

## Home Care Services Expand to Brooklyn's 'Little Russia'

When Dmitri's wife passed away, he was bereft and struggled to continue on. Still fairly new to the country—he emigrated from Russia just over ten years ago—he spoke little English. Dmitri, 84, was coping with arthritis and deteriorating strength. He could not manage to do the shopping, cleaning, and bill organizing. With no immediate family close by, Dmitri faced the possibility of moving to a nursing home. Instead, he went to his local senior center, which assessed his needs and referred him to Henry Street's Home Care Services. Through Henry Street, he met Tatiana. A Henry Street home care worker, Tatiana visits Dmitri three mornings a week. She helps with household chores, escorts Dmitri to the doctor, translates for him, and grocery shops. More importantly, she has become a valuable companion to Dmitri. Like him, she is a Russian émigré, and together they navigate the idiosyncrasies of American culture. He recently called Henry Street's Home Care Services to say, "I feel like my life is back. I am so grateful for the help."

Tatiana is one of more than 100 housekeepers in Henry Street's Home Care Division, a department that has rapidly grown during the past two years. In 1999, the Division's 200 housekeepers offered home care and companionship to 500 homebound, elderly, or disabled New Yorkers. Today, the Division serves more than 800 clients and employs over 300 home care workers. The surge in program growth is thanks to Henry Street's expansion into Brooklyn. Based on its strong track record of providing high-quality and compassionate care, Henry Street was solicited by the NYC Human Resources Agency to provide housekeeping services to Russian-speaking homebound adults in Brooklyn.



"This was an invitation we simply could not decline," notes Virginia Stack, Director of Home Care Services. "It represented a real opportunity to grow. We knew there would be obstacles. We heard that other agencies had tried providing services to this population, and it had not worked. But, we felt confident in our abilities."

Over the past two years, Home Care has recruited and trained close to 200 new home care workers who speak both Russian and English. In addition, Russian-speaking administrative staff and social workers have joined the department. Larisa Golander began in July 2001 as the Assistant Director of Homecare Services and oversees the day-to-day operations of the program. A native of Russia, she has lived in New York City for the past ten years and earned her social work degree here. "Our Russian clients take comfort in knowing that their home care workers share a similar culture, can speak to them in Russian, and understand the loneliness they might feel at this point in their lives," she explains.

The new Russian home care workers are a diverse group. In Henry Street's ranks, there are men and women who were doctors, scientists, teachers, and musicians back in Russia. "This is an excellent first job for them," says Golander. "They can improve their English skills, learn more about daily American culture, and keep in touch with fellow Russians." The schedule is

also very flexible, so many home care workers combine the part-time job with school and ESL classes.

Like the housekeepers in Manhattan, this new corps of housekeepers does basic cleaning, laundry, shopping, bill paying, and meal preparation for their homebound clients. Typically, they spend twelve hours a week, divided among three days, with each client. With this level of care, clients are able to live independently without facing the trauma of moving to a nursing home. Often the homecare workers become like family members to the people they care for. "The companionship element is really important," notes Golander. "Many of our clients came to the United States with their grown children. But the children have moved to different parts of New York and New Jersey and work long hours. In Russia, elderly people often live with their families. Things are more fragmented here."

The home care workers also play an important role in gauging how clients are faring. If they feel their clients were depressed or need medical care, the home care workers report their concerns to their field supervisors. In turn, they call on the division's social workers and nurses to make a home visit. Recently, one home care worker noticed that her client's furniture and bed were nearly falling apart. Home Care services helped her to get a new bed, mattress, and linens.

As the Division continues to expand, some things remain constant. As Stack says, "Henry Street's home care services are known for being compassionate. Our home care workers form strong ties with their clients, and strive to bring comfort to their lives. That quality will always be our trademark." ■

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both have needed intensive counseling to cope with the horrific and graphic terror they were so close to that day.

Henry Street's Cultural Harmony Youth Theater Project is devoting this season to writing an interactive play about the terrorist attacks. By performing to audiences of their peers, these teens will start important conversations about everything from their initial reactions and fears, to their feelings about racial profiling and promoting tolerance in the community.

The need for counseling has also been felt by Henry Street's mental health clinic. Following the attacks, the clinic assigned two social workers to provide on-the-spot crisis intervention counseling and referrals to long-term counseling to those who needed it. In addition, the CCC extended its hours, opening one hour earlier and closing one hour later in the evening to accommodate walk-ins. Since the CCC can provide counseling in seven different languages, it accepted many referrals from the Red Cross, Life Net, and other agencies that had clients who needed culturally appropriate counseling.

For Shelter Services, the days following the attacks were stressful ones, notes Chief Administrator Verona Middleton Jeter. Many of the division's caseworkers depend on the phones to make calls and provide informal counseling to their clients who have moved from the shelters to new homes and jobs. Often the phone line is a lifeline. Yet, for weeks following the attacks, Shelter Services' phones were erratic. "Our case workers made a lot of home visits during this time, and tried to keep in touch using cell phones," explains Jeter.

The economic impact that the attacks—in conjunction with a declining economy—have had on Henry Street's programs is especially severe.

"Business has slowed in our Mailing Services, we are getting less customers. It is also going to be harder to place some of our job-training program graduates in jobs in this tighter economy,"

says Jeter. Across the Settlement, deep cuts are expected in programs as the City and State attempt to reduce their deficits,

and resources are redirected to building Lower Manhattan.

Despite the grim forecast, Henry Street plans to inspire recovery. This spring, the Arts Center will honor the spirit and generosity of Lower Manhattan through an art show. "We wanted to offer something that will bring the community together and promote healing," notes Jane Delgado, the Chief Administrator of the Abrons Arts Center.

"There is still a long road ahead. We are just beginning to see the economic repercussions the events of this fall will have on our programs and on the lives of the people we serve. But, Henry Street has proven its resiliency and its ability to provide support and hope. People can rely on us."

—Daniel Kronfeld, Executive Director

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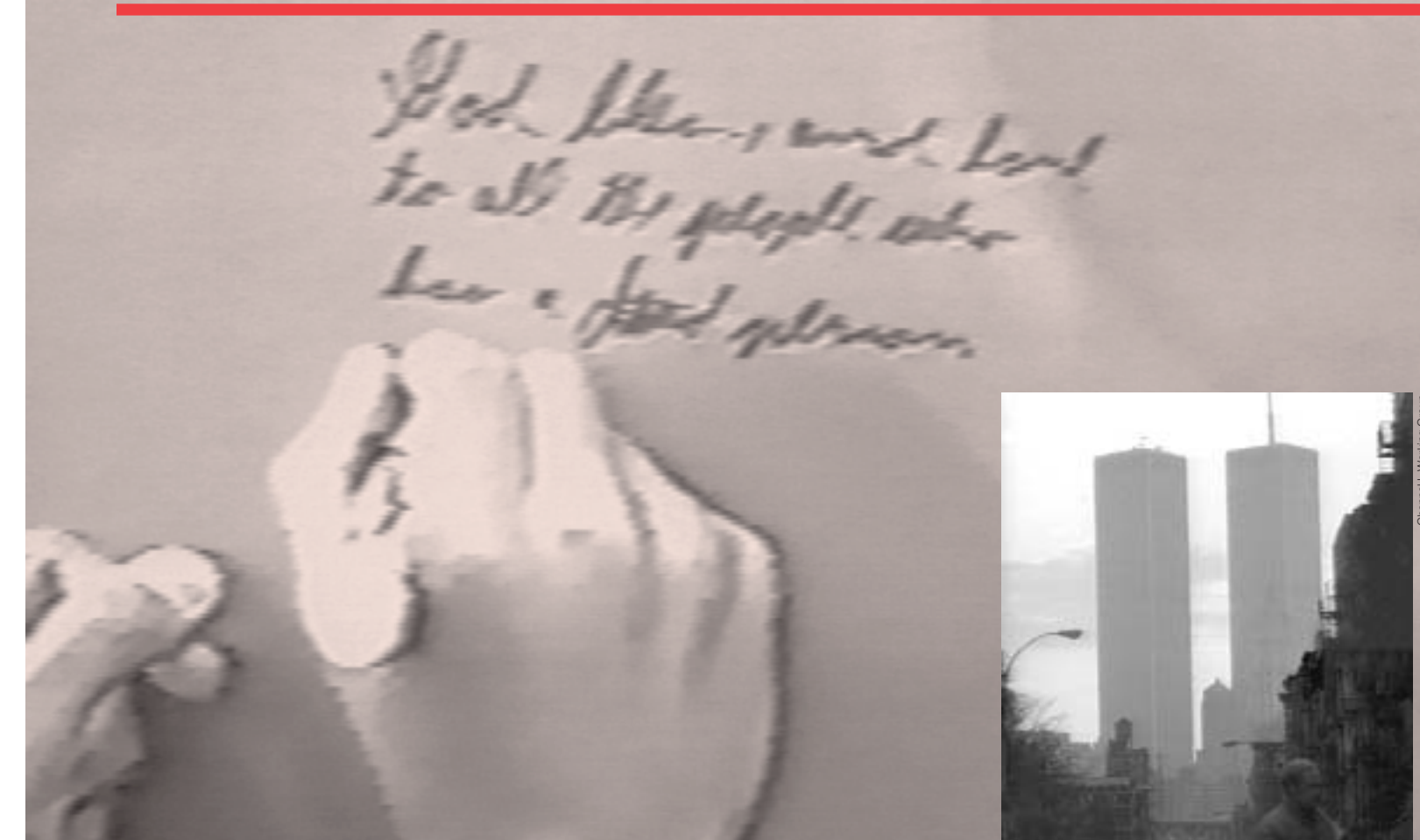
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# News from Henry Street

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## Henry Street Responds to 9/11

Before September 11th, if you stood in front of the Settlement's headquarters on Henry Street, you had a glorious view of the World Trade Center towers, rising high above the quiet, residential streets of the Lower East Side neighborhood.

That view was irrevocably altered on 9/11, as was our world. Henry Street was in the direct path of the thousands of men and women who fled downtown after the attacks, in search of safety, their families, and comfort. Since that defining morning, Henry Street has played a criti-

cal role in sustaining its community through this tragedy and its aftermath.

On the morning of September 11th, as the first wave of people came running up the streets, Henry Street reacted quickly.

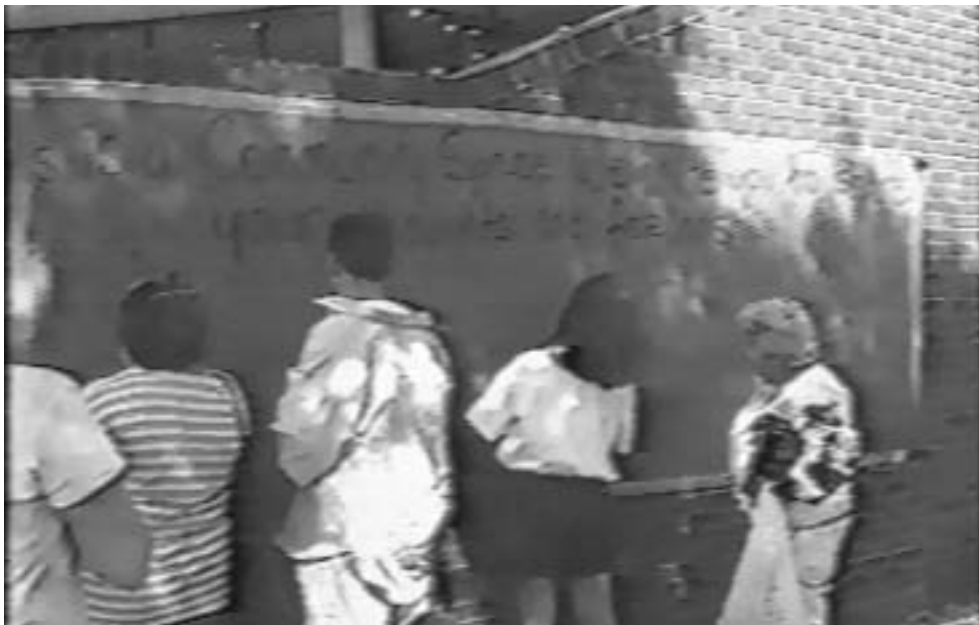
"Our immediate response was 'How can we help?' All other activity ceased,"

notes Lorraine Ahto, Chief Administrator of the Community Consultation Center (CCC). At the CCC, participants from

the Day Treatment Program established comfort stations on the streets for people to rest and collect themselves. Everyone needed water, and the CCC went through at least a dozen six-gallon jugs. They took clothes from their retail boutique, The Unlimited, and handed them out to men and women whose clothes were torn and covered in ash.

All over the Settlement, programs were providing whatever assistance was needed. At the Arts Center, people used bathrooms, called loved ones, and got

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Photographs on this page and the front page are stills taken from two videos, "You Are Not Alone," which was created to document and commemorate life after September 11th on the Lower East Side, and a Channel L Working Group video.



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water, coffee, and refreshments. The Arts Center's gallery space also became the site of instantaneous memorials to those lost. Henry Street's Senior Center became a refuge for fleeing downtown workers, seniors, and neighborhood residents who came together for lunch, met with counselors, and comforted each other. At 281 and 265 Henry Street, staff handed out sandwiches and more water to the evacuating workers. "Everyone was in shock," said one Henry Street case worker,

**"We just automatically tried to provide as much comfort as possible."**

Social workers from all of Henry Street's divisions were on-hand to provide crisis counseling.

In the weeks and months that followed the attacks, Henry Street has worked through numerous obstacles to respond to the needs of a community that is still reeling from losing loved ones, witnessing tragedy, experiencing sharp economic repercussions, and coping with insecurity. For at least a month following September 11th, Henry Street was cut off from the rest of the city. Telephone lines were down. A maze of roadblocks and security checks all but stopped traffic and halted deliveries. The economic toll the attacks took in Chinatown, and across New York City, are severely impacting

Henry Street's programs, and will continue to do so for a long time.

In Senior Services, an immediate concern after the attacks was ensuring that meal delivery would continue to nearly 500 homebound seniors. With streets closed and fresh food scarce due to the roadblocks, working conditions were less than ideal. When food supplies ran out, Henry Street's workers delivered food boxes provided by the City Meals-on-Wheels Program and Bloomberg Communications. Their work was critical. One meal recipient expressed her gratitude for Henry Street's perseverance by writing *The Daily News*, saying,

**"Despite black smoke, closed streets and silent phones, I received every meal, even on September 11th. The (meal deliverers) must be added to the list of magnificent heroes. It means so much to me to hear a friendly knock on my door, see a smiling face, and receive a hot meal and some nice words."**

The Good Companions Senior Center became an important hub for residents to gather, share news, and support each other.

**"Residents needed the chance to leave their apartments, turn off the ceaseless news coverage, and be with other people,"**

notes Janet Fischer, Chief Administrator of Senior Services. Good Companions established small language-based support groups that were held daily during the early days of the crisis. The groups, which now meet weekly, are held in English, Chinese, and Spanish and have proven to be positive ways for seniors to come together and help to ease each other's fears and anxieties.

The repercussions of the events on the children and teens in our community are still evolving says Nilsa Pietri, Chief Administrator of Henry Street's Youth Services. Two young adults in one of Henry Street's youth employment programs were pruning trees in Battery Park on the morning of September 11th. They stayed in the area for much of the day, assisting police and firefighters; however

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# News Briefs

## New Leadership at the Abrons Arts Center Begins

Henry Street welcomed Jane Delgado as the new Chief Administrator of the Abrons Arts Center in January 2002. A seasoned arts administrator and management consultant, Delgado was formerly the Executive Director of the Bronx Museum of Art and the Association of Hispanic Arts. "I am delighted to be at Henry Street where the arts have always been such a fundamental part of the community," said Delgado as she reflected on her first month on the job.

Delgado has a rich background in community arts, and in fostering collaborations between community service and arts organizations. As she explains, "I firmly believe that culture builds community. In many ways art is a spiritual foundation for the human being. Everyone should get the chance to be expressive, to create something with their own hands, or experience a moving performance. When they have had that experience, they will be stronger in their other pursuits."

Currently, Delgado is meeting with chiefs and program directors from Henry Street's other divisions to explore the possibility of joint projects. For instance, she plans to increase the number of youth and seniors who come to the Arts Center's broad array of performances and classes. She is also working with her own staff to define some long-term goals for the Arts Center.

Delgado succeeds Barbara Tate, who retired after more than twenty years at the Arts Center. During her tenure, Tate helped to design the Arts-in-Education Program that now serves over 17,000 school children; implemented an Asian American Outreach Initiative to bring relevant arts activities to the neighborhood's growing Asian population; launched the Nations of New York Festival and the Family Arts Series; and oversaw the renovation of the Harry De Jur Playhouse. In addition, Tate launched the popular Summer Arts Camp that will be named in her honor this summer.



George Hirose



San Weintraub



photos: San Weintraub



Henry Street's Abrons Arts Center and the Boys and Girls Republic (BGR) joined together this fall to offer a new after school arts program, Sidewalks, designed for children ages 10-14. The program, which combines art, movement, and personal development activities, was first launched in Chicago. The model initiative is now being replicated in New York City by the Partnership for After School Education (PASE). Henry Street was one of three sites chosen to pilot the program. In Sidewalks, children have learned mural making and ceramics, mastered the beginning steps of Capoeira, (a combination of martial arts and dance from Brazil), and participated in Passages (a personal development component that concentrates on community building.) They ended their first semester with a performance and the unveiling of their group mural. The mural, which features life-size self-portraits and the vibrant street life of the Lower East Side, was installed in the lobby of BGR.



## Henry Street Enters Cyberspace

This spring, Henry Street will add a new address to its campus. Yet this time, it is not on the Lower East Side, but in cyberspace. The official Henry Street web site, located at [www.henrystreet.org](http://www.henrystreet.org), will be launched in May 2002. "The web site is going to be an important asset for the whole Settlement," comments Joe Pennetti who co-chairs the Henry Street Settlement IT committee with Lorraine Ahto, Chief Administrator of the Community Consultation Center. This committee has overseen the two-year process of developing a Settlement site. The site will have multiple purposes, with each division using the web site to promote its programs, disseminate information, and create community. For instance, the Arts Center will be able to keep the community up-to-date on upcoming performances and classes. Shelter services plans to post the resumes of graduates from their work-readiness programs and generate job placements. Youth services will include program schedules, camp enrollment forms, and feature youths' writing.

The site will also provide important historical information on Henry Street's notable 100-year-plus legacy. Visitors will be able to take tours of Henry Street's landmark buildings, read about Henry Street's founder, Lillian Wald, and follow links to historical archives and references.

## Lorraine Ahto Honored

The CCC's longtime Chief Administrator and Director, Lorraine Ahto, received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the New York State Office of Mental Health in December 2001. This crowning award honored Ahto's lifetime of visionary leadership that has led the CCC to become a trailblazer in mental health services. James L. Stone, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Mental Health, praised the CCC's pioneering work and highlighted programs that have made significant contributions to the field. These include the CCC's development of a three-generational model of care for families affected by AIDS, Bi-Cultural Asian Outreach program, and overall integrated approach to helping persistently mentally ill adults recover.



Tequila Winsky

## New Shelter to Open

Last winter, construction began on a new Supportive Housing Development, which will provide housing, social, and psychiatric services to homeless families headed by a parent with AIDS or other immunological deficiency of a degenerative nature. Located on the Lower East Side, the shelter will include apartment-style housing units for thirteen families. "These families are coping with multiple stresses—the parent is sick, they are uncertain of the parent's life and the future of the children, and they are coping with significant familial conflict and anger," notes Lorraine Ahto, Chief Administrator of the Community Consultation Center (CCC). All families will be linked to the CCC which will offer a comprehensive range of services including: one-on-one and group counseling to adults and children, help in planning for the guardianship of the children, and medical treatment and medication management. Henry Street was chosen by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to lead the project based on its trailblazing work with families with AIDS. In the early 80s, just as the AIDS crisis was ravaging our neighborhood, CCC therapists developed a highly effective three-generational model of therapy that provides individual and group counseling to the parent with AIDS, as well as to the children and grandparents (who most likely become their guardians). The three-generational model has received nationwide acclaim and been replicated in many cities.



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