnout for Exhilarating Día de los Muertos Celebration

**New Agency Database Mailing Draws Large Numbers
to Beloved Community Event**

It seemed like every spare corner of Union Settlement's cavernous gym was filled with children, students, parents, seniors and other community members for the 13th Annual Day of the Dead celebration. The eager crowds, which flowed out into the corridors, were treated to an electrifying evening of live music, dancing, poetry, skits and warm remembrance of loved ones who have passed.



Pre-Election Day sugar skulls

Activities in the gym were underway all day with the construction and festooning of the traditional altar, led by artist Miguel Cossio.



A young participant before the altar

As the hours went by, Adult Education students and community members pitched in to transform the gym, covering the wooden platform with glorious paper flowers (*papel picado*) in pink, purple, yellow and gold, marigolds, brightly glazed egg bread (*pan de muertos*), photos and other remembrances of lost loved ones and the day's iconic skeleton figurines. Inés Rivera led the immensely popular calaveritas workshop, engaging the growing crowd in the making of sugar skulls, including timely representations of the presidential candidates.

Soon after six o'clock, the first-floor auditorium began to fill with the delicious smells of tamales, tacos dorados and chicken with mole. It was soon clear that we would be experiencing record attendance, with community residents swarming in, excited to participate.

By seven, the gym was brimming over and the evening program was underway, beginning with a history of the Día de los Muertos by emcee and historian/educator Verónica Hernández-Shusman. Music was a constant, with perennial favorites Mariachi Real de México and Semilla music and dance collective. Semilla performed traditional numbers from the Veracruz region of Mexico, including fandangos and "El Zapateado," which featured fast dancing on a *tarima*, or wood platform. The young children from the Mariachi

Continued on page 5

In Memorium: City Councilmember Philip Reed, Ardent Supporter of East Harlem Families

East Harlem lost one of its most beloved supporters in November, with the passing of former City Councilmember Philip Reed. Elected in 1997, he represented parts of East Harlem, the Upper West Side and the South Bronx, working tirelessly on childhood asthma prevention, affordable housing and HIV/AIDS before leaving office in 2005 because of term limits.

Councilmember Reed was a great friend to Union Settlement, responsible for securing the van that enabled us to launch our Senior Trip Program, which has since evolved into a full-service, city-contracted Senior Transportation Program with four vehicles and up to seven trips a day. A true friend to our seniors, he also provided frequent small grants to our senior centers, enabling us to provide dancercise classes, music performances and nutrition workshops, as well as purchasing chairs, tables and furniture for our Gaylord White Senior Center. Our Adult Education Program also benefited from his generosity and advocacy, as he secured Immigrant Opportunities Initiative funding for our program.

The impact of Councilmember Reed's strong support will also endure in the coming years: we owe him a tremendous debt for securing the seminal grant in our seven-year-long effort to renovate the agency's lobby and credit union. We continue to navigate bureaucratic channels and raise funds to support rising construction costs, but we are approaching the final steps to begin the renovation, which will greatly enhance our services to the community. When we break ground, Councilmember Reed's fervent support and its foundational role in this effort will be foremost in our minds. He will be sorely missed, as a legislator, an advocate and a friend.

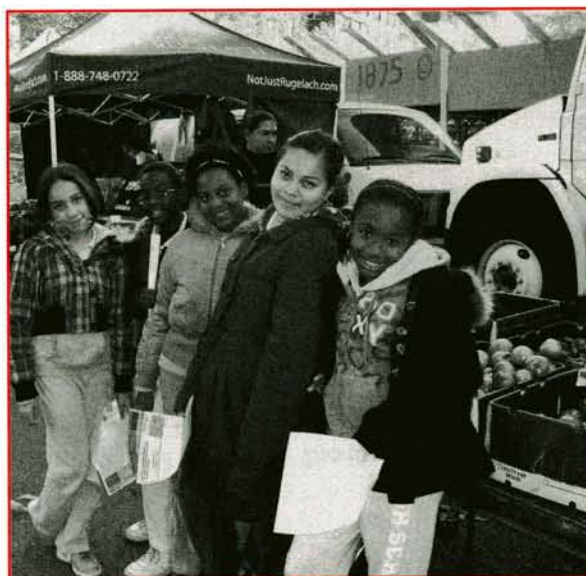
Harvest Day: Helping East Harlem kids make the connection between the garden and their food



In October, Youth at Union staff and participants eagerly joined forces with *Garden to Café*, a collaboration of NYC Department of Education, SchoolFood, the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets and more than 20 community based organizations. With no garden on site, P.S. 171 reached out to Union Settlement to partner on the effort, which seeks to incorporate student-grown food into school menus. In late August, 10 students from Youth at Union's Green Teams environmental program planted seeds, including peppermint, rosemary, dill, greek oregano, purple and pineapple sage, French tarragon, golden lemon thyme, bell pepper, tomato and lettuce. Then, the Team, with some assistance from fellow Youth at Union kids, tended to the crops.

The Team officially picked their crops on October 28 and 29 and delivered them to the P.S. 171 chef to add to his menu for Harvest Day on October 30. Oregano and rosemary were used to season the mashed potatoes with brussel sprouts and greens with chick peas. During lunch, the Team manned a display table in the cafeteria to show crops picked from the garden and answer students' questions. Then, sixth graders from P.S. 171 visited the East Harlem Farmer's Market hosted by the Settlement before visiting the agency's community garden and participating in the scavenger hunt, locating specific vegetables, fruits and plants through a series of clues.

Garden to Café seeks to increase students' healthful eating, connect them to local food and integrate school gardening and school lunch. Union Settlement was thrilled to participate and hopes to be involved in similar efforts going forward.



From the Director

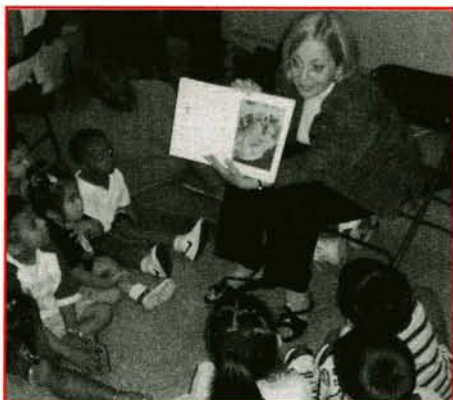
Dear Friends,

It is with very mixed emotions that I write to you today. After nearly nine years as the Executive Director of Union Settlement, I have decided to

retire. I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and kindness. Your involvement has helped the agency to serve thousands of individuals, and you have made my time here a genuine privilege.

When I arrived at the Settlement in July 2000, I had little idea of the breadth of services the agency

offered or of the wonderful participants and staff I would be fortunate to meet. As Union Settlement approaches its 114th birthday, I am mindful that my tenure



has been just a brief blip in this agency's remarkable history. I am only the tenth person to head the agency, which is a testament to the staying power of many of my predecessors and to the many rewards our vibrant East Harlem community offers. Each of my forerunners brought enduring gifts to the agency, from the founding of the Settlement College Readiness Program and the East 104th Street apartments in Bill Kirk's era to Linkage House during Gene Sklar's tenure.

For me, this period has been one of the most rewarding of my career. Every time I attended a Day of the Dead celebration, an after-school art class, a yoga class for our preschoolers, one of our many senior celebrations or one of the countless graduations, I came away renewed and proud of the wonderful work the Union Settlement does to improve the lives of those we serve. I hope that my legacy will be that I helped to continue the great tradition of service that the previous nine headworkers established.

Thank you for letting me share this time at the Settlement with you. It has truly been my pleasure.

—Ellen P. Simon, DSW
Executive Director

SETTLEMENT EVENTS

January

Adult Education Spring Semester

Registration begins January 5.

Classes begin January 12.

Day, evening and Saturday classes
Immigration, career and college counseling

237 East 104th Street, 2nd Floor
Between Second and Third Avenues

For more information, please call Melissa Nieves,
Director of Adult Education, at (212) 828-6298.

January 17 through April 15

The Union Settlement Federal Credit Union,
in collaboration with V.I.T.A., offers ...

Free Tax Preparation Assistance

237 East 104th Street, First Floor

After January 2, 2009, call for hours or to make an
appointment: (917) 671-1000.

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Dana Wolf, LCSW, Director of Development

Megan Abbott, Director of Grants and Contracts

Fine Art, Fine Wine and a Harvest of Giving at the Settlement's Fall Wine Tasting



Beloved art instructor Yvonne Lamar-Rogers with star pupil Tyler Brown, whose artwork was displayed prominently at the wine tasting.

Artwork proved stiff competition for the fine wines, as another highlight of the evening was the elaborate Harvest Quilt hanging in the side tasting room. Yvonne Lamar Rogers, our talented Rising Stars art teacher, worked on the multi-media collage with children in our program. Highlighting harvest themes such as pumpkins, ghosts and scarecrows, the quilt hung over guests' heads as they tasted a delicious Paolo Scavino Rosso and a Messapicus Salice Salentino Riserva in the private tasting room.

The goal of the evening was to raise funds for Union Settlement programs as well as to make new friends. "The venue was fabulous. So many people commented on their discovery of the Chelsea Wine Vault and the Chelsea Market, which amounted to a visit to an exciting art gallery for those of us who walked through its concourse," said Maxine Rockoff, Board Chair. "The wines were terrific,



Paula Stern, Maxine Rockoff, Kate Buford and Joshua Bloodworth

Union Settlement Board members, staff and new friends gathered for an evening of wine tasting at the rustic and intimate red brick setting of the Chelsea Wine Vault, located in the historic Chelsea Market. Attendees took a trip around the world, tasting wines from Argentina to Italy, all while supporting our mission and services.

Among the honored guests were Tyler Brown, age eight, and her parents, Lolita Frazier and Walter Brown. A participant in our Rising Stars after-school program, Tyler is a budding young artist whose work was selected to grace the benefit's invitation. Not long after her starry arrival at the event, Ms. Brown was walking around with her Reidel glass full of sparkling cider, autographing reprints of her artwork and warding off the flashes of light from the paparazzi snapping her photo from all angles like a true celebrity.



Jeff Clyde, Jay Lathen, Lisa Clyde, Alison and Randall Shaw

as were the hospitality and knowledge of the staff. But the nicest part was being able to meet and greet and visit in such a warm and friendly setting. It was truly a successful friend-raising party!"

Union Settlement would like to thank our event co-chairs, Reggie Harwell, Lisa Clyde and Ruth Pachman, and all the generous supporters of this fall benefit.

For information on ways you can help Union Settlement serve the families of East Harlem, please contact Dana Wolf, Director of Development, at (212) 828-6024 or dwolf@unionsett.org.

Senior "Beaders" Offer Gifts to Those Living with Cancer

The talented jewelry-makers in our Senior Services Program are now using their skills to provide hand-crafted earrings to members of Gilda's Club, a support network for those recovering from cancer.

Collectively dubbed the East Harlem-Buena Vista Jewelry Connection, our beaders have been learning the skills of bead jewelry for the past three years with guidance from our jewelry guru, Arlene Waldorf. Many are survivors of cancer and were inspired by anchor Robin Roberts, who shared her recovery journey on *Good Morning America*, removing her wig and facing the camera proudly. Watching Roberts don a different pair of pretty earrings every morning, the beaders decided to add jewelry for cancer survivors to the work they do. Extending the circle of giving, Gilda's Club has provided Breast Cancer Awareness Training at our centers.



Flourishing beyond their own high expectations, the talented Buena Vista beaders have crafted jewelry for World AIDS Day, for neighborhood festivals including Day of the Dead and the East Harlem Ethnic Festival and at Union Settlement's Annual Sounds of East Harlem Benefit.

Día de los Muertos (Continued from page 1)



Costumed cutie lines up for a Day of the Dead meal.

Academy of New York were also on hand to support Mariachi Real, as was special guest singer Yolanda Leticia.

Adult Education students performed "La fiesta de los muertos," a skit written and directed by one of our long-time teachers, Maria Morales. La Carpa Theatre Group also performed skits, while poet and teacher Papoleto offered stirring Día de los Muertos poems.

At night's end, everyone followed Mariachi Real de México to the community garden as the band played "Los Golondrinas" ("The Swallows"). With lit candles in hand, participants shared personal remembrances to deceased loved

ones as the music soared. With each year, this celebration has become a more treasured community experience as well as a deeply meaningful one for the many East Harlemites of Mexican descent.

This year's event was among our most popular ever, drawing scores of new community members from various cultural heritages, including African, Yemenite and Chinese. The particularly large turnout can be attributed in part to an exciting Union Settlement effort, made possible through a generous grant from the Altman Foundation, to create an agencywide database that will enable us, for the first time, to collect participants from across our 22+ programs. After more than two years of development, we now have a functioning database that gathers information from across our core programs. In October, we used the database to conduct our first agencywide mailing to alert community members to our Day of the Dead celebration. Because so many of our participants only know about the one program in which they participate, the mailing also introduced them to our wide range of services. We believe the more we use the database, the more we will encourage "cross-pollination," with, for example, the parents in our Childcare Program enrolling in our Adult Education classes, joining our credit union and alerting their parents to the many activities at our senior centers. We eagerly look forward to the many opportunities the database will offer as we expand the Settlement family.



Adult Education Director Melissa Nieves and emcee Verónica Hernández-Shusman.

Union Settlement would like to thank the Altman Foundation for their generous support of our new database and the New York State Council for the Arts for their ongoing support of this much-loved community event.

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
- ♦ Scholarships funds for our College Readiness participants
- ♦ 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
- ♦ New computers for the Finance Department
- ♦ A digital camera for the Manhattan HIV Care Network

SAVE THE DATE!

Our Eighth Annual Sounds of East Harlem Benefit

*Honoring
Hope Knight*

*Chief Operating Officer of the
Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone*

**Tuesday, April 21, 2009
Prince George Ballroom
15 East 27th Street
New York City
6:30PM**

Join us for a celebration of the people and music that inspire our neighborhood.

For more information, please contact Dana Wolf, Director of Development, at (212) 828-6024 or dwolf@unionsett.org.

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