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# News from Henry Street

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Fall 2003

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**UNDER ONE ROOF!**



Sari Weintraub

## New Center Offers Wealth of Education, Employment, and Business Development Resources

**H**enry Street's newest facility, the Workforce Development Center, is home to a network of education, training, employment, and business development programs. Located in the heart of the Lower East Side business district on the corner of Essex and Delancey Streets, the Center has been funded by a major gift from Rita Abrons Aranow and is open to neighborhood residents and local business owners.

The Workforce Development Center provides job training, placement, and retention services and referrals; career counseling; advice on accessing 9/11 resources; literacy and GED classes and college counseling; English as a Second Language (ESL) classes; and computer and entrepreneurship training. Clients will benefit from state-of-the-art resources and amenities, including classrooms equipped with audio-visual tools; a Career Resource Center; a computer training lab; a Client Lounge; a Video Studio for taping mock interviews; and a resource library for local business owners. It will be open six days a week and has evening and daytime course offerings.

Long recognized for developing innovative models in job readiness and training, Henry Street has helped people whom many regarded as "unemployable" find independence and fulfillment through productive enterprise for more than 30 years. Over the past two decades, compounding economic and social factors have prompted the agency to address the plight of unemployment and illiteracy with increasing urgency.

"Our Workforce Development programs have evolved across a number of the Settlement's Divisions—in our Shelter Services Division, at our Community Consultation Center, at Youth Services—all developed to meet specific client needs," explains Executive Director Verona Middleton-Jeter. "By the late 1990s, we began to develop strategies to maximize these programs by bringing them together under one Workforce Development Division," she adds.

In 2002, Henry Street brought together the agency's established job training programs with a number of new initiatives designed for public assistance recipients, out-of-school youth,

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and individuals and local business owners affected by the 9/11 tragedy. This year, it has trained and placed more than 400 people with over 100 employers—this in the midst of one of the bleakest job markets in two decades.

### Alternative Career Paths for Youth

According to Chief Administrator for Workforce Development Christine Koenig, “Job training programs for out-of-school youth have been part and parcel of youth development at Henry Street, in part responding to the high drop-out rates and the lower numbers of students who enter college from this neighborhood.”

The Workforce Development Center equips young people who are not college-bound with practical alternatives that lead to economic independence. It has already been recognized for its participation in innovative pilot programs designed to help young people compete in today’s changing economic climate, including Recycle-A-Bicycle (RAB), Inc., which trains neighborhood youth to repair and refurbish used bicycles for re-sale in two revenue-producing retail shops, and STRIVE, a national job training and placement program for young adults ages 18 to 25.

### Halting the Cycle of Public Assistance

Long before the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, Henry Street saw the need to provide quality, practical job training and placement services to heads of families who access its social service programs. Because of its past success in working with this population, Henry Street was a natural candidate to help individuals leaving the public assistance rolls under the new legislation. In 2001, the agency partnered with the community-building organization Seedco and began to implement a program called EarnFair, designed to meet the needs of adults making the transition from welfare-to-work. Now the agency’s largest job training program, Earnfair has helped hundreds of adults find and retain employment.

### Partnering with the Business Community

Koenig views the Center’s opening as a prime opportunity to build on the relationships it has established working with local business owners and placing individuals who lost their jobs after 9/11. “We hope to continue to make a positive impact on the economic growth of the neighborhood,” says Koenig, explaining that a Business Advisory Group is currently in the planning stages that will help Henry Street identify hiring trends and also tailor its training programs to respond to the current job market and place workers with “partnering” companies.

### New Collaborations

The establishment of the Workforce Development Center has already led to further intra-agency collaborations at the Settlement. This summer, the Center partnered with the Henry Street’s Home Care Services Division to help workers displaced from Chinatown garment factories, one of the industries hardest hit by 9/11. The program trains the workers, who are mostly Chinese women with limited education and English language skills, to become certified housekeepers while offering ESL instruction and additional support services. ■

### Coming Soon!

*A comprehensive guide to Henry Street Programs for Job Seekers and Employers online at [www.henrystreet.org](http://www.henrystreet.org).*



Christie yanis

**In 2002, longtime Henry Street staff member Christine Koenig MSW, CSW, was promoted to Chief Administrator of Workforce Development. Koenig worked for 16 years in the Settlement’s Youth Services Division, most recently as Assistant Chief Administrator of Youth Services, where she was instrumental in developing highly successful job training programs for youth. She currently serves on the board of directors for Recycle-A-Bicycle (RAB), Inc.**

## Good Health Sundays

Last spring, Henry Street Settlement’s Good Companions Senior Center launched a special program called Project New Life. Funded by the Indirect Vitamins Purchasers Antitrust Litigation Settlement and administered by the New York State Attorney General, the initiative brings nutritional counseling and wellness programming to 150 seniors, many of whom are living independently in public housing complexes on the Lower East Side.

Project New Life was created to address the nutritional and preventative health care needs of low-income seniors, who are especially at risk for medical complications due to isolation, poor nutrition, and cultural and language barriers. The program strives to improve the wellness of this hard-to-reach population through bi-lingual street outreach and nutritional counseling, health screenings, physical therapy, and fitness instruction at the Center’s new, on-site gymnasium. In addition to weekday classes and lectures, the initiative includes a special activities day on Sunday when most senior centers are closed.

According to Good Companions Center Director Rachel Sherrow, the program has been particularly effective in reaching out to and assessing a population of seniors who are at high risk for medical complications. “Many of our clients suffer with arthritis, osteoporosis, and nutrition-related hypertension and diabetes,” she relates, adding: “Project New Life is providing them with the information that will empower them to make healthy choices and remain independent, which is the ultimate mission of Henry Street’s Senior Services.” ■

# The Three O'Clock Club

To many youngsters on the Lower East Side, weekday afternoons at Henry Street are a “can’t miss” occasion. At P.S. 134 and P.S. 110, two neighborhood schools where Henry Street conducts after-school programming, students participate in activities like cooking, step team, yoga, and special Friday field trips. Not far away at the Boys & Girls Republic (BGR)—Henry Street’s co-ed after-school facility on Avenue D—students are learning about democracy through a unique self-government learning model, and selecting from a rotating curriculum of sports, arts, and personal enrichment activities.

“In this neighborhood children are burdened with tremendous responsibilities at an early age,” explains Chief Administrator of Youth Services Nilsa Pietri, adding: “Henry Street provides both a safe physical space for students, as well as a nurturing environment where children can feel safe emotionally—a place where children are allowed to be children.”

## Promoting Academic Achievement

Recognizing that today’s economy demands a new standard of literacy and a complex range of skills, Henry Street promotes academic success as a top priority in all of its Youth Services programs. Each after-school program responds to the academic needs displayed by students who attend some of the city’s lowest performing school districts with a regimen of “Homework Help” and structured tutoring in reading and math. Counselors also work regularly with children to develop individualized learning plans that address problem areas in order to help them raise test scores and progress to the next grade level.

## A Creative Approach to Learning

Henry Street has also been approaching youth development through a wide range of arts and recreational programming. In recent years, the Settlement has established several initiatives that respond to the emotional needs of children and adolescents through artistic exploration. The largest of these is *Sidewalk*, a program

that has been integrated into the BGR curriculum for the past three years. *Sidewalk* offers formal instruction in such art forms as ceramics, theater arts, and hip hop/spoken word, and is integrated by educational and personal development components intended to strengthen a child’s social development and emotional well-being. With age-appropriate groups for children ages 6 to 18, *Sidewalk* also provides a section for children with disabilities who are involved in BGR’s “family respite” program.

Another new program being conducted by staff at Henry Street’s after-school program at P.S. 134 weaves creative arts instruction with therapeutic services. Taught by trained arts therapists, the program offers a special curriculum of visual and performing arts activities designed to promote self-esteem, examine emotions, and teach conflict resolution skills. “Among the children who access Henry Street services, we observe particular difficulties with socialization and appropriate expression of emotions,” says Pietri, adding: “The exploration of art forms is providing alternative ways for the children to express themselves.”

## Getting Families Involved

Perhaps most important to a parent’s peace of mind, Henry Street provides a safe haven for children during the hours that studies show young people are at most risk of being involved in unhealthy behaviors—ranging from eating too much “junk food” to being the victim or perpetrator of crime. The agency makes further efforts to ease the stress on parents, by supplying pick-up service, as well as healthy snacks or meals when appropriate.

As caretakers to their children, Henry Street has an opportunity to forge deeper relationships with neighborhood families. To that end, parent outreach has become a major goal of this year’s youth programming. Rebecca Beers, Program Director for the P.S. 134 site, explains: “We are making a special effort to reach

out to each child’s family, identify their needs, and get them involved in their child’s education.”

This is being accomplished at orientations and during evening pick-ups, when staff and instructors can engage parents. As in past years, an on-site social worker meets with children individually and in groups and communicates with parents throughout the school year, offering crisis intervention services as necessary. Staff members are also making families aware of other Settlement programs for which they may qualify, including job training and family health coverage. Further plans for collaborations with parent-coordinators in the public schools and building formal resources for parents are in development. ■



photos: Jessica Tagliaferro



# Artist-Residents Honored

Henry Street Settlement Abrons Arts Center is proud to report that five former artists-in-residence in the Abrons Arts Center Workspace Program have received prestigious honors this year.

**Melanie Baker**, a resident from the 2002–03 season, received the 2003 New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA) Prize. The highest honor among the Foundation's annual fellowships, the prize is accompanied by a \$25,000 grant. Baker produces large-scale charcoal drawings that explore themes of media and men in power. Like several artist-residents who have gone before her, she contributed to the wider Henry Street Community during her residency, developing a spring 2003 drawing workshop for women residents at the Urban Family Center. **Yoko Inoue** (AIR 2001), who currently teaches at the Henry Street Community Consultation Center, and **Juan Sanchez** (AIR 1983) also won NYFA fellowships in sculpture and printmaking, respectively.

Two more former residents, **Nicolás Dumit Estévez** (AIR 1998) and **Mary Ting** (AIR 1988), also a former teaching artist and current arts administrator at Henry Street, received Lament Fellowships in the Arts from the Tides Foundation. Awarded to six New York City-based visual and performing artists, the three-year, \$21,000 grants are awarded based on "artistic excellence," and the potential to add "fresh voices" on the city's art scene.

The Abrons Arts Center AIR Program provides free studio space to six New York City visual artists each year. The program provides recipients with a range of career development opportunities, including the chance to exhibit in an annual exhibition with former residents, as well as teaching and mentoring opportunities in Henry Street's social service and art education programs. ■

*For more information about this program, as well as a new season of Arts Center events and classes, please visit the Henry Street website at [www.henrystreet.org/abronsartscenter](http://www.henrystreet.org/abronsartscenter).*



**Melanie Baker, *Company of Men* (detail), 2001 charcoal on paper**

## 2003–04 SETTLEMENT EVENTS Mark your calendars!

### Mardi Gras Masquerade and Casino

Friday, February 6, 2004

### Art Show Gala Benefit Preview

Wednesday, February 18, 2004

### Art Show Dates, General Admission

Thursday, February 19, through  
Monday, February 23, 2004

### Spring Gala

Tuesday, April 20, 2004

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