

# UNION SETTLEMENT

## ANNUAL OUTCOMES REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2020

We are very pleased to present Union Settlement’s Annual Outcomes Report for Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). Union Settlement serves more than 10,000 residents across six major program areas at more than a dozen locations throughout East Harlem, one of New York’s lowest-income communities.

This past year was different from any other in living memory. After eight months of relatively normal operations, the world changed seemingly overnight in mid-March. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the ensuing economic shutdowns, have had a profound effect on all aspects of our lives and the work we do. With the exception of our Meals on Wheels program, which had to continue meal deliveries even in the height of the pandemic, virtually all of our other programs had to quickly transform from in-person to remote operations, with the vast majority of our staff suddenly working from home, but still providing services to those in need.

East Harlem is an underserved community that has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, skyrocketing unemployment, the economic downturn, and social injustice and upheaval. The residents of this community need our programs and services more than ever. As we are now beginning to re-open, we remain committed to ensuring that our neighbors receive the assistance they need to survive and thrive. The pages that follow contain a comprehensive list of our achievements, with special attention paid to the changes and adaptations that we made during the pandemic.

### ***Early Childhood Education***

Union Settlement is the seventh largest provider of early childhood education services in New York City, serving almost 700 children each year with a well-rounded program focused on cognitive, social, emotional, creative and physical development. We are a trusted provider of high-quality early childhood education, enabling families to work, seek employment or care for loved ones.

- The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to close our six *Early Childhood Education centers* and provide our supportive services to our children remotely. For the first time, we left the classrooms to engage in digital learning. We devised a remote learning plan with the following goals in mind: (1) to aid parents during distance learning periods, providing health checks, educational services and emotional support; (2) to create meaningful learning plans inclusive of all content areas (Education, Health & Family Engagement) in collaboration with parents/caregivers; and (3) to teach through virtual interactions, creating touch points to continue learning development outside of the classroom. Our teaching staff continued daily instruction offering remote learning sessions as well as parent workshops and supplemental Family learning connections.
- Our *Family Child Care Network* trains qualified neighborhood residents to set up their own home-based early education centers, fostering financial self-sufficiency for providers. Last fiscal year we had 43 providers caring for over 230 children using an evidence-based curriculum. We provide oversight and administrative support for all sites within the Network and an additional seven independent providers through our Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) contract. Due to the pandemic, many of our providers swiftly pivoted to distance learning, with some

providing limited in person care. Providers have remained diligent in providing a level of care for parents who had essential jobs and needed childcare.

- Union Settlement’s *Early Childhood Asthma Prevention Program* works to combat high rates of pediatric asthma in childcare facilities throughout East and Central Harlem. In FY 2020 we enrolled 2,872 children and provided asthma awareness training to 151 staff members and 204 parents. In addition, we provided Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plans to the 50 centers that we enrolled in the program. Our Health Specialist maintained regular contact through virtual health checks even during the pandemic, because it was imperative to ensure that all children who had Asthma Action Plans be contacted to ensure proper medication and protocols were in place.
- Grants from the Stella & Charles Guttman Foundation, the William and Dorothy O’Neill Foundation and the van Ameringen Foundation supported our *Early Childhood Mental Health Program*, through which we ensure that children from the ages of 0 to 5 who are at risk for negative developmental or mental health outcomes receive timely intervention and services. We have established licensed mental health clinics within our Union Carver, Union Johnson and Union Washington early childhood education centers to provide on-site services to children enrolled in any of our six ECE centers. The current health crisis—along with concurrent economic, employment and social upheavals—has created a particularly stressful time for the children and families we serve. As such, the social-emotional needs of our children are more important now than ever. Working in tandem with our Mental Health department—discussed in detail later in this report—the young children receiving services received regular scheduled sessions via telehealth.
- Since 2016, we have served as the lead agency of the Administration for Children’s Services’ *Community Partnership Program (CPP)* in East Harlem. In this capacity, we convene allied organizations from across East Harlem and beyond to provide services that benefit families and children in the neighborhood, utilizing a two-generational approach. The 2 Gen model allows our outreach team to identify conditions and important criteria for ensuring effective, results-oriented, equity-centered supports to achieve better outcomes for families. During the pandemic, CPP has focused on community outreach efforts and in keeping the community safe by providing PPE, hand sanitizer, fresh food and vegetable boxes, diapers, baby wipes and care packages to the community. To further support families, over \$40,000 in emergency COVID relief funding was distributed among our community partners, including Catholic Charities, Soup Kitchen of East Harlem, the Islamic Center, Bilingual Head Start, the Community Navigator Program, Barrier Free Living and Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service.
- Partnerships provide a variety of key enhancements to our programs. Arts Horizons provides circus arts, creative movement and international dance at two of our early childhood centers. In Metropolitan Hospital’s Teddy Bear Clinic, which visits our sites, children bring in stuffed animals and work with medical students and professionals to “examine” them, which helps them gain comfort with common medical equipment and procedures. Brick House Pantry promotes healthy eating habits in the home through interactive workshops for parents, covering meal planning, food shopping and stocking the pantry with healthy items. This school year our children participated in a variety of activities through UGOT Active Kids, to explore the elements of dance, music, and yoga to reap the benefits of physical exercise.
- *Cool Culture* is a membership-based program which allows families in our program to visit museums and cultural events throughout New York City for free. Although most of the city

closed down during the pandemic, through our partnership with Cool Culture our classrooms were able to take virtual trips from home, including virtual tours of museums and exhibits.

### ***Youth Services: In-School Programs***

Our Youth Services division provides robust afterschool and summer education, arts and recreation programs for children from kindergarten through high school. Through our programs, every year more than 1,700 eager and energetic children, teens and young adults actively seek and create opportunities to forge brighter futures. Many enter our elementary-age program and stay with us until they enter college. For them, we become a second family. When the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of public schools, our programming shifted to remote modalities as well. As outlined below, each of our programs provided tailored, responsive remote learning supports. Overall, a large portion of staff time was devoted to assisting students and their families—a majority of whom were not equipped for remote learning—in obtaining devices and technology required for the school’s remote learning program. These devices were supplied by the DOE and Union Settlement.

- We enrolled 350 children ages five to 12 in our lively *Rising Stars* after-school program at two East Harlem elementary schools and two community centers. Our program features year-round activities, including tutoring, computer instruction, visual and performing arts projects, recreation and a summer day camp. We also offer a unique program such as our popular circus arts programming, offered in conjunction with Marquis Studios, as well as an enriching visual arts program. In the summer of 2019 and the 2019-2020 school year we engaged the *Rising Stars* children in our highly successful literacy-building *Theme Teams* program—multi-week learning projects organized around a specific theme. This year’s theme was “A Wrinkle in Time,” where participants engaged in project-based learning activities, including STEM, dance and crafts, which centered around comparisons between different decades. Upon the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Rising Stars* programs quickly shifted to providing all services remotely. Participants were engaged in an array of virtual activities, including homework help, tutoring, fitness-related games, STEM activities and art projects. All participants were engaged in literacy and math skill building activities, including read-alouds, shared reading, community stories, and addition, subtraction, multiplication and division brain teasers. Participants took weekly virtual field trips to destinations such as Disneyland or Yosemite National Park. Social emotional learning also was a high priority for program staff, and we engaged participants through wellness checks twice a week.
- Our *Bridges* middle school program, operating out of four school-based sites, served 450 students with academic, personal and cultural enrichment, as well as our year-round *Middle School College Preparation Program*, designed to help students in East Harlem's middle schools gain admission to competitive high schools. In addition, we partnered with Arts Horizons, Improv 4 Kidz, Follow to Success (Girls Leadership Initiative), Taste Buds Kitchen, Flex NYC Dance Program and Soccer for Success, to offer high quality dance, yoga, Zumba, drumming, creative arts, cooking, improvisational theater, technology and drama activities during afterschool programming. We also offered Leadership Development and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) curricula, encouraging our students to develop key leadership skills through public speaking, critical thinking, debate and research in topics such as social injustice, environmental changes, community development, political awareness and advocacy efforts for summer funding. Upon the onset of the pandemic, the *Bridges* program quickly transitioned all services to remote modalities. Participants were engaged daily in a variety of remote activities, based on their interests and needs of their families. These included STEM, literacy, sports/fitness, art and dance activities. We provided leadership development opportunities by engaging our

students in the city-wide “Save Our Summer” campaign, which was successful in partially restoring the city-funded summer activities that were initially cancelled.

- Thanks to funding from the Joseph H. Flom Foundation, we continued our successful volunteer-based *Intergenerational Tutoring* program, which provides one-on-one literacy support to elementary school children, in kindergarten through third grade, who are referred by their classroom teachers. This is a critical age for literacy development, as students’ success in reading throughout their academic career is often essentially determined by the fourth grade. Eighty-five students in six East Harlem elementary schools were tutored by 51 older adults from the community, all of whom received training to build the children’s reading skills, self-esteem and positive attitudes towards learning. The coronavirus pandemic resulted in the program suspending in-person tutoring as schools closed across the city. We continued to encourage the development of literacy skills by having volunteers pre-record read alouds, which were passed along to students. This approach was identified by the Oasis Institute, which designed the Intergenerational Tutoring Program, as a best practice during the quarantine period.
- Our DYCD-funded *COMPASS High School* afterschool program served 51 high school freshmen and sophomores at Esperanza Preparatory Academy. The program provides counseling, tutoring, college preparation and team-building activities. Through a partnership with the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, graduate-level social work students worked with participants to develop goals and strengthen their social/emotional intelligence, support school retention and increase attendance. Participants engaged in enrichment activities including participating in the Esperanza Family Night Community Forum, cooking and nutrition classes, a robotics program, music and dance activities, and a spoken-word forum. Since 2017 we have also offered a *21st Century Community Learning Center* program within the same school, with a mission of uniting school, family and community to help young people achieve their full potential. We are serving 113 middle and high school students at Esperanza with services that emphasize personalized instruction, student wellness, readiness to learn, community partnerships and family engagement as key strategies to leverage better academic and social-emotional outcomes among high-need students. Key objectives of the program include increasing student attendance, providing mental health support for students and their families, and providing workshops for parents and families on topics including healthy living, college readiness and cyber-bullying prevention. During the quarantine, our interns continued their work with program participants remotely, and we took enrichment services online.

### ***Youth Services: Out-of-School Programs***

Among our older youth, we face a growing crisis: many of New York City’s young people ages 16-24 are neither attending school nor participating in the labor force. Conditions are particularly dire in communities such as ours. We serve approximately 620 out-of-school youth, almost exclusively African-American and Latino, who are more than twice as likely to be “disconnected” as white youth. Poverty, parenting responsibilities, low education levels and lack of job experience also play key roles. It is vitally important to reach out to these young people and provide early intervention before the cycle of unemployment, underemployment and, most of all, hopelessness continues. Facing low literacy, low self-esteem, learning disabilities and other obstacles, these young people sorely need help to build their futures. Our programs provide just this kind of help, and over time we have expanded our offerings to provide targeted services to at-risk and court involved youth.

- Our *Youth Opportunity Hub* program, which is funded by the Manhattan District Attorney’s office, is a key part of our youth services programming. The Hub provides case management and

wraparound services to youth throughout East Harlem. Youth are able to participate in recreational, educational, medical, arts, fitness and sports activities, while receiving supportive case management. Over the last year the Hub served 308 young people, while working with upwards of 20 partners including CBOs, government entities and law enforcement organizations. Program leadership has collaborated closely with the DA's office, NYPD and other frontline organizations working to reduce youth violence and gang involvement. The Hub's two centers are safe spaces for youth living in Washington and Jefferson Houses and the surrounding areas. The 2019-2020 program has been challenging due to the closures related to COVID-19. Fortunately, the program staff has been able to continue to provide supportive care to participants through virtual sessions, workshops, email connections and social media engagements. Youth were also supplied with care packages containing food and personal hygiene items, and assistance with accessing devices to engage in remote learning and other programming.

- We continued to make a difference among the high-risk, difficult-to-serve disconnected youth population through *Reconnect and Rise*, a rigorous program of educational, vocational and support services designed to help young men and women ages 16 to 24 who have left or been pushed out of school and are struggling in the job market. The program, which is now a part of our Youth Opportunity Hub, provides disconnected youth with a range of services, including high school equivalency (HSE) classes, educational workshops, tutoring, and connection to our college and career services. Most students enter the program performing below a ninth grade reading and/or math level and must pass through remedial instruction in order to enter HSE preparation. During FY20, we were able to enroll 69 participants, 15 of whom were working, which made it difficult for them to attend classes. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all high school equivalency sites were shut down, preventing many of our program participants from sitting for the exam. We requested test exemptions from the State Education Department for those students who needed to make up one subject area and were slated to test between March and May 2020, and several students received these exemptions and were granted their diplomas. In total 25 students passed the test and will be receiving their diplomas. Since March, classes were shifted to virtual sessions.
- We provide several types of employment services through our *Workforce Development* programs which are funded by Robin Hood (since 2013), HRA and the Department of Probation. Our flagship program, *Career Academy*, functions as both a training resource for job seekers and as a “no-fee” talent acquisition service for employers. Supporting young adults ages 17 to 24 who are neither in school nor employed, and in many instances coping with complex barriers to employment, the goal of Career Academy is to enhance a candidate's competitive positioning to enter the employment market and stay employed. This is accomplished by delivering a targeted and effective 24-cumulative-hour workshop series driven by critical employment disciplines and life skills, coupled with individual strategies that support placement and effect retention, wage gain and career advancement. This is followed by two weeks of intensive one-on-one and group follow-up, placement services, educational and social service referrals and retention. Though programming was affected by COVID-19 related shutdowns, we were able to serve 92 participants during the year. Of these, 45 were placed in full-time, part-time or temporary employment opportunities, and all 45 individuals also achieved a three-month retention milestone. During the quarantine, our workshop sessions were provided virtually, and participants worked closely with workforce staff on preparations for interviewing. We were also able to provide sector-based training to 37 young people through a partnership with Center Security. This includes OSHA 30, Security (8 and 16 hour), Site Safety and Flagging. We also provided subsidized internships to 20 young people through the HRA-funded *Work Progress Program*.

- Through our contract with the New York City Department of Probation, we continue to offer the *Advocacy, Intervene, Mentor* (AIM) program. This program provides a minimum of 15 hours of one-on-one mentoring per week to youth who are on probation and referred by DOP. Services include counseling, case management, home visits and life skills development. Each participant also attends monthly (or more, as needed) family team meetings with the program director, mentor and primary caregiver. AIM served 11 participants this year. During the latter part of the year and under COVID-related DOP guidelines, services were provided virtually for all participants. Mentors and probation officers held Zoom-based sessions with participants and their families. Occasional face-to-face meetings took place in open spaces, adhering to social distancing guidelines.
- Support from NYCHA also allowed us to offer daily (seven nights per week) sports, arts and life skills programming at three community centers in July and August 2019. This is an intervention and prevention program designed to get youth off the streets and involved with positive activities. In the summer of 2019 we were able to work with youth ages 13 to 24, providing activities and services including basketball, volleyball, touch football, Hip Hop dance, poetry, spoken word performance, music production and DJ techniques, visual arts and prevention services and trips. The program served over 150 young people—up from 100 in the previous year. This was our fifth year of running this summer program; unfortunately, the pandemic kept us from offering this program in the summer of 2020, but we hope to participate in this initiative again in summer 2021.

### ***College Readiness***

Founded in 1964, our *College Readiness* program has provided more than 20,000 low-income students with guidance and encouragement to pursue higher learning. We provide college and financial aid counseling, as well as tutoring, SAT preparation, college trips and summer enrichment programs.

- This year, thanks to generous grants from the Pinkerton Foundation and GS Humane, we served 211 high school seniors and 137 high school juniors at Talent Unlimited High School and Esperanza Preparatory Academy, helping them complete graduation requirements and navigate the college selection, admissions and financial aid processes. Once schools closed under the pandemic, our College Counselors stayed in close contact with high school seniors, helping to guide them through the process as they received college acceptances, pursued financial aid and made decisions on where to go to college. Ninety-five percent (200) of our seniors graduated and 92% of our seniors (194) went on to college in the fall. Seventy-seven percent of those heading to college will be attending four-year colleges and 12% are enrolling in two-year schools. Eighty-eight students will be attending CUNY schools and 28 will be attending SUNY schools.
- We offered the ninth year of our successful *Program Alumni College Transition* (PACT) initiative, designed to guide graduates of our *College Readiness* program through the difficult transition to college. Many of our most promising young people head off to college ready to take on the world, only to find themselves intimidated by campus life, unprepared for first-year demands and generally isolated from support systems. Nationally, college retention rates among low-income, minority students remain a major struggle; students whose parents never attended or completed college are twice as likely to leave before their second year. The PACT program provides crucial academic, social, and emotional support and links participants to on-campus support services and activities. Our 2019-2020 PACT cohort comprised 50 students, who are attending Borough of Manhattan Community College, Bronx Community College, La Guardia

Community College, Hostos Community College, City College, New York City College of Technology, York College, John Jay College and Monroe College.

- Twenty-seven students enrolled in our six-week *Summer Writing Program*, which introduces participants to different styles of writing, improves their public speaking skills and increases their college awareness. In addition to taking writing and public speaking workshops, offered in conjunction with the House of SpeakEasy, students visited several colleges (including Brooklyn College, Columbia University, New York University, the Fashion Institute of Technology, and Hunter College).

### ***Adult Education***

In East Harlem, 25% of adults have less than a high school education. Only 38% have a college degree, compared with Manhattan's rate of 64% and New York City's overall rate of 43%. Many residents are illiterate, including immigrants who lack literacy even in their native language; 20% of residents do not speak English "very well." One of the area's largest adult education providers, we are committed to helping our neighbors overcome these obstacles and take vital steps toward achieving their educational and career goals. We strive to close the education-unemployment loop by giving individuals the opportunity to improve their English language skills, earn their high school diploma (in Spanish, in many cases) and prepare for a career in health care. Our student population is approximately 70% Latino, representing around 13 different Latin American countries of origin. About 10% of our students self-identify as Black or African American, many coming from West Africa and Haiti, with another large group coming from the Middle East, primarily Yemen. Three-quarters of our students are female, and two-thirds have no high school diploma.

- Last year, we assisted over 390 students through a menu of eight English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes and six Adult Basic Education and High School Equivalency (ABE/HSE) classes (in English and in Spanish). We estimate that approximately 75% of all our students moved up at least one level consistent with previous years. Of the 189 ABE/HSE students we served, 26 applied to take the TASC high school equivalency exam, five sat for the test before testing sites were shut down due to the pandemic and one passed.
- Funding from the Pine Tree Foundation has allowed us to provide ABE/HSE instruction in Spanish. Spanish-language academic instruction will enable these individuals to significantly reduce the amount of time it will take them to earn high school diplomas, particularly since the TASC can be taken in Spanish. Last year we served 50 students in two Spanish ABE/HSE classes.
- For the past 27 years, we have collaborated with the prestigious 92nd Street Y on our *Writing Through Reading* program, which this year helped all of our students improve their reading and writing skills by reading contemporary literature, enjoying visits from renowned authors and producing their own creative writing.
- The pandemic quickly changed our program offerings as we shifted all classes to a remote learning model on March 23, 2020. We saw a decline in participation due to a range of challenges, including students lacking internet-enabled devices or home Wi-Fi services, lack of knowledge of how to use devices, loss of employment, COVID-19 exposure, etc. Our goal has been to address and accommodate these issues and to help our students continue on their paths to their educational goals. Students were given the option of attending remote learning with their own devices, borrowing tablets from us, completing and submitting hard-copy homework packets sent with return postage, connecting with instructors one-on-one remotely for

clarification on assignments, and changing class the class schedule to accommodate outside conflicts. These options were well-received by our participants, and aided in increasing engagement. We also reached out to participants who had stopped attending classes before the pandemic due to scheduling conflicts, and offered them the opportunity to attend virtual classes, which resulted in an increase in enrollment.

### *Senior Services*

Services for seniors have always been a critical priority—we have been providing services targeted directly to older East Harlem residents for over a century, and Meals on Wheels for over 40 years. Economically struggling and often living alone, our community’s senior population relies heavily on Union Settlement to help meet their everyday needs, including mitigating feelings of isolation. We provide a wide range of services to more than 3,000 older adults each year.

- Our five *Senior Centers* offer daily group meals (41,394 this past year), of evidence-based exercise activities, benefits assistance counseling, nutrition classes, health and wellness programs, computer classes, games, and arts and cultural activities to over 1,900 seniors every year. The seniors who come to our centers attend for many reasons, but healthy food and socialization/companionship are two of the most powerful. Living alone, as most do, many suffer from extreme isolation and loneliness. Many will describe the center as their “second home”. Our fifth Senior Center, at Wagner Houses, opened in November 2019, and offered a wide range of services to the seniors of our community including serving a nutritious meal Monday-Friday. At the onset of the pandemic all five of our senior centers quickly went from providing services onsite to operating via telephone and digital platforms such as Zoom. We initially provided “Grab and Go” meals to our seniors to pick up at our centers, and then transitioned to serving as a meal distributor for the NYC Department for the Aging. Finally, our staff became authorized enrollers for the City’s GetFood program, and we were able to enroll over 600 seniors for at-home food delivery. We have continued to provide case assistance, information and referral and telephone reassurance via telephone and have also been able to host activities and classes such as meditation and storytelling virtually.
- Our Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) Program continues to serve older residents of Franklin Plaza, a 14-building, 1,632-unit Mitchell Lama development in East Harlem. About half of the units in Franklin Plaza are home to at least one senior, totaling over 1,000 senior residents in the complex. Our strong partnerships with Franklin Plaza Apartments, the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, the New York Academy of Medicine and Mount Sinai continue to enhance the level of service provided to the 921 seniors who have now registered for services through the NORC. Over one third of our participants are of Chinese heritage, an underserved population in East Harlem. The NORC also hosts graduate-level social work interns from all of the major social work schools in the area, as well as nursing students from Hunter/Bellevue School of Nursing, Columbia University and the CUNY School of Professional Services. Additional funding secured from the New York State Office for the Aging in spring 2019 enabled us to expand our on-site nursing services to five days a week and hire an MSW-level Spanish-speaking program supervisor. Since the start of the pandemic, NORC staff have continued to provide case management and healthcare management via phone and online platforms. NORC staff have also run errands for our clients, picked up important documents and delivered masks and food in order for seniors to stay safely at home. In order to stay connected, NORC staff are leading support groups and Zoom workshops, and we call our seniors daily to provide emotional support and essential information on benefits, entitlements and food resources.

- Our Meals on Wheels program currently serves more than 500 homebound seniors each day and over the course of the past year we provided over 118,000 meals to homebound seniors. Our Meals on Wheels program is one of the great success stories of Union Settlement's response to the pandemic; this program fills the most basic need for our most vulnerable population, and yet is the least adaptable to remote models. During the pandemic we were forced to change the logistics of our Meals on Wheels operation, but we have not stopped serving the seniors of our community. Our delivery schedule and method changed in order to protect our seniors and our staff; we went from delivering a week's worth of meals in six deliveries to a week's worth of meals in four deliveries. We also changed the way we hand over the meals, by leaving the meals in a bag on the client's doorknob to reduce contact with this vulnerable population. We continue to deliver monthly calendars with announcements and invitations to virtual programming to our clients to aid in reducing social isolation. Our much loved and sorely needed *Dinner Project* provides a supplemental sandwich to Meals-on-Wheels clients two days a week. The *Dinner Project* is supported entirely through private gifts and grants rather than by government funding. Many of the clients who receive the sandwiches have reported to us in past years that without the sandwich, they would often be forced to subsist on one meal a day.
- The *Seniors United to Serve* volunteer program, funded by a generous grant from the Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, remains an important part of our seniors' lives. Until March 2020, approximately 95 senior volunteers worked on average of four hours a week running exercise and walking groups, planning recreational trips and celebrations, assisting in arts and crafts, making and packing sandwiches, serving light breakfast and lunch, calling bingo numbers, setting up tables for events, and many other activities. They also keep in touch with our frail, homebound, and ill clients by making home visits and telephone calls to provide a vital lifeline to the outside world and reduce social isolation. In addition, about 40 community service volunteers worked in our centers performing maintenance, clerical, and housekeeping tasks. During FY20, volunteers contributed almost 30,000 total hours of service to our programs. Throughout the pandemic, the entire Senior Services department has been working to make virtual activities accessible to our senior clients by offering virtual weekly meditation classes, bingo, storytelling workshops, concerts and more. Additionally, we have partnered with InfoTech High School and Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement, who have sent us four interns who spend 25 hours per week assisting with virtual programming.
- There has been a significant increase in East Harlem's Chinese population over the last decade, and China is now the third most prevalent country of origin for the neighborhood's foreign-born population (after Mexico and the Dominican Republic). There is a growing need to provide culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services to Chinese seniors in East Harlem. Funds from the Isaac H. Tuttle Fund and the New York City Council have allowed us to hire a full-time Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking case assistant to provide services to Chinese seniors living in East Harlem. The case assistant connects these seniors to services and resources that address needs related to nutrition, housing, medical care, transportation, physical safety, emotional wellbeing and socialization. Since the pandemic, efforts have concentrated not only on connecting our current Chinese speaking clients to essential services, but also receiving referrals from local elected officials and through the new Union Settlement Helpline. We also started a weekly support group through the popular WeChat app, to reduce social isolation.
- In a partnership with Sunnyside Community Services, we offer a comprehensive *Caregiver Support* program, housed at our Corsi Senior Center. A full time bilingual Social Worker provides referrals, resources and information for those who are serving as caregivers for friends and family members suffering with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. He also

provides assistance with managed long-term care and respite services for caregivers, both in-home and through adult day programs. This crucial service addresses a large unmet need in our community. Throughout the pandemic we have been able to continue to provide services to approximately 50 clients within the East Harlem community by shifting our efforts from in-person services to virtual and telephone programming and counseling.

- Union Settlement continues to operate our “Be A Buddy” program, which seeks to protect senior health and safety during weather emergencies through: (1) community education, information and organizing; (2) providing supportive service to prevent and/or ameliorate the impact of weather emergencies during non-emergency time periods; and (3) organizing a “friends and neighbors” telephone tree network to check on senior safety during emergencies and provide or refer for emergency services as necessary. Beginning the first week of the COVID-19 lockdown our volunteers began to make wellness check calls to the Be a Buddy clients, focusing on their physical health, food insecurity, mental health and family health.

### ***Mental Health Services***

East Harlem has the city’s highest rate of psychiatric hospitalization. Poverty substantially increases the emotional burdens many of our residents shoulder, as do the high rates of violence, substance abuse, child abuse, trauma, mental illness and AIDS and HIV infection. Union Settlement’s Mental Health Services Program, which has been in existence for more than 60 years, addresses these disparities by providing a range of mental health counseling services. Every year, we keep families together, minimize psychiatric hospitalizations, keep community members out of institutions (including prisons), help clients maintain sobriety, and literally save lives.

- The *Johnson Counseling Center*, our licensed mental health clinic, provides assistance to the residents of East Harlem through individual, family, group and couples therapy, crisis intervention, psychological/psychiatric evaluation, medication management, advocacy and other services. In FY 2020 we served over 1,300 individuals in both English and Spanish. We offer an ongoing Women’s Support Group, as well as an expressive arts therapy program which includes drama, art, music and movement therapy as a means for transformation and healing. Due to the pandemic, we moved to providing all therapeutic services remotely as of March 2020. The transition to remote services was relatively seamless, and we actually are now able to serve more clients because of reductions to the “no show” and cancellation rates.
- We provided mental-health-focused care management services to 135 emotionally and behaviorally challenged children and adolescents with our *Children’s Care Management* program. We helped to ensure that these children are receiving all the mental health, educational, medical and social services that they need to remain with their families and out of institutions. We provide two different developmentally-sensitive specialized intervention services to children who have been impacted by trauma: for children under five, we use Child-Parent Psychotherapy, and for those over five, we offer Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Serving children through telehealth—as we have done since March 2020—has its challenges. Our therapists have had to be very creative and think outside the box when engaging the younger children. Many therapists utilized online therapeutic games to help their clients work through difficult feelings related to the pandemic.
- Our Mental Health Services program operates satellite clinics at three East Harlem public schools (PS 72, PS 102 and PS 146). Our clinical staff provides individual, group and family therapy to approximately 90 students, along with their parents and teachers, at these clinics. As was the

case with our main clinic, when the pandemic began, therapists continued to conduct child and family sessions remotely.

- Our Mental Health program has been focused on implementing a more formalized approach to treating and tracking our high-risk clients, defined as those who have been hospitalized in the past year for suicidality/homicidally and/or who struggle with ongoing self-harming behavior. Our goal is to identify when clients begin to destabilize and to utilize targeted interventions to decrease hospitalizations. Our *High Risk Committee* meets monthly to review the progress of the clients on the high risk list and to make recommendations to the therapists involved in the client's treatment, and our separate *High Risk Support Team* provides emotional support to clinicians in an effort to reduce and minimize compassion fatigue and burnout. Many trauma-informed models of care indicate that such a team is a best practice in supporting staff. Since implementing this structure, which allows a more hands on, team approach, we have seen a decrease in client hospitalizations. We have also been able to decrease the number of clients on the high-risk list from 21 to 12.
- Our *Early Childhood Mental Health Program* operates satellite clinics at three of our Early Childhood Education sites, which help families of young children (ages 0 to 5) access mental health and other intervention services to address issues early, and help children who are having difficulties move to a healthy developmental trajectory. We have three Creative Arts Therapists who use the communicative power of the arts (dance, visual art, music, drama) to assess and provide interventions for children and families. Our therapists have utilized creative approaches to ensure there was no disruption when we switched to providing services through telehealth due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

### ***Community and Small Business Development***

Union Settlement's mission is to empower the East Harlem community, and that mission extends to nurturing and developing the community's small businesses and entrepreneurs. We seek to connect businesses with each other as well as help incubate local businesses of all sizes, thereby keeping employers and employees in our neighborhood.

- Our *Business Development Center* oversees a Commercial Corridor Revitalization Program in East Harlem. In partnership with Uptown Grand Central, this initiative: (1) provides business education courses, workshops and technical assistance to merchants to enable them to remain in the community, increase profits and grow; (2) improves the cleanliness and attractiveness of the area's three main commercial corridors; (3) increases visits to the neighborhood and local businesses by organizing special events, such as pop up cafes, concerts and mobile libraries; and (4) designs and implements marketing and publicity campaigns to increase the visibility of local businesses and cultural attractions. This past year we sponsored workshops on Marketing, Managing the Competition, and Defining Your Target Market, and gave a presentation on Rezoning in East Harlem. We also reviewed merchants' leases, assisted merchants in structuring sales and special offers during high traffic days, and developed a program to clean merchants' awnings. We also worked with local merchants to co-sponsor several events, including the "El Grito" cultural event, celebrating Mexican independence; and co-sponsored several "pop up" markets, at the East River Mall, Mt. Sinai Hospital, and Metropolitan Hospital. These events brought over 5,000 visitors to East Harlem.
- The Business Development Center also assists new entrepreneurs and existing small businesses, many of which are struggling. It is vitally important that entrepreneurs – both new and

experienced – have the appropriate understanding and capacity for launching and maintaining a successful business. To that end, the Business Development Center provides business education, technology training and technical assistance in both English and Spanish. This past year the Business Development Center provided technical assistance to a total of 247 entrepreneurs/businesses, including assistance developing business plans, identifying available commercial spaces, securing permits, licenses and EIN numbers, and accounting and business practices.

- In early 2012 Union Settlement spearheaded the creation of the *East Harlem Community Alliance*, which is a consortium of local businesses, non-profits, religious and governmental entities seeking to address the problems faced by this community. The East Harlem Community Alliance now has 228 members, including local businesses, not-for profit organizations, government agencies and religious institutions. The Alliance meets quarterly and currently is focused on four major initiatives:
  - *Hire Local East Harlem*, which works to reduce local unemployment by connecting East Harlem job seekers with local employers and workforce development organizations;
  - *Buy Local East Harlem*, which strives to increase local economic activity by creating an online searchable website of goods and services available in East Harlem, and encouraging local organizations to first look to make purchases locally;
  - *Serve East Harlem*, which seeks to connect local residents in need of social services with the many non-profits in East Harlem that provide those services; and
  - *Promote East Harlem*, which promotes East Harlem as a destination to visit, eat, shop and live.

Thanks to funding from Citi Community Development, Ponce Bank and the NYC Department of Small Business Services, Buy Local project sponsored a series of events, including ,Meet and Greet events, Cash Mobs Holiday Pop-Up Markets, a Small Business Saturday trolley tour for purchasing decision-makers from local anchor institution, MWBE workshops and a Bar/Restaurant Crawl targeting three area restaurants.

- In early April, Union Settlement learned that Metropolitan Hospital needed help feeding their employees, who were working long hours due to the pandemic. Thanks to a grant from L+M Development and Jonathan Rose Companies, our Small Business Development team worked quickly to enlist 24 local East Harlem restaurants to prepare meals for Metropolitan Hospital’s healthcare heroes. In total, the selected restaurants prepared more than 5,700 meals over five weeks. Not only did the program feed some of Metropolitan Hospital’s essential workers, but it also helped to keep East Harlem’s thriving restaurant scene alive during the very worst of the outbreak.
- Unfortunately, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have determined that over 133 local businesses have closed, either temporarily or permanently, impacting hundreds of employees. In an effort to respond, we were able to adapt and “virtualize” several of our services. We provided a total of 12 workshops on Digital Marketing and Social Media Marketing via Zoom, which were conducted in both English and Spanish for a total of 29 participants. We conducted a virtual Cash Mob, for a local business, which netted a profit of over \$1,900. We contracted consultants to assist 30 local businesses in developing videos of their businesses for marketing purposes, and we secured and coordinated over 20 local businesses to cater meals for first responders at Metropolitan Hospital. Most importantly, with the support of Council Member Diana Ayala and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, we provided were able to secure \$4 million in grants and \$4.2 million for low interest loans for East Harlem’s small businesses for FY21. The

Business Development Center will be processing the grant applications and working with a financial institution to promote and oversee the loans.

### ***Outreach and Community Engagement***

Thanks to the generous support of the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation, in January 2020 we launched the East Harlem Community Outreach program, which has enabled us to centralize and systematize outreach efforts across our agency and across our community. This has been a major step and, even though the program is still young and the global pandemic is forcing us to shift strategies, we are already seeing successes. Now that we have a designated staff person focused on community outreach, we are reaching more local residents and connecting them more efficiently with needed services.

- We have hired an English/Spanish bilingual Director of Community Outreach, whose primary focus is engaging with neighborhood residents, local community-based organizations and government agencies, and working to connect underserved East Harlem residents with the services they need. The duties of our Director of Community Outreach include:
  - Reaching out to groups of local residents, including tenants' associations, block associations, PTAs, senior centers, and religious congregations;
  - Conducting outreach at public events, such as street fairs, health fairs, youth fairs and public school open houses;
  - Serving as a primary liaison with government offices and agencies, including local elected officials, Manhattan Community Board 11, local public schools and libraries, and all federal, state and local government offices;
  - Connecting with local nonprofits and other service providers, to collect information about the services they provide and any eligibility requirements;
  - Meeting with individual residents to discuss their needs, and how Union Settlement can assist them; and
  - Helping these individuals connect with the services they need.

Our goal is to ensure that our underserved neighbors have access to needed services, and to ensure that our programs are enrolled at maximum capacity. We served 415 community members during FY20, enrolling 115 into one of our programs.

- The nature of our outreach efforts shifted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our program was designed for direct, face-to-face contact and planned activities included outreach at public events, and meeting with individual residents to discuss their needs, and how Union Settlement can assist them. Naturally, many of these activities can no longer take place, so the Director has had to utilize “remote outreach” practices. We are engaging the broader community through social media and other online channels, and are working to implement new and creative ways to connect with the residents we serve, particularly those without access to technology.
- Union Settlement served as the East Harlem hub for information, outreach and training related to the *2020 Census*. Since the beginning of calendar year 2020, we have undertaken a new outreach initiative to encourage East Harlem residents to complete the Census. We conducted a comprehensive outreach campaign to educate all East Harlem residents about the census and its importance to their lives. In addition, we integrated census work into all aspects of our service delivery so that participants and community residents have multiple opportunities to receive information about the census and be encouraged to participate and be counted. We have also established a network of community-based organizations and community leaders and are

distributing messaging tools to facilitate their participation in the initiative. During the pandemic, the entire Census team has been working remotely. Our entire outreach plan shifted to engagement via phone calls, text messages, virtual presentations and social media engagement.

- In response to the vast needs of our program participants caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic shutdown, we created an Emergency Needs Working Group composed of employees from our many different program, who reached out to assess the needs of individual participants. This assessment resulted in a decision to create a “Union Settlement General Store,” which offers free essential items to program participants, including non-perishable and perishable foods and basic toiletries, which we purchase in bulk. The Store is open every Tuesday and Wednesday, and we are serving 165 to 185 individuals each week. We also created the Union Settlement Helpline, which gives our participants the opportunity to call and speak with a team member to make an appointment for the General Store or about any other need they may be facing. The General Store and Helpline both launched towards the end of June, and by the end of the fiscal year (June 30) had each served just under 200 people.