Mental Health Services
Find out how your support helps Union Settlement combat East Harlem’s high mental illness rates.

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Meals on Wheels
More than 40 years of delivering nourishment and personal connection to East Harlem’s homebound seniors.

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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 over 450 and services that impact 10,000 people, Union Settlement is building the vitality and success of East Harlem.

Executive Director
David Nocenti

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Photos by Karen Smul & Jason Rost
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These are trying times for immigrant families – particularly those with members who are eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

DACA covers young undocumented immigrants who were brought into this country as children, and has shielded them from deportation for the past five years.

On September 5, however, President Trump announced that he was ending the program and giving Congress six months to pass a replacement program. If no replacement bill is passed, then DACA residents will face deportation as early as next March.

This is a humanitarian tragedy. Most DACA recipients came to the United States when they were six years old or younger, which means this is the only country they know. Many have younger siblings who were born in the United States and therefore are citizens and cannot be deported.

The President’s action threatens to literally tear these families apart.

There are over 30,000 DACA-eligible residents in New York City, and the impact is felt particularly hard here in East Harlem. For over a century, Union Settlement has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for immigrant families from all over the world. Each day we provide them with child care, after-school programs, mental health services, English language classes, job training, and so much more. In this newsletter you’ll find a selection of these important services profiled.

We know these families well, and know them to be hard-working, dedicated, loving, compassionate and patriotic. We will continue to advocate on their behalf, and try to convince the President and Congress to preserve DACA and allow these young immigrants to remain in the country and continue to build their futures here.

—David Nocenti
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Your gift helps us save lives. Here’s how.
Meet Noel.

Noel Ayala
Mental Health Participant and Substance Abuse Counselor

“Union Settlement believed in a life worth living for me even when I didn’t. Thank you...for having the vision and practice that produce miracles and to all you kind people that support the miracle.”

Noel is particularly effective in his work because he has personally experienced the strength, dedication and commitment it takes to overcome mental illness. Like many others, Noel’s parents suffered from untreated mental health issues and substance abuse. Growing up in an environment of abuse and trauma had a long-term impact on him, and he suffered the consequences. Noel battled post-traumatic stress disorder, severe depression, and addiction, and was suicidal. During his darkest hours, Noel lost sight of any joy in his life and became isolated. “I could barely leave my apartment for four years.”

Noel felt something had to change. When a family member encouraged him to see a therapist, Noel decided to give counseling a try. He was able to access the help he needed at Union Settlement’s Johnson Counseling Center.

Over the next three years, Noel experienced an incredible improvement in his quality of life. With the help of his counselors, Noel was able to heal from his negative experiences and began to live life to the fullest. “Union Settlement believed in a life worth living for me even when I didn’t,” Noel reflected.

Today, Noel takes his recovery one day at a time. He gives back to his community through his work as a substance abuse counselor, and his personal success is a source of inspiration to the people he helps. “I want to thank Union Settlement for having the vision and practice that produce miracles. And I want to thank all the people who support this miracle.”

East Harlem has the city’s highest rate of hospitalization due to mental illness.

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<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Age 12 and under</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 13-20</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 20-55</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 55 and over</td>
<td>9%</td>
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Ages served by Union Settlement’s Mental Health Services in FY 2017

Your support allows Union Settlement to provide much needed help to nearly 1,000 residents suffering from mental illness each year.
At Union Settlement, we believe that a community needs access to comprehensive, affordable mental health care services to thrive. That is why we have provided critical mental health services to East Harlem for over 60 years.

Poverty substantially increases the emotional burdens many of our residents shoulder, as do high rates of violence, substance abuse, child abuse, and trauma. Our wide array of services are strength-based and help to develop resilience that enable individuals to heal and go on to lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Our dedicated and compassionate staff provide a wide range of culturally sensitive mental health counseling services in our eight clinics and local schools in East Harlem. Many of our staff members, including a third of our therapists and nearly half of our psychiatrists, are bilingual.

Last year, Union Settlement helped nearly 1,000 children, adolescents and adults obtain the care they need, and we strive to increase access to our services in the coming year.

In March we opened satellite mental health clinics in three of our seven Early Childhood Education centers. Children and families served by any of our Early Childhood Education sites or our Family Child Care Network can access services at those centers as well as at our main clinic, Johnson Counseling Center.

In addition to traditional talk therapy, we’ve recently introduced creative arts therapies in recognition that healing is very individualized. We have included art, music, drama and movement therapy in an effort to better meet the needs of the community.

“Often our clients come to us suffering from a lethal absence of hope. Our work aims to nurture resilience and help build meaningful lives,” says Bonnie Miller-Ladds, Director of Mental Health Services.
Union Settlement is honored to count Dr. Merryl H. Tisch as one of our most generous supporters.

Dr. Tisch served on the New York State Board of Regents for 20 years, including serving as Chancellor from 2009 to 2016. In that role, Dr. Tisch was responsible for setting the state’s education policy and overseeing both public and private education throughout New York. In June 2017, Dr. Tisch was appointed as a member of the SUNY Board of Trustees.

“Dr. Tisch is a renowned educator and tireless leader, who has dedicated her entire career to improving the quality of education in New York,” said Executive Director David Nocenti. “She understands the importance not just of high quality public schools, but also how important education is in overcoming the disadvantages faced by residents of low-income communities like East Harlem.”

Education is a core component of Union Settlement’s work, including early childhood centers, youth afterschool and summer programs, preparing students for college, providing English language classes for new immigrants, and high school equivalency preparation in English and Spanish.

“I am delighted to support Union Settlement’s work in East Harlem,” said Dr. Tisch. “They are a premier organization providing vital educational services to East Harlem residents from infancy through adulthood. Their programs help bridge the educational divide, and help set both youth and adults on a course towards success.”

Dr. Tisch’s generous support has allowed Union Settlement to enhance the educational programs that we offer to thousands of residents each year. We are deeply thankful for that support, and for everything she has done, and continues to do, to improve the lives of those in need.

“I am delighted to support Union Settlement’s work in East Harlem. They are a premier organization providing vital educational services to East Harlem residents from infancy through adulthood.”
Isolation and neglect plague our homebound seniors
Meals on Wheels provides daily nourishment and companionship

Providing services to seniors has long been a critical priority of Union Settlement, and Meals on Wheels has been part of that mission for over 40 years.

David Villega (pictured below) had worked in our Meals on Wheels program since 1992 preparing and personally delivering meals to seniors. After 26 years serving our community’s homebound neighbors, he retired this past August.

“It is a very important program for this community,” said David. “A lot of seniors don’t get any food, or see anyone else throughout the day. Many times I was the only other human they would see for weeks.”

Our Meals on Wheels program currently serves approximately 520 homebound seniors each day. These members of the community include people from a variety of backgrounds. David recalled befriending seniors who came from all sorts of careers, “from dancers, to doctors, to people who worked in the movies.”

He went on to add: “I enjoyed all of my time with them, and will never forget it.”
Upcoming Events

Toasting Union Settlement - Thursday, October 26, 6:30 - 8:30pm
Union Johnson Early Childhood Center (1829 Lexington Ave at 113th Street)
To purchase a sponsorship or tickets, go to unionsettlement.org/toasting,
email spuder@unionsettlement.org or call 212-828-6024

NYC Marathon Cheering Party - Sunday, November 5, 1:30 - 3:30pm
Jefferson Senior Center, 2205 1st Ave (between 113th and 114th).
For more information, email esolomon@unionsettlement.org

Holiday Toy Drive - November/December
For more information, call 646-672-5082 or email cvalbuenacastor@unionsettlement.org

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