



# UNION SETTLEMENT CHRONICLE FALL 2017

## **Meals on Wheels**

More than 40 years of delivering nourishment and personal connection to East Harlem's homebound seniors.

**Page 7**

## **Mental Health Services**

Find out how **your support** helps Union Settlement combat East Harlem's high **mental illness rates.**

**Page 5**





# UNION SETTLEMENT CHRONICLE

## Contents

- FRONT COVER** **David Villega**, recently retired after 26 years of working with our Meals on Wheels program
- 3** **Executive Director's Message:** Our immigrant residents face new fears with changes to DACA
- 4** **Participant Spotlight:** Meet Noel - a participant in our Mental Health Services who is now a substance abuse counselor
- 5** **Program Spotlight:** Mental Health Services - combating high mental illness rates in East Harlem
- 6** **Donor Spotlight:** Dr. Merryl H. Tisch's passion for education brought her support to Union Settlement
- 7** **Program Spotlight:** Meals on Wheels continues to provide meals and companionship to homebound seniors

**BACK COVER** **Upcoming Events**

**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

**Union Settlement**  
237 East 104th Street  
New York, NY 10029  
[www.unionsettlement.org](http://www.unionsettlement.org)

---

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

---

### Threats to DACA hit close to home in East Harlem



**David Nocenti**  
Executive Director

 @davidnocenti

**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.**

**T**hese 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, afterschool 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.”

**N**oel 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.



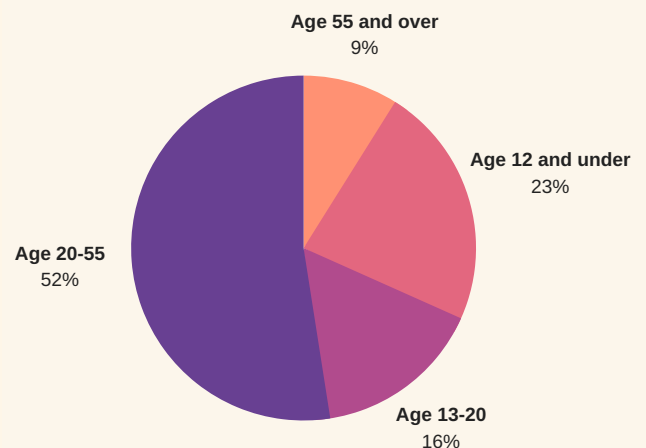
Over the next three years, Noel experienced an incredible improvement in his quality of life. With the help of his counselors, Noel was able to heal from his negative experiences and began to live life to the fullest. “Union Settlement believed in a life worth living for me even when I didn't,” Noel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

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.



# East Harlem continues to struggle with alarmingly high mental illness rates

Union Settlement's Mental Health Services strives to change that



**“Our work aims to nurture resilience and help build meaningful lives.”**

Bonnie Miller-Ladds, *Director of Mental Health Services*

**A**t 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.



## DONOR SPOTLIGHT

# Dr. Merryl H. Tisch

Meet a philanthropist who supports East Harlem families



**"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."**

**U**nion 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.



Student in Union Settlement's Rising Stars Program



# Isolation and neglect plague our homebound seniors

Meals on Wheels provides daily nourishment and companionship

**P**roviding 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."

With your support we serve

**8,000**

nutritious meals **each week** to East Harlem children, youth, seniors, and homebound community members.



David Villega (far right) recently retired from his work in our Meals on Wheels program after 26 years

# UNION SETTLEMENT

David Nocenti, Executive Director

## Board of Directors

Ruth E. Pachman, Chair  
Eli Gross, Vice Chair  
Caren A. Heller, M.D., Vice Chair  
Reginald E. Harwell, Treasurer  
Christopher Quiñones, Assistant Treasurer  
Gina Rusch, Secretary  
James B. Lynch, Assistant Secretary

Ed Adler  
William Arnold  
Kate Buford  
Helen V. Cantwell  
David Castelblanco  
Susan Chapman  
Denise Colon  
Scott Cooper, M.D.  
Francesca Curtin  
Kalaivani S. Duane  
Robert V. Edgar  
Ricardo R. Granderson  
Martin T. Hamilton  
Laura Colin Klein

Jack Leventhal  
A. Slade Mills, Jr.  
Nizan Geslevich Packin, Esq.  
Maxine L. Rockoff, Ph.D.  
Julio Rodriguez  
Andrew Schwalm  
Robin Sparkman  
Barbara Sternberger  
Szilvia Szmuk-Tanenbaum, Ph.D.  
David C. Thomas, M.D., M.H.P.E.  
Kate B. Townsend  
Drew Warshaw  
Brittley Wise  
Dawn M. Zappetti

## 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](http://unionsettlement.org/toasting),  
email [spuder@unionsettlement.org](mailto: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](mailto:esolomon@unionsettlement.org)

Holiday Toy Drive - November/December

For more information, call 646-672-5082 or email [cvalbuenacastor@unionsettlement.org](mailto:cvalbuenacastor@unionsettlement.org)

EMPOWERING EAST HARLEM SINCE 1895

[www.unionsettlement.org](http://www.unionsettlement.org)



[facebook.com/unionsettlement](https://facebook.com/unionsettlement)



[@unionsettlement](https://twitter.com/unionsettlement)