

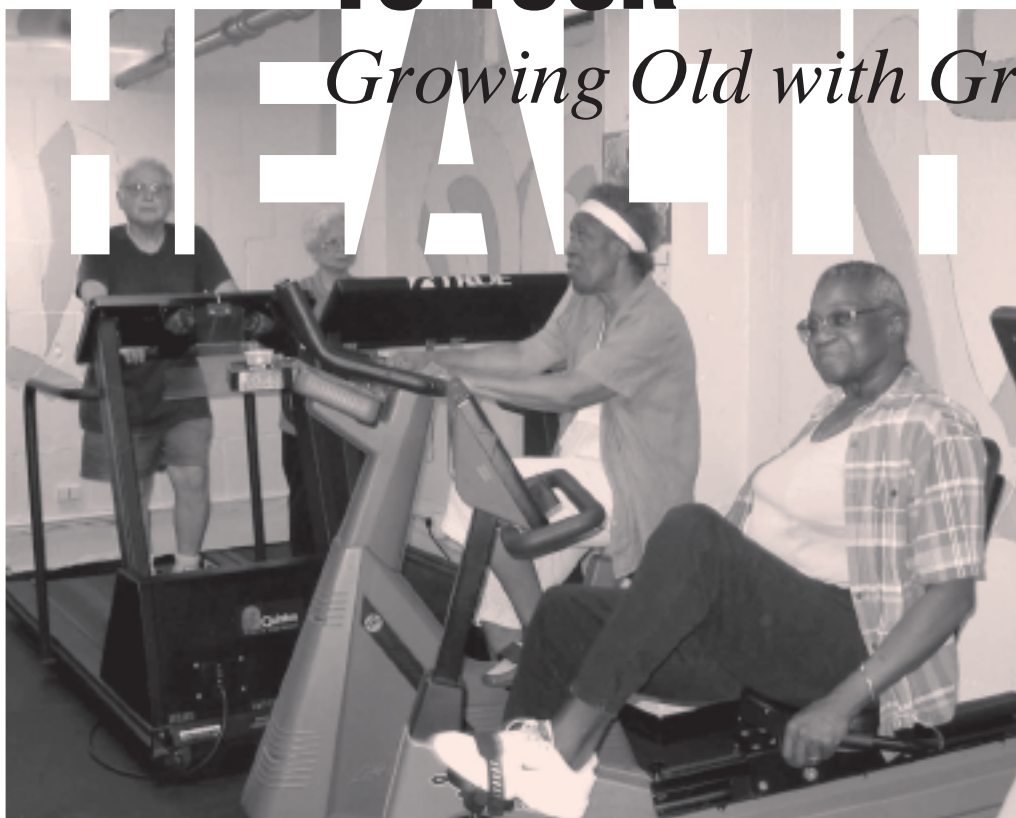
# News from Henry Street

265 Henry Street, New York, NY 10002 Tel: 212.766.9200

September 2004

## TO YOUR

## HEALTH *Growing Old with Grace and Vitality*



Sam Weintraub

**“Henry Street is good for what ails you!”**

—Good Companions Fitness Center participant



Robert Glick



A volunteer hands out milk in the Good Companions Senior Center lunchroom.

There is no more “hot button” issue in today’s headlines than that of health care. From obesity and diabetes, to long-term care of the elderly, just about all of us have been touched by one of these health issues, or know someone who has.

Tragically, these conditions are further compounded among the elderly whom are disenfranchised and/or poor, where a convergence of additional risk factors prevails, including higher incidences of improper nutrition, unemployment, and language/cultural barriers. Studies by the National Institutes of Health and the American Obesity Association demonstrate that people in minority and low-income groups have the highest likelihood of developing life-threatening diseases of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and heart disease.

Henry Street’s founder Lillian Wald long-ago recognized that social and economic progress could not proceed without first addressing the physical health and emotional well-being of individuals. That core mission is reflected in Henry Street’s health and wellness programs designed for senior residents of the Lower East Side. Highlighted here are the two most recently developed—a Diabetes Outreach initiative and a fitness and nutrition program centered around a new Fitness Center—which together are making a remarkable impact on the lives of elder residents.

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## Living Well: The Diabetes Outreach Project

Imagine what good a certified nutritionist might do if she visited your home, analyzed the contents of your kitchen and medicine cabinet, and helped you form a personalized wellness regimen?

It is just this kind of intensive service that Henry Street nutritionist Sally Wong provides for diabetic seniors living in the Vladeck Houses, a public housing complex on the Lower East Side. Over the past two years, Wong has become admired and respected among her Chinese- and English-speaking clients, who look forward to her home visits and educational forums. In fact, many of Wong's Asian-speaking clients have rearranged their Sundays, a day traditionally reserved for family visiting, to attend a weekly support group she leads in English and Chinese.

Wong partners with a registered nurse and another bilingual, Spanish-speaking nutritionist to provide culturally sensitive education and counseling to residents suffering from diabetes. Established in late 2003 by Henry Street's Senior Services Division, the Diabetes Outreach Project targets 200 of the most vulnerable seniors living on the Lower East Side.

Key to the delivery of the Diabetes Outreach Project is language- and reading-level appropriate materials and home visits to diabetic seniors and their families. After an evaluation by the registered nurse, the bilingual nutritionists

**Nutritionist Sally Wong and members of a Diabetes Outreach Project support group**



**Seniors use exercise machines at the Good Companions Fitness Center**

counsel seniors on food selection and lifestyle. Using visual tools as well as written learning materials, they help them develop customized menus and activity plans and offer follow-up assistance and counseling.

Often, the Diabetes Outreach team must work to break down long-held health misconceptions and to demystify illness.

“Many clients think they are already living healthy, but I have to tell them ‘do not rely on the salespeople at health food stores for your medical advice,’” explains Wong, referring to the faith many immigrant clients invest in herbal supplements, which can sometimes interact dangerously with prescription medications.

In addition to one-on-one counseling, seniors are encouraged to attend a Nutrition 101 forum in Chinese, Spanish, or English, as well as to join a weekly peer support group. The multi-media educational forums utilize an array of teaching aides, video presentations and how-to demonstrations. Past topics have included:

“Breast Cancer and Nutrition,” “The Signs and Symptoms of Hypoglycemia,” “Foods to Cut Back On,” and others selected by participants for informal discussion.

“With the Diabetes Outreach Program, we are addressing the disease of diabetes on a person-by-person basis,” explains Janet Fischer, Chief Administrator for Senior Services. She adds that “the end result of all our health and nutrition programs is the prolonged independence for seniors through better lifestyle and dietary habits.”

## Shaping Up: The Good Companions Fitness Center

At first glance, the Good Companions Fitness Center seems nothing more than your average, workaday gym. Located just beyond the lunchroom on the ground floor of the Vladeck Houses, it is furnished with typical accoutrements: rows of barbells, lifecycles and treadmills, an imposing cross trainer machine, a massage therapy table, and yoga mats.

What makes this gym truly remarkable, however, are the people who use it and use it well—the aging residents from surrounding public housing or moderate-income apartments on the Lower East Side. One of these is Adalia\*, a retired restaurant worker who suffers from diabetes. At 63, Adalia is engaging in physical fitness activity for the first time in her life. After discovering the Fitness Center when it first opened in the spring of 2003, she has consistently worked on the treadmill or lifecycle three to five days a week. This is an astounding lifestyle change for Adalia, who has to think as far back to her girlhood bike riding to remember a physical activity she enjoyed.

Adalia's doctor, who has been treating her diabetes, agrees. In the past year, her glucose levels have improved and she has lost twenty pounds. Adalia says she is not sure why she took to the treadmill with such enthusiasm, but feels it led to a twist of fate that helped her husband as well.

“I wanted him to join the gym with me, but first they made him go to a doctor,” she says, referring to the Fitness Center's requirement that all participants undergo a physical before entering into an



exercise program. But when 67-year-old Juan\*, a former cab driver, was examined by a doctor for the first time in 20 years, it was discovered that he was in dire need of emergency heart surgery.

To date, Juan's health has not recovered sufficiently enough for physical activity, but he is back at Good Companions, leading the dominoes club and enjoying the Center's healthy lunches.

"Good Companions saved his life!" exclaims Adalia.

Open free to all neighborhood seniors and for \$50 a year for those under 60, the Fitness Center is just one of the tools that Henry Street Senior Services uses to address the health needs of its participants. For many years, Good Companions has organized a diverse array of movement activities and classes that respond to the interests of their members. Popular selections include early morning Tai Chi; "Dance with Amatullah," a toned-down salsa class; a "Seniors Strollers" walking club; chair aerobics; and yoga, to name a few. These activities have been carefully monitored by trained staff members and therapists and modified to accommodate seniors' ability and comfort level.

According to Good Companions Program Director, Rachel Sherrow, however, it was the establishment of the gym, as well as the addition of Sunday operating hours, that led to more formal wellness programming at the Center. With an infusion of new funding, the Center was able to offer increased counseling and activities, a healthy meal program on Sundays, and employ two certified fitness instructors who monitor the gym facility, teach group fitness classes, and provide personal fitness plans for members. The six-day-a-week programming is unique among senior centers in New York City.

Since the program's inception, a dozen or so seniors have made remarkable strides by losing weight, building strength and balance, and limbering arthritic joints and muscles.

Inspired by that success, "we're now seeing new people sign up at the gym every day," says Sherrow, adding: "The expanded selections are attracting new seniors whom we previously were not able to reach."

Over the past year, Henry Street staff members and community residents have been encouraged by the physical feats and life-changing accomplishments of their elders.

"We all know it is not easy, and the successes of these seniors should be applauded," says Henry Street Settlement Executive Director Verona Middleton-Jeter, adding: "We are pleased to be helping the senior population live healthier and more independently on the Lower East Side, where they can continue to provide wisdom and inspiration to all of us." ■

# ARTS



Jessica Tagliaterra

**Saturday  
visual arts class**

**right: Flamenco  
students perform  
in *The Nutcracker*  
at the Harry De Jur  
Playhouse**



\*Names have been changed to protect the privacy of Henry Street clients.

# Learning for All Ages

From the traditional to the cutting edge...from center stage to behind the scenes...the 2004-2005 Abrons Arts Center calendar is chock-full of classes and workshops to pique your passion for the arts.

Undoubtedly one of the most vibrant and culturally diverse arts schools in the country, the Abrons Arts Center offers high-caliber instruction for the amateur to the professional right here on the Lower East Side. In addition to a robust array of visual and performing arts courses for children, the Center has newly expanded offerings that fit the schedule and interests of working adults. Brand new or returning favorites include Chinese and African dance, an intensive music study program, theater talks, video production, featured faculty lectures and workshops, historic and architectural tours, ceramics, and so much more!

The Abrons Arts Center offers affordable tuition and scholarships for students who qualify. If you've never taken a class at the Center, this is the season to join. For a brochure or information, please call 212.598.0400 or visit [www.henrystreet.org/abronsartscenter](http://www.henrystreet.org/abronsartscenter). ■

right: Urban Youth Theater actors in *Report from the Neighborhood*

Private guitar lesson at the Music School



Zé Maurício



Tom Brazier



Tony Jones Photo



## Fall Celebrations and Events

### Halloween Extravaganza! begins on October 29, 2004

Thanks to the homespun efforts of staff, volunteers, and a team of talented artists and performers from the Abrons Arts Center, Henry Street's annual **Halloween Extravaganza** provides a safe and enjoyable atmosphere for dozens of neighborhood families each year.

The 2004 Halloween Extravaganza will kick off at dusk on Friday, October 29 at the Abrons Arts Center (full dates and times TBA). Guests will be treated to a haunted house walk, a special family performance, and other ghoulish goodies.

Admission is \$5 for this all-ages event. Ghost-o-meters recommended!

### Giving Thanks on Thanksgiving November 29, 2004

On Sunday, November 29, the Abrons Arts Center and the Lower East Side Conservancy will sponsor another event in the *Celebrate 350 Jewish Heritage* series (see back page for details). **Giving Thanks on Thanksgiving** offers a family-friendly tour of the historic Bialystoker Synagogue, followed by a creative workshop exploring Jewish themes at the Arts Center.

Admission is \$25 per family of four. To register, call the Lower East Side Conservancy at 212.374.4100; [www.lesconservancy.org](http://www.lesconservancy.org).

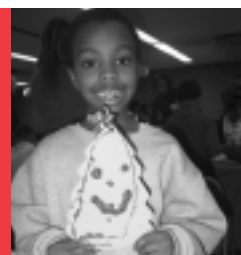
### Holiday Joy Drive

Each year, we strive to insure that each individual served at the Settlement is helped to feel warmth and joy during the holiday season. This is achieved through a number of small celebrations and parties at program locations that honor the tapestry of cultural traditions and faiths celebrated by our participants.

Last year, we were overjoyed by the generous donations of individuals and corporations, which allowed us to present each and every Settlement participant with a gift. This year, we seek to do the same. Donations of new children's toys and school supplies, as well as personal items, toiletries, and small stocking stuffers for adults are welcome.

For more information or additional gift ideas, please contact Bernadette Perrette at 212.766.9200 x259; [bperrette@henrystreet.org](mailto:bperrette@henrystreet.org).

For more Settlement events, please visit [www.henrystreet.org/calendar](http://www.henrystreet.org/calendar)



photos: Sam Weintraub

# PARENTING 101



photos: Jessica Tagliaterra

It is a scorching July morning and the staff of the **Henry Street Parent Center**, a new program of the Community Consultation Center (CCC), is awaiting the arrival of their first students—expectant mothers and parents of young children ages birth to three. Today will be the second-to-last course in the Early Child Development series, in which participants learned about first and second year milestones in a child's life.

This morning, a temporary lull prompts Parent Center Program Director Melanie Austin to step outside, where she spies a woman who is about eight months pregnant passing by with her mother. She proceeds to invite the expectant mother and grandmother in for a tour of the facility, gives them a small baby gift, and launches into brief orientation on the Center's educational programs and resources. Austin's manner resembles that of a wise older sister as she excitedly informs the woman about this fall's workshops, which begin on September 1, and upcoming special events, including an August baby shower open house/party and "Stroller-cize," an informal group of mommies exercising together along the East River.

"This will be just in time for you," exclaims Austin, who is a licensed occupational therapist with a specialty in child development, "and grandmother can attend, too." Before they depart, the pair leave their names and numbers, so that they may be called when the fall program starts up.

Established in 2004, the Parent Center is grounded in the CCC's commitment to delivering holistic and culturally-competent health services. Designed to serve as a support network for neighborhood residents as they raise their families, the Center offers a series of core workshops and classes on an array of informative topics—from pre-natal and early childhood development to health and life skills. Classes may be attended on a one-time basis, or as part of an eight-week series, during which mothers, fathers, and other caregivers will also receive mentoring from staff, peer support, and information and referral services from a staff of health professionals. The heart of the Center facility is its comfortable Resource Library, where parents can conduct self-guided research via Internet workstations, DVD/video, or the latest periodicals and books.

It is perhaps a testament to its beautiful and welcoming design, as well as its attentive and approachable staff, that three-quarters of parents and



expectant mothers who toured the center since its opening in May have enrolled in the program or used the Resource Center. Two first-time mothers of toddlers, Marisol\*, 30, and her sister Veta\*, 35, report that the Center is the first service of its kind they have encountered since becoming parents. Marisol found out about the program after being approached by registered nurse Kathy Chan, who leads workshops at the Center, at a bus stop on Essex Street. When they learned that they would not have to find sitters in order to attend the program, she and her sister decided to give the program a try. (Babies and children are welcome in class and often unwittingly help "demonstrate" child behavior, to the amusement of parents and instructors.)

Marisol, who was a cadet in the Henry Street Pioneers program in her own youth, says that taking the eight-week Child Development seminar at the Parent Center has helped build her confidence as a parent. She has learned that many of her son's behaviors are normal markers of his growth as much as his personality. She was also fascinated to learn what was coming up next in his development. Most of all, she has enjoyed the camaraderie with other parents and the friendships built with Parent Center staff members. In fact, the day her son turned two her Parent Center friends threw him a birthday party before class.

"It is wonderful to make these friends. We are all going through it together," says Marisol.

The Henry Street Parent Center welcomes walk-ins between 10 am and 3 pm, Monday through Friday. All services are free and available in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. For more information about upcoming workshops and special events, visit [www.henrystreet.org/parentcenter](http://www.henrystreet.org/parentcenter).



**"These are the kinds of classes you just don't see for young mothers in this neighborhood. It's about time!"** –63-year old grandmother

# Celebrating Jewish Heritage

below right (l to r): Henry Street Jewish Heritage Committee members Janet Fischer, Chief Administrator of Senior Services; Virginia Stack, Chief Administrator of Home Care Services; Lillian Wald Award winner Joyce Mendelsohn; Catherine Cullen, Chief Administrator of Operations; and Christine Koenig, former Chief Administrator for Workforce Development

below: Outdoor performance of traditional Klezmer music by Drei Freylachs



Jessica Tagliaterra

On July 18th, Henry Street took part in **Celebrate 350: Jewish Life in America 1654-2004**—a year-long celebration of the Jewish presence in the Americas sponsored by the Lower East Side Conservancy, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and New York City cultural and religious organizations—with an event in honor of our founder **Lillian D. Wald**.

The celebration kicked off on the steps of the Abrons Arts Center with an outdoor performance of traditional music, followed by presentations on Wald by poet and performance artist **Clare Coss** and historian **Marjorie Feld**. The event concluded with the presentation of the **First Annual Lillian Wald Award to Joyce Mendelsohn** by Executive Director **Verona Middleton-Jeter**.

An admired author and historian, Mendelsohn has worked tirelessly to share the history of the Lower East Side. Time and again, she has served as an ambassador for the Settlement, working collaboratively on such projects as the 1993 Centennial Celebration, public school programs, and orientations and tours for interns, new staff and board members, and other groups.

“I am deeply honored to be the recipient of the first Lillian Wald Award,” says Mendelsohn, adding: “I accept it on behalf of all the staff and volunteers of the Settlement, past and present.” *Mendelsohn’s full remarks may be found on our website at [www.henrystreet.org](http://www.henrystreet.org).*



Erin Marie Dey

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