



# A SUMMER OF RECOVERY





# HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT

Henry Street Settlement's mission is to open doors of opportunity.

But opportunity isn't a one-time event. It's a process, and often a multi-step one.

At the Settlement, we work hard to stay close to the members of our community who are in the greatest need of a chance to succeed—seniors, homeless families, low-income workers, those with mental illness, and over the past year, children learning at home without the right resources. We work with all kinds of people seeking opportunity, helping them overcome myriad challenges and obstacles.

When participants come to Henry Street, that's often just the first step. Initial contact frequently leads to deeper involvement, when we learn more about an individual's goals. At the height of COVID-19, Henry Street ensured that core needs were met through new programs as well as existing services. Now, we are moving forward, deepening our engagement with many community members to help our neighbors undergo the long-term process of emerging from a catastrophe while we are still living through it. As unimaginable, indescribable, and unthinkable as these times have been, Henry Street has had the advantage of a blueprint left by our trailblazing founder, Lillian Wald: In times of need, act.

Leaning in to the strength and compassion of our team, the timelessness of our mission, and our deep commitment to the people we serve, Henry Street built a summer of resiliency on the Lower East Side.



David Garza, CEO, with Nichole Stevens, Jacob Riis Cornerstone Activity Specialist, who teaches art and dance.

As you'll read here, that determination led to a season of breaking isolation while promoting the safety and wellness of our staff and community. We opened our doors wide: summer camps, Saturdays in the park, roller skating events, basketball tournaments, health fairs, food distribution, outdoor classes, art exhibitions, graduations, summer youth employment programs, and so much more to deliberately connect with *everyone* in need of Henry Street's services. We even created a new position to sustain the effort and introduced Debbie Cox, a Henry Streeter for four decades, as our Director of Community Engagement and Integration.

Whether it's helping people get a job, learn English, get food, go to college, or simply spend a beautiful day together in the community, we keep opening doors every day. When doors don't swing open, we push them until they move. It's a process that takes time, and we are here for the duration.

David Garza, President & CEO, Henry Street Settlement

## Our COVID-19 Response Is Evolving

As Henry Street followers know, we've begun more than a few new programs during the pandemic. Our Helpline, launched in April 2020, has now come under the leadership of N.Y. Project Hope, a FEMA-funded community mental health program through which Henry Street has counseled more than 2,000 people since February 2021. After having provided more than 35,000 bags of food to 1,000 households through the first half of 2021, Henry Street is continuing our LES Mobile Market, feeding 200 families in New York City public housing developments. Our Abrons Arts Center classes are now free to public housing residents, and our Community COVID Response Team has engaged 73 young people in an astonishing array of public-service projects. Henry Street has continued to provide COVID-19 information, testing, and vaccination through multiple outdoor summertime events with our partners at Betances Health Center and NYC Health + Hospitals in an effort to keep the community safe and informed.



Patricia Matthews gets her COVID vaccine at Henry Street's Welcome Back Healthy Event.

“

Our neighborhood artists really felt an obligation to serve the community and to connect on a very human level.

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—Craig Peterson, Executive Artistic Director, Abrons Arts Center



# FROM A STAGE to a Staging Area

The now-iconic image of Henry Street's pandemic pivot is that of our Abrons Arts Center stage, used for more than a year as the base of our food pantry operations. It wasn't just the theater itself but its people who underwent a transformation—as arts workers redeployed to pack and deliver food to families in need throughout the neighborhood.

“If you look at how we all survived the pandemic—using books, music, and movies to keep ourselves sane—it was artists and creators who got us through,” says Craig Peterson, executive artistic director of Abrons Arts Center. “We danced on Zoom in our living rooms.”

At Henry Street, artists also carried us through in a practical way, as the arts center hired stage hands, musicians, and others to keep the food pantry running smoothly. “Our neighborhood artists really felt an obligation to serve the community and to connect on a very human level. Even when many people were trying to stay home, working at the pantry—as both volunteers and paid staff—gave them the opportunity to continue to hear and tell stories.”

To Peterson, their bravery was reminiscent of the role of artists during the HIV/AIDS crisis, when artists stepped up amid tragic loss. Abrons served as a gathering point then, and more recently in the aftermath of 9/11 and during Black Lives Matter protests. “There is an enormous amount of crossover between art-making and political demonstration; in so many contexts, art moves people to action; even a sit-in is a performance of sorts.”

This fall, Abrons will build on its ties with the surrounding community to hold an exhibition about the matriarchs of New York City's public housing (NYCHA) developments, offer free classes to public housing residents, and produce a Panto play with neighborhood actors performing alongside professional artists.

“Creativity and access to the arts build healthy communities,” says Peterson, looking with guarded optimism to the season ahead.

# Giving Summer Back to the Kids

## at Henry Street

**Summer 2021 was the first opportunity** in more than a year for many Henry Street children to be with their peers in person, bringing both joy and challenges. At Camp Henry (based at Boys & Girls Republic and Jacob Riis Cornerstone) and at Abrons Arts Camp, usual trips to museums or theme parks were adapted to activities such as walks to parks, dancing, and free play like jumping rope that allowed for social distancing.

“The kids had a lot of fun this summer,” says Leonor Colon, assistant director of afterschool and camp services. “But undeniably we are seeing children having trouble socializing or being in each other’s space. The structure that was there for them before is gone. They have to get used to activities like walking in a line all over again.”

A number of children exhibited clear signs of trauma, including severe depression, as a response to abrupt changes in their and their families’ lives. Whether parents were facing job insecurity, working overtime in frontline positions, or had lost access to their secondary caregivers, summer camp staff observed that children were spending far more time at home alone or with adults who were themselves traumatized.

To support children suffering from these disruptions, Henry Street provided a full-time onsite social worker, who offered day-to-day counseling as well as crisis intervention. Additional social workers from Henry Street’s Urban Family Center transitional residence also started their day at BGR, accompanying the children who came to the camp from the shelter.

“With the youngest kids, we’re trying to give them ‘normal’ again after they’ve been home for almost two years,” says Jacob Riis Program Coordinator Dru Pena. Pena introduced sensory toys for those who needed stimulation during the day and yoga mats for those who needed to move. “After being 100% remote, they may find it difficult to sit in a chair. It’s about giving them choices.”

Abrons Arts Camp limited enrollment to ages 6 to 8, “but it was successful,” says Millie Kapp, assistant director of education, adding that “small groups allowed children to work through readjustment.” When a child exhibited challenging behavior, “counselors did a phenomenal job of striking a balance between giving that child special one-on-one attention while making sure they could also function in the group.”

Henry Street was also one of the New York City agencies enlisted through the Summer Rising program to get kids back on track after remote learning. Working over six weeks in University Neighborhood Middle School, PS 20, and Nest + M, Henry Street’s recreation team provided a fun afternoon complement to the morning’s academic services, offering visual arts, STEM activities, and sports to more than 200 students.

For Pena, the most promising part of the pandemic recovery is that “the world is trying to help.” The science and technology nonprofit Hypothekids NYC provided twice-weekly science classes, CitiBike donated 50 bicycles, and New York Cares volunteers gardened, made new benches, and provided children with school supplies. “It’s been an outpouring,” says Pena, “and one that was badly needed.”

“It’s about giving them choices.”

—Dru Pena, Jacob Riis Program Coordinator

Children at Camp Henry, based at Jacob Riis Cornerstone, made balloon-powered cars with help from science teachers at Hypothekids.



# We Want Our Senior Center Back!

Throughout the pandemic, Henry Street's Senior Services team has worked nonstop to make sure their senior participants have not been alone, even in isolation. But despite Zoom classes and activities, and even virtual field trips, our intrepid Senior Center friends couldn't wait to be together—to eat meals, play pool, sing karaoke, and converse. In May 2021, Henry Street joined a citywide campaign to encourage the City of New York—which had kept senior centers closed out of an abundance of caution—to reopen. Many members were vaccinated and ready to return to normalcy. The center reopened on June 14 for grab-and-go meals served outdoors, followed soon after by indoor meals, discussion groups, and billiards, albeit with limited capacity.



## School-Based Mental Health Team

### Eases Burdens



Jennie White, with daughter, Ariana.

“It was wonderful to be listened to as a single mom; we don't always feel heard. They gave me a toolbox that I can use in difficult times.”

Henry Street's School-Based Mental Health Clinic is just one of our programs that adapted overnight when the pandemic struck—moving online not only counseling but interventions such as play therapy and sand tray therapy that could be done at home. Serving nearly 150 low-income student families on the Lower East Side, this social work team removes barriers to mental health care by providing it onsite in eight schools. Their goal is to address any student or family issues—from grief to food insecurity—that can interfere with learning. The team's excellence during the pandemic led to top honors in the What's Great In Our State mental health competition in New York.

During the pandemic, “we could see that families were disconnected and isolated,” says Program Director Kelly Lennon-Martucci. So, the team launched new virtual programs, such as painting and yoga classes as well as bereavement groups, to bring people together and encourage creative expression.

Jennie White is among the parents whose family switched to online therapy during the pandemic. The team had been providing her family with services for about five years, beginning when her son was acting out in school. Jennie's concerns about her son's hearing and other special needs had been dismissed by a pediatrician, but her therapist pushed Jennie to see specialists, who were able to provide a diagnosis.

“The family therapists implemented activities we could do at home, such as showing each other gratitude,” Jennie says. “They helped to base my narrative about the environment I wanted to create for my children as they got older. It was wonderful to be listened to as a single mom; we don't always feel heard. They gave me a sense of empowerment and a toolbox that I can use in difficult times.”

The team has also supported overwhelmed educators through the pandemic. They advocated for children with special needs to undergo testing for individual education plans and helped families overcome language barriers in school communication. To engage elementary students and the larger school community in larger discussions of racial justice and equity, the team also formed an antiracism and inclusion book club.

As soon as newly vaccinated social workers returned to school, they began receiving alarming numbers of referrals about children facing a difficult adjustment from home to the classroom. “If you had a baseline of anxiety, OCD, or depression, COVID made it peak,” Lennon-Martucci says. Still, in a difficult year, several struggling students graduated from high school with the program's support.

“Kelly and [our therapist] Jaclyn Vasaturo are rock stars for these children,” White says.

## Thanks to Our Generous Supporters

During the pandemic, the vast majority of Henry Street participants have faced a combination of job loss, financial and food insecurity, bereavement, parenting challenges, and a wide variety of other health and personal crises. In the face of this debilitating emergency, supporters of the Settlement opened their hearts to aid their neighbors. Through volunteerism, monetary contributions, and in-kind donations, Henry Street received an outpouring of resources, which allowed us to pivot in real time to meet the rapidly evolving needs of our community.

We at Henry Street were blown away by our exceptionally generous and steadfast supporters in the year following New York City's shutdown. We saw a:

**184%** in the number  
of gifts  
**INCREASE**

AN ALMOST  
**300%** in new monthly-giving  
participants in our Heroes of  
Henry Street donor program  
**INCREASE**

**5,000** logged by individuals  
and corporate groups  
**VOLUNTEER HOURS**

We are grateful to everyone who has supported Henry Street throughout this difficult time. Your gifts gave the Settlement a lifeline when we most needed it and continue to allow us to sustain our life-changing work.



# New Yorkers

## Helping New Yorkers

## How we used your donations

Henry Street Settlement receives 70% of our funding from government sources. Without it, we could not run six transitional and supportive housing residences, a preschool, a senior center, and more. *But those funds cover our core services.* It is your support—"unrestricted funding"—that gives us the agility to listen to our community and then to act instinctually, addressing un-covered or unexpected needs—like those that have emerged over the past year and a half. In this unprecedented crisis, Henry Street acted boldly to create new programs overnight and to modify existing services. Below are just a few examples of how we've maximized your generous support:

### We saw participants and neighbors struggling to buy food and cover basic needs.

**How we responded:** By April 2020, Henry Street had launched a food pantry as well as three meals a day for our shelter residents, and we increased Meals on Wheels deliveries by over 40% to homebound seniors. We also created cash assistance programs to help undocumented workers, artists, and others in need.

### We saw an increase in depression, anxiety, and fear in our community and on our staff.

**How we responded:** We created a hotline staffed by crisis counselors and new public health initiatives to inform, support, and connect people to vital resources. To support our team members, we increased our staff benefits and supports, including a pay differential to our frontline workers, child care assistance for those who worked while their children were unable to go to school, and expanded mental health benefits.

### We saw existing challenges intensify, from housing and job insecurity to social isolation. For many, these hardships became devastating calamities.

**How we responded:** Henry Street's doors never closed, and in many areas our core programs expanded and evolved to support the families, children, and individuals who rely on our integrated network of more than 50 programs. Individual gifts have helped us sustain a number of critical initiatives, including scholarships for college-bound seniors, new job-training initiatives, free arts classes for young people who live in local public housing, and so much more.

# Why we need your support



As the Settlement moves into the next phase of our recovery response, your contributions will be as vital as ever, supporting the expansion of our community engagement, mental health, and public health initiatives while enabling us to continue providing a life-affirming continuum of human services and cultural programs.

## HOW TO HELP:

### Donate

Financial support of any amount helps us ensure the safety and well-being of our neighbors. **Donate online at [henrystreet.org](http://henrystreet.org).**

### Volunteer

Henry Street offers a variety of volunteer initiatives to ensure that our community is able to weather this storm. **Read about current opportunities at [henrystreet.org](http://henrystreet.org).**

### Spread the Word

Let your friends and family know about Henry Street Settlement's work. **Share our Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram platforms with your networks.**

## Employment Services

# Overcoming Barriers in the IT Field

The first computer Jadah Stone loved was a chunky, white monstrosity that ran Microsoft Windows 95.

Always fascinated by the technology, Jadah, by the age of 20, had earned several tech certifications through the TechBridge program of The Door. She had also completed a series of internships and entry-level jobs. But though she is resourceful by any measure, when it came to applying for a job with greater responsibility, Jadah lacked confidence in her interviewing skills—a classic case of “imposter syndrome,” according to Henry Street Employment Coordinator Jay Koo. Anxiety is common, he says, but especially pervasive among young women of color entering jobs in tech that are traditionally held by white employees.

At Henry Street's Job Essentials Training (JET) program, Koo provided Jadah with an armload of resume and interviewing tips. Jadah also attended Henry Street's “Hello to Hired” online workshop (which more than 1,000 people have completed). Jadah was ready when she learned about a job opportunity at Casper, the mattress company—and couldn't wait to tell Koo when she nailed the interview.

Jadah is now part of a three-person IT team, providing support for help desk requests, configuring workspaces and conference rooms remotely, rolling out projects, and supporting new store openings.

“I learn on the spot and upskill really fast,” she says. “Jay was instrumental in giving me the motivation to be able to do this.”

And when imposter syndrome rears its ugly head? “I look at the accomplishments I've made in a short time,” she says, “and I see solid evidence it's not true.”





When Dominique Santiago was a child, she liked to play with dirt, “but this is the first time I was doing it for a purpose” says the Henry Street LES Mobile Market team member of her spring 2021 experience with the Lower East Side Ecology Center.

The Mobile Market team of young adults were the perfect cohort for the ecology center’s inaugural Food Justice Project. They were already delivering healthy food to 200 families with children on the Lower East Side through a collaboration between Henry Street and NewYork-Presbyterian. Now, Dominique and her teammates would learn how food is grown and its nutritional components, not to mention how to make their own soil out of compost.

For seven spring weeks, the delivery team spent every Thursday afternoon working in Henry Street’s Abrons Arts Center garden. There they explored soil and compost varieties, investigated insects under microscopes donated by Biobus, and tended a garden, all while studying food inequity.

“Our aim was to help them build hard skills in growing and preparing food while understanding how what we eat contributes to individual, community, and environmental health,” says Jennifer Bombardier of the ecology center.

Another Mobile Market team member, Joseph Maria, and his family have been eating more healthfully because of the program, he says. A third-year student at Borough of Manhattan Community College, Joseph entered college

undecided. But, now his interests have turned toward community mental health—a response, he says, to the mental health challenges he witnessed during the pandemic, many of them brought on by food insecurity.

## Digging for a Purpose

# Honoring Our Own: *Above & Beyond*



Henry Street each year honors team members who go above and beyond their job requirements to serve our community. This past year, extraordinary service defined so much of our staff’s work that it was hard to narrow it down.

On March 3, 2021, the Settlement celebrated more than 200 team members for frontline work, spirit, and more. Top “Hero” honors went to the **Transitional & Supportive Housing** team for their tireless work to keep families safe and nourished and children engaged in online school.

The newly created Transformer Award was presented to both an individual and a team who “exemplified agility and an uncanny ability to pivot.” The group that took the honor—known as **Team Cash Assistance**—coalesced from a wide array of our programs—employment, housing, health & wellness, development, and finance departments. Through this interdisciplinary effort, Henry Street disbursed nearly \$300,000 to more than 400 households and to Helpline callers and unemployed artists for rent, food, and/or utilities during the peak of the pandemic.

The individual Transformer awardee was **Jon Harper**, director of operations and facilities at Abrons Arts Center who morphed uncannily into our director of emergency response food distribution. For more than a year, Harper ran the food pantry from the Playhouse stage at Abrons, delivering groceries to more than 750 homes each week. We are proud of our entire Henry Street team!

Through countless trials and tribulations, loss of loved ones, illness, and fear of the unknown, the 24/7 Transitional & Supportive Housing division never wavered. Management, maintenance, resident assistants, office staff, and social service teams adjusted and innovated.

Below, Angel Tolentino, a Transitional & Supportive Housing maintenance team member, shared the *Above & Beyond* top Hero award.



“Jon was an inspiration, especially at the beginning of the pandemic... He was like a beacon of encouragement and hope—out there delivering food in all kinds of weather, finding out who needed food, and handling challenges of equipment and staffing.”

—Kristin Hertel, VP, Health & Wellness