



## Making a Small Difference Each and Every Day

Retirement for some is a chance to relax and enjoy the fruits of a life's work. For many East Harlem seniors, however, retirement is an opportunity to give back to their community. Union Settlement Association's Senior Volunteer Program has provided seniors in our centers with the opportunity to serve their community for over 30 years.

Senior volunteers assist at Union Settlement's four senior centers, working to improve the quality of life for the seniors involved in our centers. Approximately 50 seniors volunteer up to 20 hours a week greeting visitors, preparing and cleaning up after breakfast and lunch, helping to organize special events like birthday parties, and assisting with monthly trips, fundraising, and activities. Seniors also volunteer by tutoring children and providing telephone reassurance and visits to the homebound. **Virginia Berrios**, the Senior Services Volunteer Coordinator, says the program helps the volunteers as much as the seniors that come to the centers. By helping others, the volunteers are helping themselves: they feel useful and happier because of their service.

### Wanda Ferreira's Commitment to Giving Back

When you step through the doors of the Gaylord White Senior Center, chances are you will be met with a smile from **Wanda Ferreira** (pictured at right). Wanda has committed her retired life to giving back, volunteering with multiple community organizations. She came to the United States at 15 from Puerto Rico, has lived in East Harlem for nearly 30 years, and has volunteered at the Gaylord White Senior Center since 2002.

"I didn't want to stay at home. I wanted to help other people," Wanda says. "I started taking the meals upstairs and I helped in the

**"I love it, love it, love it. I love to help.  
That's my main thing."**

*-Wanda Ferreira*



kitchen. Anything they want, I will do." Wanda also helps the Secretary of Community Board 11 and volunteers at the local precinct. Her husband of 50 years shares the same values and volunteers as well. "I feel so good. I'm nice to people; I respect you so you respect me," she says of what she has learned from her experiences as a volunteer. "I love it, love it, love it. I love to help. That's my main thing. It doesn't have to be seniors – anybody."

### Renaissance Woman Maria Pacheco

**Maria Pacheco** (pictured on page 3) has put her multiple talents and compassion for others to work volunteering at multiple Union Settlement programs over the past five years. "Since I retired, I keep busy," she says. While taking care of a woman with Alzheimer's, Maria recognized the importance of companionship and staying active, and so began taking her to a senior center and helping her attend programs there. She visits a homebound senior in our Meals and Wheels program each week, and explains how the conversations and simple time spent together "helped her so much." Twice monthly, Maria visits each of our senior centers and holds beading workshops, showing other seniors how to create jewelry. In addition, Maria has also been a tutor in our Intergen-

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## A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of Union Settlement:

Union Settlement is a place of giving.

We mostly are known for providing vital services to our East Harlem neighbors, but as you will see in these pages, the spirit of giving is embodied in many other ways – seniors who attend our senior centers taking time to help the homebound; Adult Education students helping raise funds to beautify their classrooms; a donor giving time and financial support to our LGBTQ initiative; a pro football star spending an exciting afternoon with our elementary school youth; corporate employees giving career guidance to those looking to enter the workforce; local teens teaching their peers how to stay healthy, and so much more.



Volunteers – whether they are Board members, corporate partners, program participants, local residents or others – are essential to our work. Every year, hundreds of individuals offer their time, assistance, support, expertise and enthusiasm to our programs, and we could not offer our services without them.

And yet, as is clear from these stories, so many of our volunteers feel that they are receiving more than they are giving. That is how we feel as well – we are able to help the East Harlem community, and receive in return a wonderful feeling of fulfillment.

Thank you for helping us do our work, and we hope you share our feeling of reward.

— David Nocenti

## Staff Spotlight: Ursula Llamas



When **Ursula Llamas** started at Union Settlement in 2009, she already had a long history of community development work. Llamas grew up in New York and received her Masters in Social Work from Hunter College. Initially, she worked helping learning disabled children and their families access appropriate early intervention resources. After several years at community and Head Start centers, she joined Union Settlement’s Johnson Counseling Center as a psychotherapist.

Seeking help is often the greatest challenge for Ursula’s clients. “As a Latina I know that mental health counseling is often viewed with a stigma, but once someone walks in the door they experience a big sense of relief and often become an advocate for our services.” Being bilingual helps Ursula connect with clients on a deeper level, since many of them are more comfortable speaking in Spanish.

Working within Union Settlement helps Ursula connect her clients to a wider network of support. Recently she was able to refer a teen client to an SAT tutoring course through our Youth Services department, and several of her senior clients also drop in on our centers for companionship. She appreciates that the agency is able to look at the broader needs of the community and work to meet them.

“Union Settlement has so much integrity. The Counseling Center really fosters good work by providing a lot of training and support. It’s very much like a family.”

## Making a Difference

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erational Tutoring Program since the program's launch two years ago. "It's so rewarding to be able to help the children. My student's parents are from Africa and don't speak English at home, so her reading isn't as good as it could be," she says. The two of them read together, and Maria also incorporates card games, basic mathematics and drawing into their sessions. "I will continue next year, God willing."

### Shirley Horton's Shining Enthusiasm

New York native **Shirley Horton** has been volunteering at Union Settlement's centers for about five years, putting to use skills she gained during her career in customer service at Chelsea Piers and the nearby Hope Community. It is clear from the fond way she speaks of her professional experiences that she loves working with people. Shirley has assisted the coordinators with the phones and answering questions. Now she greets people and calls bingo at Union Settlement's Gaylord White Senior Center. It is apparent that Shirley loves what she does – as seniors walk through the door she greets them each by name and her enthusiasm shines through. "It is a learning experience," Shirley says. "You have to give back in this world. I'm very fortunate." She knows that what she is doing is important; as one of her old supervisors used to say, "Volunteers are my right hand."

That sentiment is echoed by **Luz Lara**, Coordinator of the Gaylord White Senior Center, who says the volunteers' "hard work, dedication, and creativity makes my job that much more enjoyable."



*If you are interested in volunteering, contact our Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteers@unionsettlement.org](mailto:volunteers@unionsettlement.org), call 646-672-5082 or visit [www.unionsettlement.org/volunteer](http://www.unionsettlement.org/volunteer) to fill out a volunteer application.*

## Thank You!

We would like to express our gratitude to everyone who helped us collect over 1,000 gifts this holiday season!

Donors include: Bryan Cave LLP, The East Harlem Cafe, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Fisher Brothers, Hunter College, Metro Hope Church, The New York Academy of Medicine, RLM Finsbury, Savoy Bakery, and YES Network





## Union Settlement Staff Recognition

Congratulations to all the staff members who received longevity and recognition awards at our 2011/2012 Staff Recognition party!

Clockwise: A table decorated for the "masquerade" theme, Terry Burch and Rozette McLean hit the dance floor, Associate Executive Director Laura Johnson was honored for 40 years of service, "Union's Got Talent" contest winner Ruth Alvarado, 2011 MVP's Jennifer Clark, Delfino Hernandez, George Brown and Monique Thomas, 2012 MVPs Roberta Nunez, Andrea Davis, Seneca Wolfe, and Ari Briski



## Donor Profile: Neuberger Berman

"Neuberger Berman is a wonderful partner to Union Settlement Association," said **David Nocenti**, Executive Director. "For the last two years, their foundation has provided much needed support for our College Readiness Program, and Neuberger Berman staff members generously volunteer their time to assist our participants."

Neuberger Berman holds an annual "Celebration with Service," a weeklong event in April when employees are encouraged to volunteer. This will be the third year that approximately 50 Neuberger Berman volunteers will help out in our programs.

Past projects include: cooking, packing, and delivering Meals on Wheels, helping to host a Mother's Day Party for our seniors, and leading job readiness workshops for participants in our Adult Education classes and our disconnected youth programs. Many of the same volunteers return each year.

The Neuberger Berman Foundation's mission is to assist at-risk children and youth, enabling them to achieve their potential through educational enrichment and support programs that promote academic success, independence and economic sustainability. Over its 49 year history, our College Readiness Program has helped more than 20,000 low-income, minority student gain admission to college and explore career options through counseling, academic enrichment and internship opportunities.

# Seniors Making Strides in Fitness



*Luis Flores and the Union Settlement Senior Walking Club*

From walking clubs to senior swim in the Jefferson Park Pool, **Luis Flores**, Union Settlement's Senior Services Health Coordinator, brings fitness programs to East Harlem's seniors. These programs promote evidence-based group exercises that improve functional abilities, such as strength, flexibility and mobility, and increase confidence and well being. Flores says these programs "develop strength in everyday muscles" while combating common issues surrounding aging.

Activities change every few weeks in order to involve more seniors and to be seasonally appropriate. During the warm weather months, seniors participated in the Walking Club. Each Friday this winter, seniors meet at the Harlem Armory to engage in activities to increase core strength, flexibility, and balance, all led by a certified instructor.

Participant **JoAnn D'Alessio** says the walking group "pushes you to your potential." She enjoys this program so much and wishes it met more often. She appreciates the instructors at Union Settlement who know how to work with participants of all abilities. She

also enjoys the many activities offered in different locations. "Variety is important," she said. "Exercising at different places keeps you interested and provides a total body workout."

Participants have made strides in their health and well-being. Flores implemented a Tai Chi program, offered this past fall, to improve coordination and prevent falls. "One participant could hardly move—and she improved," he said. "After Tai Chi, she didn't need a walker anymore."

Flores' advice on how to execute a successful exercise program is, "Give them a chance to exercise. Show genuine concern and respect and emphasize empowerment. You will do great." Another vital aspect in the success of this program is the enthusiasm and care that Flores shows towards our seniors' health.

Union Settlement also offers swimming, exercise classes at Asphalt Green, nutrition education, and much more. With so many options for staying active, seniors in our centers are improving their health and fitness.



*Rosa Montes participating in a Tai Chi class*

## Adult Education Students Fundraise for a Classroom Makeover

Union Settlement's Adult Education program serves over 300 students each year with classes in Basic Education, GED preparation, Home Health Aide training, and English for Speakers of Other Languages. Our students come to us excited and ready to learn. However, our classrooms and spaces aren't well equipped and existing funding streams do not support upgrading them.

To address this issue, Adult Education Director **Melissa Nieves** and a group of students enrolled in our Adult Education classes began brainstorming fundraising ideas. They identified the need for technology and basic furnishings in the classrooms, and decided to raise money online through a crowd-sourced funding platform, asking others to make donations towards their project. The funds will go directly towards providing each classroom with

a laptop, whiteboard, projector, and projector screen, and replacing the blinds. These classroom upgrades will help our teachers teach and our students learn more effectively. As an added bonus, these improvements will serve to enhance the afterschool programs that utilize those classrooms in the afternoon.

After months of preparations, the Adult Education program is proud to present their crowd-sourcing campaign for a classroom makeover.

*To view the wonderful videos and pictures, and for the opportunity to donate to a classroom makeover campaign, please visit [www.indiegogo.com/adultedclassroommakeover](http://www.indiegogo.com/adultedclassroommakeover).*

# Hakeem Nicks visits Union Settlement



On Tuesday December 11, 2012, Union Settlement hosted NY Giants Wide Receiver **Hakeem Nicks** for an afternoon of sports and fun with East Harlem children. His charity, Hakeem Nicks' Helping Hands and UnitedHealthcare have teamed up with the Food Bank for New York City to support healthy food distribution.

Union Settlement will now be able to send 180 children enrolled in our after school programs home on weekends and during school breaks with backpacks full of healthy produce and dry goods.

At the start of the event, the students learned about the program and healthy eating and exercise habits from **Bill Golden**, the CEO of UnitedHealthcare of New York, **David Nocenti**, the Executive Director of Union Settlement, and Hakeem Nicks.

Youth Services elementary school program coordinator **LeSohn Regans** designed an activity for students to get a jump start on improving their fitness. After a group warm-up session led by Nicks and Regans, the students were divided into groups and sent to different stations to participate in football drills including passing, catching, footwork and speed. Nicks made the circuit and participated in all of the drills to the delight of the kids.

Our students had a great time getting active with Nicks and the Union Settlement staff. We would like to extend our thanks to UnitedHealthcare, Hakeem Nicks Helping Hands, and the Food Bank for NYC for helping our youth develop a well-rounded approach to health and fitness.

*To see more photos from the event be sure to visit [Union Settlement's Facebook page](#).*

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## Teen Health in East Harlem

The East Harlem Teen Health Project (THP), now in its third year, is a program that educates 12-19 year olds about sexual health and empowerment and gives them the tools to educate their peers. THP operates in six month cycles and divides its participants into three age groups: middle school, high school, and out-of-school youth. Twelve participants are selected to form the Teen Health Council, which then conducts research, participates in meetings, maintains an active facebook page and a blog, publishes informative articles and pamphlets, and plans events to educate their peers and their community on issues surrounding sexual literacy and health in East Harlem.

The Teen Health Council's annual end-of-year community event was "Get Tested Day" held on December 19, 2012. The event, held in our community room on East 104th Street, offered free AIDS testing to participants, employees, and community members in conjunction with Harlem United. Interested community members also received information about sexual health best practices, community resources, and an "I Got Tested" pin.

Program Coordinator **Michelle Rivera** marked the event as a success, citing a flow of participants for "five hours straight." Community support also was one of the factors in the success of this event, says Ms. Rivera. "Union Settlement staff came out and got tested.

When people came and saw names that they recognized they felt more comfortable."

The Teen Health Project's peer-to-peer education model has proven to be successful in bringing sexual health to youth in a way that is fun, empowering, and informative.

*For more information, please visit [THP's Facebook page](#), [www.facebook.com/TeenHealth4Me](http://www.facebook.com/TeenHealth4Me).*



## Donor Spotlight: Jim Porçarelli



**Jim Porçarelli** is a wonderful supporter of Union Settlement's work in East Harlem. He first learned about the settlement through his friend **Marylen Mann** and the OASIS tutoring program that she helped us to start at Union Settlement.

As a gay man, he is concerned about human rights, equal opportunity and safety for all people. When he learned about our efforts to make East Harlem a safe space for the LGBTQ community, he quickly became a champion of this initiative. He hosted a reception in his home to introduce friends and colleagues to Union Settlement and recently sponsored a trip for East Harlem youth to attend the Hispanic Black Gay Coalition's LGBTQ Youth Empowerment Conference at MIT. For most of the teens on the trip, it was their first time to visit Boston; they were inspired and excited by the conference and the visit to a new environment.

"This kind of exposure adds to a young person's confidence and encourages them to aspire to their dreams and passions. If we can facilitate that sense of belonging, and provide a conduit to achievement, then we

have accomplished something."

Now, Jim is tapping his networks to recruit speakers who can serve as role models of successful LGBTQ professionals in various fields of work. "So many young people in our programs have never met successful professionals who have careers in creative fields or broken a barrier as an LGBTQ person," said **Steven Portericker**, Director of Youth Services. "My colleagues and I are very grateful for Jim's friendship, input and support."

## It's Tax Time!

Each winter the Union Settlement auditorium transforms into a full service tax preparation site. For three and a half months, volunteers from the New York City Financial Network Action Consortium help community members file their tax returns and get their full refund--completely free of charge. Last year, volunteers:

- Filed a total of 4,306 tax returns for East Harlem families
- Generated \$5.48 million dollars in refunds; and
- Helped 57 visitors connect with opportunities to save and manage their money by assisting them in opening accounts at Union Settlement Federal Credit Union

"We look forward to our the 10th year of helping credit union members and our community to get their taxes prepared for free. We also hope to introduce those who aren't yet members of the credit union to our 56-year-old community financial institution, which offers a full range of affordable financial services and loans," said **Ana Rosenblum**, CEO of the Union Settlement Federal Credit Union.

*For more information, and to make an appointment, please call (212)-505-3482.*

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Tuesday, April 16, 2013

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