

Telling Our Stories



**HENRY STREET
SETTLEMENT**

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Greetings from the CEO

DEAR FRIENDS,

What does it mean for people to speak for themselves, and to be heard? In so many of Henry Street's programs, we serve neighbors whose voices, due to their education, employment, immigration status, or age, have not been heard with the resonance they deserve.

That's why it's a bedrock principle at Henry Street that we listen attentively to the voices of our participants—and reflect on their words before acting to address their needs.

To speak for oneself is to reclaim power. **In this newsletter, Henry Street is honored to share the words of four people whose lives have been transformed by our programs.** Their voices speak to the resiliency of our community and the robust array of services we provide.

While the participants who tell their stories on these pages embody the optimism and hope we see every day, the hard truth is, we hear growing anxiety, and even panic, among participants due to impending and shortsighted changes in Medicaid and SNAP (food stamps). A large proportion of Lower East Siders depend on these benefits for survival. They stand to lose access to mental health care during a national mental health crisis and worry about losing access to nutritious food for their children. Moreover, these benefits don't just serve the individual: When a person receives one dollar from SNAP, it doesn't just stay with the recipient; it supports the local grocery store, which in turn creates jobs in the neighborhood. According to the

USDA, every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates about \$1.54 in economic activity.

At a time when Henry Street is preparing for potential hardship conditions in the neighborhood, we also received the unfortunate news of the cancellation this fall of our largest fundraising benefit, The Art Show. For 36 years, this event has been the largest source of unrestricted revenue for the Settlement, held in partnership with the Art Dealers Association of America. It's a tremendous loss, particularly at a time when Henry Street's work is needed more than ever.

Henry Street has weathered uncertainties throughout its 132-year history, and in place of The Art Show this year, we've launched an urgent appeal—the **Open Doors Initiative**—to sustain our work.

As ever, Henry Street is fiercely committed to keeping our doors wide open so that our neighbors can continue to speak with power and the Settlement can deliver on the promise and potential that is especially important in times of volatility and vulnerability.

Please read on for more ways to support our mission today, and thank you for standing with Henry Street.

David Garza, President & CEO



David Garza and colleagues from the Community Response Team and Parent Center at our August 2025 Summer Fun community event.

Cover photo: Early Childhood Education student Preston, 5, and team member Wincy Lum use the new sensory room at 301 Henry Street. The room was funded and installed in 2025 by CD&R, with additional support provided by Macy's.



FIRST PERSON

Jason Streeter: Making Music in the Teen Expansion Program



My name is Jason. I was born in Atlanta, but I've been in New York City since I was eight years old with my mom and two brothers. I'm a senior at the High School of Fashion Industries, with a major in photography. I live on the Lower East Side, and since last winter have been going to Growth and Goals at 301 Henry Street, where we learn about the music industry and leadership skills.

Then I got a Summer Youth Employment Program job with Henry Street's Community Response Team, and they told me I could take more classes through the Teen Expansion Program. I started attending Hitmaker Lab, which takes place at Jacob Riis Cornerstone on Avenue D, and it's been great to feel other people's energy and connect with them.

I write poetry and make R&B rap; **I'm really focused on the music part and elevating myself as an artist.** I make music with both of my brothers. Our uncle inspired us; it's just in our bloodline. I didn't see my summer as being able to get to work on my music, so it's been a nice balance between my music and work. I most definitely see myself being famous, learning all aspects of mixing and mastering, using a camera, editing music videos, developing a clothing brand—I want to do that all in one bundle.

For people my age, programs like this are great if they're willing to take the opportunity. I feel like you should try something new, never say that you can't do something without trying. If you don't try, how will you know?



**Athletics
&
Enrichment**

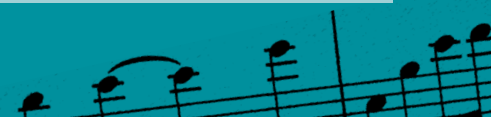
**Summer
Youth
Employment
Program**



This summer, 184 youth participated in the Teen Expansion Program, established in 2023 to address growing community safety concerns and an ongoing youth mental health crisis. TEP serves as a safe haven for young people to explore a wide variety of interests on summer evenings while learning essential social-emotional skills vital for future success. This program was developed in partnership with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).

Here are just some of the classes that youth took through the Teen Expansion Program:

- Karate
- Boxing
- Phone & device repair
- Financial education
- Dance
- Cooking
- Heal through Art
- Music production



FIRST PERSON

Dale
Jones Burch
Neighborhood
Center

Janissa T.: Building a Home with Love



I moved out of a domestic violence shelter in August 2024, after living there for almost three years. My son and daughter were 5 and 4 at the time. The shelter offered daycare, and they helped

you out. There was a weekly meeting I liked. You're trying to heal, and sometimes you feel like you don't want to do it, but you have to because you have children. So, I prepared myself to be on my own.

I was 16 and he was 18 when I met him. We were young, trying to do adult things. Things got physical because we didn't know how to sort out our feelings. After I had my son, I didn't want to fight anymore. My priority was raising my son in a healthy environment. I was afraid to go into a shelter, but I had to out of despair for my children.

When I moved into my apartment, I didn't have enough resources to really restart my life. The Human Resources Administration gives you money for beds and a few household products, but it wasn't enough.

A neighbor who came from the same shelter told me that someone had gotten help from Henry Street Settlement. I sat on the phone number for two or three months before I gave Jose [Acosta Tejada] a call. It's

hard to receive help—and I'd contacted resources previously that weren't much help.

When my son said he was tired of eating on the floor, I knew it was time to make the call.



Jose was informative and easy to talk to; his main concern was getting me what I needed. I couldn't believe how kind he was. When you've been in a DV situation with a man, it's hard to speak to men. I felt heard and cared for. He trusted me.

Henry Street provided money for a couch, three rugs, a dining room table, comforters, a lamp and coffee table, pots and pans, sheets, pillows and cases, and cleaning supplies. It gave me the power to create a home that brought warmth to my family. My children were excited to get the packages; they lay on the couch all day when we received them.

Now, I'm just trying to enjoy moments. In shelter it wasn't easy to heal, cry, and process everything I'd been through. There was pressure to look for an apartment and a lot of rules.

During Covid, I took a six-week class in growing fruits and veggies, and now I'm working toward a certificate. I asked if I could work in my building's courtyard, growing flowers, herbs, and tomatoes that had been donated, and now I'm planting them. I also make cocoa butter from plants and flowers, and I'm learning about starting my own business.

I'm still in shock at how much help I received for the start of a beautiful new chapter for my family. This grant took a heavy weight off my shoulders and gave me time to breathe and plan my next steps. Words can't express how grateful I am. My home is beautiful, warm, and filled with love.



Henry Street's Dale Jones Burch Neighborhood Center helps community members access critical benefits and services that keep them nourished, housed, healthy, and able to lead stable lives. Services include help applying for health insurance, food stamps, public housing, and cash assistance; connections to legal and financial help to avoid evictions and financial jeopardy; and our Parent Center.





Around the Neighborhood



COMMUNITY RESPONSE TEAM WINS ECOLOGY AWARD

On June 23, 2025, Henry Street's Community Response Team won the "Youth Steward" category in the Coolest Block in the Lower East Side competition of the Lower East Side Ecology Center. **The team (pictured above) won the award for taking care of the trees in the triangle of green space adjacent to the Settlement on Montgomery Street.**

In the bed of each of seven trees, they posted one of Henry Street's seven values: **Community, Impact, Care, Integrity, Collaboration, Passion, and History.**



HENRY STREET ARTISTS EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN ABRONS EXHIBITION

On August 1, Abrons Arts Center debuted *Freedom of Expression: The Visual Voices of Henry Street Settlement*, an exhibition featuring artwork by participants in Older Adult Services and the Community Consultation Center's CONNECT program. The works were created in painting, beading, and self-expression classes that promote physical and mental well-being. At the opening, several of the participating artists attested to the profound impact that the classes have had on their lives.

"For me, art therapy really helped me to speak my mind and have my independence and my freedom," said Rahbonne "Bonnie" Dancy (pictured left), who thanked her friends in the program for reinvigorating her interest in painting. **"It also represents the people I've lost; I'm pretty sure they're so proud of me for what I've done."**



LOCAL STUDENTS PAINT NEW MURAL IN MLK JR. PARK

In June 2025, students from two Henry Street Community Schools—University Neighborhood Middle School and Orchard Collegiate Academy—repainted the mural in Martin Luther King Jr. Park, adjacent to the Settlement's headquarters. **Before painting, the students voted on and chose a Lower East Side theme—with deli sandwiches, people playing basketball, and the sunset over the Brooklyn Bridge—which a corporate partner turned into an outline.** The mural honors the park's namesake, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., celebrating justice, freedom, and unity.



“ The training was amazing; I didn’t want it to stop. What I loved about it most was the people. ”

FIRST PERSON

Peter Ramirez: Finding a Meaningful Career

On
Ramps to
Opportunities

Building
Automation
Systems
Training



“ I found out about Henry Street Settlement when I was going through a hard time in life. I was 21, and I’d grown up all over the city.

I was about 13 when my family was displaced by Hurricane Sandy. It was traumatizing; I can still see pictures in my head of people swimming, losing their cars, everyone using generators.

Our family moved from Far Rockaway, Queens, to a hotel near LaGuardia Airport, with four kids. I was out of school for a year during a really critical period of time, my whole sixth grade year.

That experience left a real mark on the family. I went to three different high schools before getting my diploma from the Brooklyn Academy of Global Finance.

I didn’t have so many thoughts about what kind of career I wanted to have, and it wasn’t ‘til I was 18 or 19 that I wanted to change

my life. I came to Henry Street and signed up for an On Ramps to Opportunities bootcamp. They helped me work on my resume and interviewing skills. Before that, I was very careless. I didn’t take time to think my actions through. ORO’s director, Shana Walters, worked with me to think about the best kind of job for me.

The first step was getting my security license, and they helped me get a job for a security company. To stay there, I had to get certified as a fire and life safety director, and Henry Street paid for this training, which was really amazing. After a while, I was seeking new options. Shana gave me a list of training areas. Learning about HVAC, which an organization called Stacks+Joules teaches at Henry Street, seemed like the right step, because it could lead to a career. Shana changed my life in so many ways.

The training was amazing; I didn’t want it to stop. What I loved about it most was the people. We could have talked about any topic. They made me so comfortable and happy. It’s changed me as a person.

This past summer, I had an internship at The Walker Hotel on West 13th Street in Manhattan. I worked with the engineering supervisor to help maintain the building. We could do things like install a new thermostat, and I learned more every day, like about how their HVAC systems work. It’s been a great experience.



FIRST PERSON

Amber Leon: Painting Poetry at Abrons Arts Center

Afterschool

Abrons
Arts Center

I'm in second grade at P.S. 110. Every day, I go to afterschool, and on Tuesdays we walk to Abrons Arts Center for art

classes. I like art because I get to draw stuff and use my imagination.

Last school year, we read poems by a kid poet named Kali who grew up in the East Village in the 1980s, and then we wrote our own. This was my first poem.

When I Grow Up

*When I grow
up I want to
see people being
nice to people
and respect from
everyone*

I wrote the words on fabric. Then, I sewed two layers of fabric together and put cotton in the middle, and then I colored it with avocado juice and painted around the words.

I was inspired to write this poem because some people are mean and don't help other people. I wrote it because people need to be nicer to each other. They can't just be mean.

I try to get people not to argue. They can take deep breaths and say things calmly and nicely so other people know how to be calm.

I feel good at Abrons because every day we get to draw stuff. A really long piece of paper is on the table when we get there, and everyone gets to draw on it. It's really cool!

I do art at home, too; I like to draw people. When I grow up, I want to be painter.



Amber, 8, is a third-generation Lower East Sider. During the summer of 2025, Amber and her brother, Preston, went to Henry Street's summer camp at P.S. 134.

Henry Street Settlement provides afterschool art classes to children in 9 schools and 2 community centers on the Lower East Side, serving more than 2,000 children each year. Teaching artist Nadia Misir centered Amber's class around Filipino-American artist Pacita Abad's 2024 retrospective at MoMA PS1. The class discussed how Abad uses art to talk about social issues, migration, and cultural diversity, and they studied photos of her quilted paintings ("trapuntos") made of canvas and stuffed with cotton. The afterschool artists' trapuntos were exhibited in Abrons Arts Center's Education show, "Hope is Local."

Henry Street Launches the Open Doors Initiative

DONATE



HERE

FUNDRAISER IS RESPONSE TO SUDDEN CANCELLATION OF THE ART SHOW



With sadness and disappointment, Henry Street shared the news on Friday, July 18, 2025, that The Art Show, our iconic annual fundraiser, held in partnership with the Art Dealers Association of America, was unexpectedly cancelled for 2025. Proceeds from The Art Show have been the largest source of unrestricted revenue for the Settlement since the launch of this fundraiser 36 years ago, enabling Henry Street to meet both urgent and chronic community needs with agility, resilience, and compassion.

As soon as we learned that The Art Show would not be happening this year, the Settlement pivoted to launch a fundraising campaign—the **Open Doors Initiative**—to raise this revenue.

“At a time of profound need in our community, and amid extraordinary volatility in social services, education, and arts funding, we’re heartened by the outpouring of generosity that we have already seen from both long-time and new supporters,” said David Garza, president &

CEO. “This year, instead of an art show, we have a ‘heart show’—a virtual show of support—and we are enormously grateful that our donors and friends understand that, while it’s been wonderful to experience beautiful art together and mingle at our annual benefit, the needs in our community can’t wait.”

To make a gift, please visit HenryStreet.org/OpenDoors or reach out to Ellen Schneiderman, ESchneiderman@HenryStreet.org. For those who have long attended and loved The Art Show, please do not hesitate to share this information with others.



WAYS TO GIVE

THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS TO HELP HENRY STREET CHANGE LIVES AND SERVE OUR COMMUNITY:

- 1) **Give an annual gift or support us monthly at** HenryStreet.org/Donate.
- 2) **Buy a brick in our historic firehouse**—the Dale Jones Burch Neighborhood Center—for yourself or a loved one.
- 3) **Engage your employer** through matching gifts, special campaigns, and volunteerism.
- 4) **Join the Lillian Wald Legacy Circle** by making an estate gift to leave a lasting impact.
- 5) **Give through your Donor Advised Fund** using our legal name, Henry Street Settlement, and Federal Tax ID Number 13-1562242.

For more information, go to HenryStreet.org/WaysToGive.

TAKE HOME A WORK OF ART BY EMILY MANWARING

Bring the spirit of our Abrons Arts Center into your home by purchasing one of 250 signed, limited-edition prints of Emily Manwaring’s painting *Sun Chimes Through the Summer Song*—a collage-like depiction of the Abrons amphitheater. Manwaring, an artist known for her exuberant depictions of life in New York City, teaches at Abrons and is a former AIRspace visual arts resident (2022–23) whose work has been featured in galleries and museums around the world. Purchase of the prints, which sell for \$250, supports the Arts for Living Fund at Abrons to keep groundbreaking art rooted on the Lower East Side and accessible to all New Yorkers. To order your own print, go to HenryStreet.org/SunChimes.