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## **THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST SUPPORTS THE WORK OF UNION SETTLEMENT WITH TWO LARGE GRANTS**

### ***Funds will Support Two Promising Initiatives in East Harlem***

NEW YORK, NY – Union Settlement ([unionsettlement.org](http://unionsettlement.org)) today announced the award of two large grants from The New York Community Trust ([nycommunitytrust.org](http://nycommunitytrust.org)). The first of the two grants will support expansion of a high-impact literacy curriculum, *Photos and Me*, for elementary school children whose families speak a language other than English at home. This grant, totaling \$439,000, comes from the Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education and will allow the *Photos and Me Program* to serve eight schools in the upcoming school year. A second award of \$50,000 will support the East Harlem Community Alliance, a vital resource for businesses and community-based organizations in East Harlem.

“These grants will help to sustain the vital education, wellness and community building programs that we offer to people of all ages here in East Harlem,” said David Nocenti, Executive Director of Union Settlement. “On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers and especially the families we serve, we extend our gratitude to the New York Community Trust for this generous support of our work.”

“The Brooke Astor Fund supports promising programs that improve the literacy skills of students in under-resourced City schools. Our continued support for the *Photos and Me Program* reflects impressive results in its first two years of implementation,” said Shawn Morehead, Program Director for Education at The New York Community Trust. “Brooke Astor wanted every New Yorker to be able to read and write. We are honoring her legacy with our continued support of this program, and we hope to see it replicated around the country.”

### **The Photos and Me Program**

*The Photos and Me Program* helps bilingual second graders to improve their English language comprehension skills, learn academic vocabulary and cultivate critical perspectives. The program combines photography and oral storytelling with nonfiction reading and writing. Children write informational texts inspired by their photos and videos of their neighborhoods, families, friends, and homes. “The program is built on having the children explore their lives and cultures, and helps them develop literacy skills through this exploration,” said Harriet Stein, Union Settlement’s Director of Literacy Programs, who leads the Photos and Me Program. “The program was designed to connect children’s literacy development with their own cultures and languages. This honors their experiences while actively engaging them in the learning process.”

The program is provided in partnership with María Paula Ghiso and Patricia Martínez-Álvarez, Assistant Professors at Teachers College, Columbia University who developed the research-based curriculum. *Photos and Me* addresses the documented gap between methods of literacy instruction used in schools and the experiences of linguistically and culturally diverse students. In East Harlem, 53% of residents speak languages other than English in the home.

“We are thrilled to work with a community-based organization like Union Settlement, which brings a wealth of knowledge and experience about the East Harlem community, and has been a strong partner in implementing our curriculum,” said María Paula Ghiso and Patricia Martínez-Álvarez of Teachers College, Columbia University. “The students in our program have shown improvement in their literacy skills as a result of instruction that mobilizes their cultural experiences and linguistic resources for reading and writing. We are thankful for the continuing support of the Brooke Astor Fund, and we look forward to continuing our work with Union Settlement.”

This grant will enable Union Settlement to expand the reach of this project in eight local public schools to include students in third grade. The Trust has supported the *Photos and Me* Program since its launch in 2014.

### **East Harlem Community Alliance**

The East Harlem Community Alliance ([www.eastharlemalliance.org](http://www.eastharlemalliance.org)) is a consortium of over 100 businesses, nonprofits, religious organizations and governmental entities located in East Harlem. The Alliance is driven by four initiatives that enhance the local community: *Buy East Harlem*, *Hire East Harlem*, *Serve East Harlem*, and *Promote East Harlem*.

The New York Community Trust provided start-up and core funding for the East Harlem Community Alliance to increase awareness, participation and engagement in economic activity and resources for East Harlem residents, workers, and nonprofits in both 2013 and 2014. This renewed grant will allow Union Settlement to expand the Alliance’s role as a vital resource for business and community-based organizations in East Harlem. This includes initiatives to promote the Alliance to East Harlem organizations, residents and providers through increasing membership, providing vital community resources and facilitating stronger community networks.

### **About Union Settlement**

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 more than 350 and services that impact 10,000 people, Union Settlement is building the vitality and success of East Harlem. For more information, please visit [unionsettlement.org](http://unionsettlement.org).

### **About The New York Community Trust**

Since 1924, The New York Community Trust has been the home of charitable New Yorkers who share a passion for the City and its suburbs—and who are committed to improving them. The Trust supports an array of effective nonprofits that help make the City a vital and

secure place to live, learn, work, and play, while building permanent resources for the future. The Trust welcomes new donors. Information at [nycommunitytrust.org](http://nycommunitytrust.org).

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