

UNION SETTLEMENT



KiyAiraje Horace, 7th Grade, practicing with AileyDance Kids

Bringing the Arts to East Harlem

“We provide strong academic and social support, but we also want to bring the arts back into schools.”

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A Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends of Union Settlement:

Elliot Eisner, one of the nation's leading academic voices in support of arts education, famously stated: "The arts help children learn to say what cannot be said. When children are invited to disclose what a work of art helps them feel, they must reach into their poetic capacities to find the words that will do the job."

In this issue, you will read about Union Settlement's continuing efforts to infuse the arts into our programming. This includes not just after-school dance, theater and visual arts, but also our work across the generations, from the arts programming in our early childhood education centers, to the artistic activities that enrich and enliven the lives of our senior citizens.

Union Settlement believes in the importance of educational rigor, achievement and excellence.

But as all teachers will attest, the best education encompasses not just words and numbers, but also ideas, emotions, values, inspiration, and ways of thinking. As Eisner succinctly put it: "Art is literacy of the heart."

At Union Settlement, we bring a holistic approach to our work, focusing on whole individuals, whole families and whole communities. We are passionate about that work, and compassionate for those we serve. Education, wellness and community building are the three pillars of our work, and art enriches all three.

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season, and wish you all the best for 2015.

David Nocenti
Executive Director

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by the numbers

947 gifts were donated to children in our Early Childhood Education and Youth programs by Bryan Cave, Axiom, Finsbury, Mirada, healthfirst, Mount Sinai, East Harlem Café, New York Academy of Medicine, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and Fisher Brothers.

Learning Through Visual Storytelling

Afterschool programs are getting a new angle when it comes to teaching English Language Learners (ELL). Thanks to a grant from the Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education, Union Settlement is introducing the Photos and Me program at four East Harlem elementary schools, where ELL children are learning through creative storytelling in after-school clubs.

First through fifth grade students are using digital cameras, iPads and other media to develop their reading and writing skills, English fluency and critical thinking. The children are highly engaged and excited to express themselves.

The Photos and Me curriculum, developed by **Maria Paula Ghiso** and **Patricia Martínez-Álvarez** of Teachers College, encourages creativity and critical thinking through projects such as interviewing parents



Fernanda, PS 72 grade 3, working on her class' community map.

on their perspectives of “injustice” and constructing a community map that lets students show how their family fits into the neighborhood. This evidence-based curriculum addresses the gap between methods of literacy instruction used in schools and the experiences of linguistically and culturally diverse students, which benefits the 12% of the students in East Harlem who are English language learners.

307 turkeys (with fixings) were distributed to families in need during our Thanksgiving Turkey Drive. Food was generously donated by Axiom, the Chapin School, Park Avenue Foods, Driscoll Foods, the YES Network, Art of Men and UnitedHealthcare.

548 hours were contributed by generous volunteers in November and December for education services, meal delivery, gift-wrapping and holiday events.

Staff Spotlight: Luz Lara



Luz Lara is the coordinator at Corsi Senior Center, one of our four senior centers, planning activities for hundreds of older adults. “Seniors want to live independently,” Luz said, noting that there are many barriers to healthy aging including a lack of awareness of available resources.

Luz breaks these barriers by connecting seniors to Union Settlement’s health and wellness classes, social activities, transportation and recreational trips, volunteer opportunities, community meals and education resources like computer classes. “When people think of senior centers they immediately picture lonely, sick seniors,” Luz said. “The reality is that I see seniors doing so many active things that the world doesn’t see.” Luz works full time while simultaneously pursuing a masters degree at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, which is located right here in East Harlem.

In addition to health and fitness classes, Union Settlement’s senior centers offer many opportunities for seniors to express themselves through the arts, music and dance. For example, instructor **Frank Engle** has led an art class at the Corsi Senior Center on East 116th Street for almost a decade.

“Seniors demonstrate that powerful artistic talent may emerge at a later age,” said **Jane Richardson**, the Deputy Director of Union Settlement’s senior services. “By expressing themselves in a new way that is appreciated and valued they overcome stereotypes of aging as only a path of decline.” Past projects include classes led by teaching artists from The Whitney Museum of American Art and Elders Share the Arts. Beading activities, pictured at right, are always popular, and a group of seniors have begun creating murals such as the one found in the Gaylord White Senior Center

Seniors Find Creative Freedom in Art Classes



Bringing the Arts to East Harlem

The 2014-2015 school year has seen a huge expansion of free afterschool programming for middle school students as part of Mayor de Blasio's "School's Out NYC" initiative. Union Settlement's middle school programs have grown from 120 students in one school last year, to about 400 students in four schools this year.

A central goal of Union Settlement's expansion has been to nurture the arts in under-resourced local schools. We are doing this through partnerships with arts education leaders Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, the Shakespeare Society and Roundabout Theatre.

Andy Rodriguez, Program Director of Union Settlement's afterschool program at Esperanza Preparatory Academy on East 109th Street, said, "We provide strong academic and social support, but we also want to bring the arts back into schools."

Students in our afterschool program in Esperanza have been really excited about the arts focused clubs such as AileyDance Kids Residency, Roundabout Theatre Company's After School Drama Club and a media project focusing on photography and videography. "The kids love these extracurriculars," Andy said. "They can move around, learn, play and be creative."



Seventh-grader **KiyAiraje Horace** participates in the AileyDance after school club. "On day one, I stumbled a lot, but since then I learned how to make a move that people don't really know," KiyAiraje said. "I break down the dances into steps that anyone can learn." Most students start in the club without any previous dance experience, including sixth-grader **Diosmedis Diaz**, who said, "I've learned how to work together in a group and I actually like it a lot."

On East 120th Street, students at Joseph Lanzetta Middle School are rehearsing scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*. Learning Shakespearean language is important now that it is part of the Common Core curriculum for middle school. These afterschool offerings create new experiences and exposure to art that add to their overall education.

A Twist on Giving Tuesday

December 2nd was #GivingTuesday, a response to the materialism of Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday. This year, rather than asking for donations, Union Settlement staff walked the East Harlem streets, speaking with our neighbors about the importance of helping and giving to one another. To set the example, we gave out small gifts (single ride Metro Cards) while asking for promises to “pay it forward” through three acts of kindness. Most people agreed to do so, and here are a few of the giving pledges we collected:

- “I will write poetry to help to inspire women to leave domestic violence situations.” – Annette
- “Portare una comida a mi vecina.” (I will bring a meal to my neighbor.) – Arturo
- “I will volunteer to give out gifts at Harlem Hospital.” – Antonio

Overall, we were met with wonderful enthusiasm from the East Harlem community. People hugged us and we connected community members with Union Settlement’s services.

One woman said, “I love this. Giving to the community is what I am all about.” People appreciated the gift and the message behind it, and we have enrolled several new volunteers who came to us through this effort.



Our message of giving was amplified through Executive Director **David Nocenti's** op-ed in the Chronicle of Philanthropy, which was picked up by other writing in Cleveland and Richmond, VA, and by a news report on Channel 4 WNBC News. Many thanks to our corporate partner **AT&T**, who supported our social media campaign and our efforts to engage young people in community service.

Partner Spotlight: AT&T

AT&T is a supporter of Union Settlement and has been for five years. The company's dedication to creating opportunity for young people has led them to contribute to our College Readiness Program which helps hundreds of young people each year achieve the dream of going to college. The vast majority of these students are the first in their families to do so.

"AT&T shares Union Settlement's commitment to helping young people graduate from high school and prepare for success in college and in their careers. The College Readiness Program ensures that students can obtain the education that is critical for today's workforce," said **Marissa Shorenstein**, New York State President, AT&T. "We are proud to support the essential work that Union Settlement does to help so many young people reach their goals."

AT&T is also a wonderful resource and partner to Union Settlement, and an acknowledged leader in creating a safe and welcoming workplace for LGBTQ employees and their family members. **David Kirby**, of the LEAGUE at AT&T, spoke about LGBTQ inclusivity in the workplace at a Safe Space Network Community Forum held earlier this year at our Washington Houses Community Center. In addition, AT&T has been Union Settlement's partner on #GivingTuesday the past two years.

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"We are so pleased to have AT&T's support of our programs and to partner with them on #GivingTuesday," said **David Nocenti**, Executive Director. "Through these efforts AT&T is helping to build the vitality and success of the East Harlem community."

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237 East 104th Street | New York, NY 10029

Save The Date!
The Solutions Benefit
May 5, 2015