Self-Help Program Offers Support in Transition from Homelessness

Henry Street Settlement provides pathways to self-sufficiency.

One of the most innovative programs offered by Henry Street Settlement’s Transitional and Supportive Housing division is Self-Help, a homelessness-prevention program for families transitioning out of the shelter system and families outside of the system who are at risk of eviction. The program offers extensive case management services, such as support groups for shelter residents and life skills workshops, and serves about 150 families every year.

Self-Help prepares each client for a more self-sufficient life with instruction in vital areas such as financial literacy and budgeting, household management, nutrition, hygiene, parenting and conflict resolution. Many adult clients have never been the head of a household before they transition out of the shelter system. According to Program Coordinator Theresa Young, last year the program showed a 98% success rate, with only one client losing her apartment despite the best efforts of case workers.

When families relocate from the shelters to permanent housing situations, a case aide helps them transition into their new communities and connects them with resources they may need for support.

Ms. Pierce*, a client from Urban Family Center, has four children with severe chronic asthma. She was using the emergency room as their primary source of medical care, spending hours at a time there, until Self-Help located an asthma

Art Show Starts the Year off Strong

The sale of a limited edition Jim Dine print, The Henry Street Robes, 2005, was a generous and important contribution to the success of the 18th annual fundraiser. See Page 4

left: Chief Executive Officer Verona Middleton-Jeter (l) welcomed Honorary Art Show Chair Kitty Carlisle Hart.
“I thought it was too late for me to go back to school. [My case aide] helped me get my grandson in day care, and I went to a GED program. Now I feel ready to take the test. It is never too late.”

—Ms. Cooke, Self-Help client

School may be out until the fall, but Henry Street Settlement continues to reach out to young people in the critical summer months between semesters with employment opportunities that will help them on a path toward future success. The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) offered through the Settlement gives youth ages 14 through 21 important entry-level work experience.

SYEP is often a young person’s first and only opportunity for employment. Participants earn minimum wage working a maximum of 25 hours a week for seven weeks. They can earn about $1,150 in a summer. In the meantime, they also take 17 hours of education workshops in topics such as financial literacy, health, career development and college preparation.

Henry Street’s summer programs also give young people opportunities to develop social skills and begin their professional growth. Seventeen-year-old Timothy Colon was once at risk for dropping out of high school. He began seeking permanent employment in 2004. Through SYEP, he was encouraged to join the 2005 Counselor in Training (CIT) program at Camp Ralph and Rose Hittman. Behavioral structure at the camp helped Colon set goals for himself and focus on the mentally and physically demanding process of joining the program. He

*Clients’ names have been changed to protect their identities.
Real-World Experience
Summer Youth Employment

learned trust and teamwork. Now he’s enrolled in a GED program and earning college credits toward a mechanics degree.

David Kong, a high school junior, had a similar experience, having started with SYEP in 2005 as a junior counselor for Camp Henry. Though shy, he was enthusiastic and supportive, and learned quickly that he was a role model for his group of young campers. He overcame his shyness and excelled in his leadership role. From that initial summer, he joined the in-school youth program and flourished, most recently raising money for and participating in the New York AIDS Walk, an accomplishment he is very proud of.

This year, the Department of Youth and Community Development has funded Henry Street to fill 300 slots for summer youth jobs within the city and 414 slots for jobs outside of the city.

In addition, Henry Street’s In-School Program for Youth Employment and Education, which strives to improve the academic performance of teenagers through after-school work-readiness training and internships, guarantees summer work to all its 156 enrolled participants, provided they apply for it. According to Vance McDowell, who coordinates the program, 127 in-school participants alone submitted applications in 2006.

By the early June application deadline, Henry Street had received about 600 applications for out-of-city jobs and about 900 applications for in-city jobs, far more than Henry Street can accommodate, attesting to the popularity of the program and its importance to the youth of the community.

In an effort to secure additional SYEP funding, youth from Henry Street spoke up at a press conference and rally at City Hall in May. Twenty-two teenage and adult Youth Services representatives from Henry Street joined seven other community organizations at a rally later in the day as well, with the result that key City Council members and their colleagues pledged their support for restoring an additional $9.4 million for SYEP to the city’s 2007 fiscal year budget, identified by the council as a funding priority.

The dedication of young people to preserving these valuable opportunities validates the work of the Youth Services staff.

High school junior Shaquana Gardner knows the value of the program, having participated twice. She also has two years of experience in the in-school youth program, where she gained a solid foundation that has helped her hone her talents and set goals for herself. She is currently employed at a leading non-profit agency, where she has been steadily building up work experience.

Even in summer months, Henry Street Settlement does not lose sight of its commitment to the youth of the Lower East Side. Whether starting a young person on a path toward gainful and empowering employment, providing a chance to study subjects in the arts that might otherwise have been out of reach, or allowing students to escape the regular pressures of city living at a wooded, lakeside sleep-away summer camp, Henry Street continues to live out its mission of opening doors of opportunity to enrich lives and enhance human progress.
Art Show Starts the Year off Strong
Success of annual fundraising event surpasses that of previous years

The 18th Annual Art Show was a tremendous critical and financial success. This February’s Art Show, inaugurated with an elegant Preview evening, was the most successful yet, netting just over $1.1 million for the Settlement.

Proceeds from the Gala Preview, run-of-show ticket sales and a successful silent auction provide vital funding for Henry Street’s social services and arts programs. Generous support from lead underwriter Lehman Brothers and from Fairfield Greenwich Group significantly enhanced the financial success of this year’s event. The sale of a limited edition Jim Dine print, The Henry Street Robes, 2005, created and generously donated by the artist with the support of Pace Prints, also added notably to the bottom line.

Art world notables Agnes Gund, Kitty Carlisle Hart and Richard J. Schwartz served as Honorary Co-Chairmen. Steven and Heather Mnuchin, Byron and Anita Volz Wien, and Kathy and Richard S. Fuld, Jr. were Co-Chairmen. Henry Street board members joined the Chairmen to greet philanthropic ticket holders, gallery guests and representatives of ten generous Corporate Benefactors at the Gala Preview on February 22, 2006.

Close to 11,000 people attended the show over the five days it was presented at the Park Avenue Armory. Leaders from the worlds of art, business and media, including Oprah Winfrey, Glenn Close, Jerry Seinfeld, Steve Martin, Jerry Stiller and philanthropist Lily Safra were spotted enjoying the show and adding to their collections.