

THE

UNION SETTLEMENT

CHRONICLE



Science and Technology for All in East Harlem

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Fall 2015 • Science & Technology

A Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends of Union Settlement:

Union Settlement is dedicated to bringing resources to the East Harlem community. In this issue you will learn how we educate people of all ages in science, technology and math.

In today's world, you need to use computers and the Internet to apply for a job, prepare to take the high school equivalency exam, follow

your child's progress in school, compare prices, connect with far flung family members and so much more. That is why our computer labs are always in demand.

We also offer stimulating and rigorous programming for our youth to nurture and develop their interest in the sciences. Given the significant underrepresentation of African Americans and Latinos in these fields, we put particular emphasis on STEM education in our youth programs -- from classes in robotics and animation to internships with researchers.

Finally, I want to welcome **Ruth Pachman** as our new Chair of the Board of Directors and thank **Reginald Harwell** for his service as Chair during the last three years. Ruth joined Union Settlement's Board in 1995, and has contributed greatly to strengthening our organization's communications, financial health, and capacity to provide high impact social services. She is a great advocate for Union Settlement and will be a wonderful leader of our Board.

David Nocenti
Executive Director

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by the numbers

413 middle school students attended our after school programs this year, improving their academic skills and engaging in modern dance, computer animation and drama activities.

Science and Technology for All in East Harlem

As technology plays an ever-increasing role in the world, community residents of all ages can count on our computer labs and classes to help them stay engaged and learn new skills.

Sacy Ortiz, a longtime participant in the Corsi Senior Center, has been taking computer classes for about three years. “If you don’t use the computer, you’re lost,” Sacy said. Through the computer classes, Sacy has learned how to



Sacy Ortiz, Corsi Senior Center participant

write emails and send pictures to her family.

“Older adults cannot travel as much as they would like,” added Union Settlement’s Senior Services Director **Maria Alejandro**. “Computers make it so they can get medical information as needed or contact family and friends.”

Science, technology and math are highly emphasized in our Youth programs. “People of color are underrepresented in STEM fields,” Union Settlement Youth Services Director **Steven Portericker** said. “We want to engage our young people in science and technology early, so they can be inspired to take on these careers in the future.” In the coming year, children, teens and young adults are being exposed to computer classes, robotics lessons, animation courses and many other activities that combine STEM learning with creativity.

Union Settlement encourages everyone to learn more about science and technology at any life stage, whether it is an adult learning how to create a resume and attach it to an email, a young person working on robotics or a senior citizen connecting with their loved ones.

“If you don’t use the computer, you’re lost.”

-- Sacy Ortiz

725 seniors participated in cultural activities, computer classes and wellness programs last year.

600 adult students accessed educational classes including English for Speakers of Other Languages, basic literacy, bilingual high school equivalency preparation and computer skills.

Community Alliance Expo Connects Locals to Resources



"I came here to learn more about the requirements to start my business and to network."

-- Michele Walker

The East Harlem Community Alliance (EHCA) is a consortium of more than 100 non-profits, businesses, religious organizations and government agencies working together to enhance the vitality and well-being of East Harlem. On August 20, 2015 the EHCA hosted an expo bringing together resources for the neighborhood. Nearly 150 local residents and business people attended the event.

"I came here to learn more about the requirements to start my business and to network," said **Michele Walker**, an expo attendee and former Business Development Center student. The expo brought much needed information on how to prepare for the modern workforce and develop strategic business plans.

East Harlem's unemployment rate in 2013 was at 6.2% and at the same time (only a few short blocks south) the Upper East Side had an unemployment rate of 3.6%. The EHCA Expo aimed to address these issues by bringing more attention to the needs of area businesses by connecting entrepreneurs with other business people and potential clients. The expo also sought to guide job seekers to employment within their own neighborhood.

Donor Profile: Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation

The Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation has been a loyal supporter of our work for more than 30 years and the Abrons family has been

part of the settlement house community for 120 years! **Richard Abrons**, President of the Foundation shared some of his family's history.

In 1896 **Lillian Wald**, who founded Henry Street Settlement, visited Richard's widowed grandmother. Her five children were starving and ill. Lillian tended to the sick ones and placed three of the children, including Richard's mother, at the Hebrew Home until his

Staff Spotlight: Prosper Udogwu

Union Settlement instructor **Dr. Prosper Udogwu** is passionate about education. “Education is my obsession,” Prosper shared. “It is the gateway to prosperity.”

Prosper works with students ages 16 and older who have become disconnected from traditional school pathways. These students are eager to pursue educational opportunities, that are only available to those with a high school education. Prosper is a dedicated teacher who builds skills and confidence of his students.

With the introduction of the new high school equivalency exam to New York in January 2014, Prosper has improved the curriculum to meet the new standards. While many of his students still choose to take the paper-based exam, by 2017 the exam will be entirely computer-based. He notes that many students do not feel comfortable with computers, let alone

immigrant grandmother could support her family. **Herbert Lehman**, another key early leader in the settlement house community and a New York State Governor, loaned Richard’s father money to go to college.

As a Board member of GrowNYC, Richard recruited **Gerard Lordahl**, who became Director of Open Space Greening at GrowNYC, and together they helped to build gardens with



with the subjects of math and science that account for a large portion of the exams. “I diffuse their fears by emphasizing the fundamentals in my class,” Prosper explained.

“He’s patient and he’s kind,” said **Jonathan Vazquez**, a program participant. So far this year, six out of nine students in Prosper’s class who have taken the exam have passed (the others are still awaiting their results).

Union Settlement and with Hope Community. In 1992 Richard and Gerard were part of the team that constructed El Sitio Feliz, Union Settlement’s community garden, and painted the mural along the west wall with staff and community members.

We thank the Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation for its support and dedication to sustaining life changing services in East Harlem.

Science Week at Drew University

For over 50 years, the Union Settlement College Readiness Program (USCRP) has led thousands of young people through the transition from New York City public high school to higher education. This past July, that tradition continued when program partner Drew University welcomed college hopefuls from our program.

During a week on campus, STEM-focused

(Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) students experienced collegiate life. “Classes are taught by regular Drew professors, designed to introduce students to a field they might not have encountered or to show them that subjects they have already studied may be taught differently in college,” says **Wendy Kolmar**, Drew’s English department chair and professor of women’s and gender studies. “For Science Week, we try to include different and highly interactive classes that allow them to experience a variety of science fields.”

Participants left enlightened and empowered in their educational journey, saying they “got a sense of the college life” and found a new field of interest. Bronx High School of Science Class of 2016 student **Jenice Ko** became enamored of Drew, and she discovered a desire to “attend a college with a small undergrad population.”



Union Settlement College Readiness Program participants (center) with the Drew University mentors

Union Settlement's NYC Marathon Team

For the sixth year, Union Settlement has a wonderful team of runners for the TCS New York City Marathon:

Tory Dube
Daniel Goldhagen
Maggie Lawrence-Dwyer
Melissa Mapes
Louise Mullan
Brianna Ryan
Patrick Sullivan
Douglas Woods

A big thank you to Patrick Sullivan who is running a second marathon for Union Settlement. Please join us on Sunday, November 1st at 114th Street and 1st Avenue to cheer on and support our team!

You can support our runners by visiting www.crowdrise.com/UnionNYC2015

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Union Settlement is an on-the-ground resource for East Harlem residents of all ages, and a passionate advocate for the needs of underserved communities. Since opening our doors in 1895, we have brought education, wellness and community-building programs to our neighborhood, empowering New Yorkers with opportunities to better their lives. With a staff of 400 and services that impact 10,000 people, Union Settlement is building the vitality and success of East Harlem. For more information, visit www.unionsettlement.org.

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