Learning and Development Critical for Early Childhood Center Students and Families

Our teams continue to adapt and optimize our online learning curriculum and to support our families outside of the classroom to enhance the educational and developmental experience for our young students. At the start of the school year, we welcomed our new and returning children and families to the Neighborhood House to safely meet their teachers and classmates, see their classrooms and learn more about our innovative and inclusive program. Each student received a backpack filled with at-home learning materials and a brand-new iPad loaded with educational applications curated by our staff. To enhance virtual learning and support, we implemented stimulating collaborations with other Neighborhood House programs, including art, music and movement sessions with our Visual and Performing Arts Teachers, English Language classes for parents with our Adult Education team, cooking workshops with our Teaching Kitchen Chefs and much more. To support our students and families beyond the classroom, we offer weekly meal pickup for our Early Childhood Center children and families. We are so proud of the incredible hard work and resiliency of our clients and staff—we remain dedicated to ensuring that our young learners and their families have the tools they need to flourish in our remote learning model during this unprecedented school year.
Women’s Shelter Continues to Support Our Most Vulnerable Neighbors During Crisis

Our Women’s Mental Health Shelter at the Park Avenue Armory serves homeless women age 45 and over living with significant mental illness. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, these women have been among our most vulnerable clients who have required our most significant individual and organizational efforts. So many teams have been involved in this critical work—Shelter staff, along with support from our Food Services, Facilities, Information and Communication Technology and Operations departments—to protect these clients who are at very high risk because of age and physical and mental health challenges.

The Neighborhood House provides essential COVID-19 testing for our Shelter clients and staff and we have experienced terrific participation from our clients, a testament to everyone’s joint commitment to communal health and safety. To encourage participation in our testing events, we give clients fun treats and incentives. Our participation has exceeded 67%, well above the City average. It is wonderful to see so many of our clients and staff come together and encourage others to get tested as we remain vigilant to keep them safe.

Lawyers Help Parents Establish Standby Guardianship in Case of Separation

Parents have the right to decide what happens to their children if they become temporarily separated. To address this critical issue, our Legal Advocacy team, in collaboration with our pro bono partners at Pfizer, hosted a virtual legal clinic for parents who are concerned about their immigration status or their health. This free and confidential clinic provided crucial information to help families to understand how to execute a standby guardianship, a legal document that lets parents choose a trusted relative or friend to care for their children in case of separation. Without this document, children could be placed in foster care in the event that the parent is placed in immigration detention, is deported or is incapacitated due to a health condition. Parents were reassured that the standby guardianship only becomes effective upon an immigration or health-related separation, and parents can revoke the document at any time.
Older Adults and Neighborhood House Staff Kick Off the Holidays with Special Thanksgiving Celebration

Staff from around the Neighborhood House were thrilled to provide an exciting and safe Thanksgiving Celebration for our older adult neighbors, consisting of 500 homemade Thanksgiving meals and eleven days of enriching virtual programming. Our talented Chefs prepared a delicious feast of Roast Turkey, Garlic and Sage Gravy, Cranberry Relish, Cornbread Stuffing, Brussels Sprouts Gratin, Maple Ginger Sweet Potatoes and Pumpkin Trifle, distributed to our Senior Center members and delivered to many of our homebound clients on the East Side, ensuring that hundreds of our older adult neighbors would enjoy a festive dinner during the holiday season. Our community also enjoyed a full schedule of virtual programs and events, including social hours, concerts, storytelling performances, a Talent Showcase with our RealArts After School students and more. We were also proud to premiere The Resiliency Project, a developing piece featuring Senior Center members’ personal experiences and challenges throughout the pandemic. This unique and memorable Thanksgiving Celebration was a fantastic way to safely kick off the holiday season and to virtually share thanks and celebrate together as a community.

The Teaching Kitchen® Develops eLearning Platform and Mobile App to Expand Farm-to-Institution Work Around the Nation

Our Teaching Kitchen team has already trained 129 nonprofits serving more than 10 million meals annually with our in-person training and technical assistance program and has now developed a groundbreaking new eLearning version and mobile app to reach even more nonprofits and to share our program model and best practices beyond New York City and New York State. We have been piloting this eLearning model with a number of senior centers and early childhood centers in Queens, on Long Island and in upstate New York as we continue to help as many nonprofits as possible to increase the amount of fresh, healthy and local food they serve their clients—without raising costs. Enrolled users of the eLearning course can download The Teaching Kitchen app on their Apple or Android devices to access our award-winning curriculum and a wide range of resources, including videos, recipes, interactive goal-setting materials and more. Our team is excited and hopeful that this past year, during which much of the nonprofit world learned to meet and share programming virtually, has helped to lay the groundwork for a successful implementation of this unique online training and technical support program.
RealArts After School Students Express Creativity in Remote Setting

Since the start of the school year, our fully virtual RealArts After School program has continued to provide so many wonderful moments of creative outlet and connection for our students in drama, dance, visual arts, music and so much more. Our Visual and Performing Arts team of seven talented artists created a full and diverse schedule of remote classes to offer dynamic daily arts-based programming to students in kindergarten through sixth grade. Young artists in our Visual Arts class created colorful fruits using paper plates and construction paper; aspiring musicians learned about musical moods and expressed the way different songs made them feel in our Music class; and our Friday afternoon Talent Shows, which have always been must-see events, offer a channel of expression to our children with monthly virtual showcases. The show must go on to keep our students captivated, curious and strong!

Volunteers and Older Adults Stay Connected with Friendly Visiting Program

Our Friendly Visiting program has seen an even greater demand for volunteers who are eager to support isolated older adults in our community during the COVID-19 crisis. The program, which has traditionally relied on in-person visits, transitioned to a remote model to provide a unique opportunity for volunteers who desire a fulfilling one-on-one experience to help their neighbors. Volunteers are thoughtfully matched with homebound older adults and the pairs then virtually connect via weekly telephone or video calls to provide essential socialization for our older adult clients. Together they cultivate lasting friendships, learn from each other’s experiences and benefit from the personal satisfaction derived from community service. With so many older adults still isolated, these social connections are more important than ever. To learn more about the program or to become a Friendly Visiting volunteer, please contact Lauren Goldman, Deputy Volunteer Director, at lgoldman@lenoxhill.org.
Young Neighbors Generate Impactful Donations for Neighborhood House Clients

Since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, we have received an incredible outpouring of support from so many friends and neighbors who believe in our mission and want to help our thousands of struggling clients. This includes such fantastic generosity and concern from some of our younger neighbors and partners, who have been using their creative talents to generate critical donations for our most vulnerable clients.

Lila Gimbel, a high schooler at nearby The Spence School, had previously volunteered regularly at one of our Senior Centers to serve meals and work at our welcome desk—she also performed with her dance group Dance Everything NYC. When the crisis forced our Senior Centers to suspend in-person programming, Lila and her dance group immediately responded and created an online marketplace for tie-dye clothing, with 100% of the proceeds to support our older adult members. “I knew that supporting the elderly community was more crucial than ever,” declared Lila. The online shop took off and Lila and Dance Everything NYC have donated nearly $6,000 thus far to help our older adult clients!

At our Women’s Mental Health Shelter, our clients received fabulous donations of toiletry kits and important funds from Beyond Z, a student group at KIPP Washington Heights Middle School. As part of their social justice class, “P.O.W.: People of the World,” the students focus on important issues that affect their community and complete creative projects to initiate positive change. To address hunger and homelessness, the group designed and sold t-shirts, and donated the proceeds to benefit the women in our Shelter.

In another act of outstanding generosity, local high school student Kristen Padilla of Marymount School of New York graciously gifted homemade cloth masks to the children in our Early Childhood Center. Kristen, a proud Girl Scout, constructed these reusable masks to earn her prestigious Gold Award and to help our young learners and their families to stay safe.

We are so grateful to Lila and Dance Everything NYC, Beyond Z and Kristen for their inspiring energy, enthusiasm and support for our clients!

Occupational Therapy Students Aid Homebound Clients

This past fall, we were privileged to welcome two graduate students from Columbia University’s Program in Occupational Therapy to our Geriatric Care Management team to join our efforts to protect the health and safety of our 1,800 frail and homebound older adult clients. These students visited our clients virtually to develop interventions such as screenings, health education and virtual home assessments to help our clients to age safely in place. To accommodate the transition to virtual visits, our Columbia graduate students created their own specialized evaluations to assess a client’s fear of falling and address their environmental and home safety concerns. They used video conferencing to virtually examine home environments, such as showers and bathrooms, to provide safety modification recommendations and practical at-home exercises. We also provided recommendations for appropriate adaptive equipment and devices for clients to use in their homes to ensure their utmost safety. Our thanks to these wonderful students for their commitment to supporting our older adult neighbors!
Juan de los Santos, Assistant Property Manager

If you entered the Neighborhood House through our iconic red front doors in the past few years, there was a good chance you were greeted enthusiastically by Juan de los Santos. Juan has been distributing warm welcomes, big smiles and high-fives since 2015 when he first joined us as a Porter and then served as a Receptionist on our Member and Visitor Services team.

Juan was recently promoted to Assistant Property Manager and is excited to be in a position where he will “take care of the bones of the building.” Juan has always been drawn to helping others and he loves being part of an organization that cares for so many: “I like the fact that I’m doing something that is bigger than me. The big picture is such a beautiful cause and I want to be part of that.” Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Juan has been a vital part of our essential work. During the summer, Juan and other Neighborhood House colleagues delivered and installed air conditioning units in the apartments of dozens of our homebound older adult clients. “That felt incredible,” Juan recalls. Clients welcomed our teams into their homes, and one took the opportunity to share with Juan that she loved to play backgammon and missed her weekly games with her daughter. Juan was so touched to learn her story and lend a compassionate ear, and stresses that “being able to connect with someone from a different generation, a different time, makes me feel good.”

Gina Reitmeier, Director of Homelessness Prevention Program

Gina Reitmeier was recently promoted to Director of our Homelessness Prevention Program, a new Neighborhood House initiative to increase our crucial work on behalf of some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers in our community. Gina first joined us in 2006 and has served in many roles, most recently as a Social Services Manager at our Women’s Mental Health Shelter. Gina has always loved her work with the clients in our Shelter and felt very connected to the women: “You just love unconditionally. You do it because you know it is needed.” Gina first learned about New York City’s shelter system while working at a shelter during college: “All of a sudden I found a place where I wanted to work…it’s the greatest thing that ever happened to me.”

Gina is excited to lead our new program, supported in part by a grant from New York State. Our program is designed to assist at least 400 individuals to avoid homelessness each year through a wide variety of interventions, well-suited for our multidisciplinary settlement house model. The program will center our work with other social services efforts to help individuals and families in a thoughtful, coherent and effective way and to keep hundreds safe and housed. Gina has a B.S. in Behavioral Science from Mercy College and studied Counseling in Mercy College’s Master’s program. She is fluent in French and Haitian Creole and has conversational Spanish. We are thrilled to have Gina in this new leadership role!
New Yorkers have depended on Lenox Hill Neighborhood House for 127 years and during the COVID-19 pandemic, our model of comprehensive services has never been more essential. Our dedicated teams continue to feed, shelter, educate, support and advocate for our most vulnerable neighbors. Our community is resilient—we will not stop fighting to protect the health and safety of our nearly 16,000 clients!
Casa Mutua Residents Benefit from Art Therapy

Art Therapy is one of our most popular group offerings among residents at Casa Mutua, our permanent supportive housing residence in East Harlem for 54 formerly homeless adults living with mental illness. The wellness program is a vital part of our holistic services, providing a supportive environment to focus on personal and community goals of building self-esteem, self-awareness, healthy expressive outlets and cognitive stimulation. The pandemic has been very challenging for all of our clients, especially those living with mental illness. We are delighted to offer hybrid in-person/virtual Art Therapy sessions to help our clients to cope with their mental health challenges and the pandemic and to reintroduce additional normalcy during an unfamiliar time. Each individual or small group session begins and ends with a peaceful meditation led by our Director of Art Therapy Jamie Shoneman, LCAT, ATR-BC, CASAC, via video feed, which is projected for participants in Casa Mutua’s Recreational Room. To ensure the safety of our residents, seats are limited and socially distant, attendees wear masks and the sessions are supervised by an on-site member of our Casa Mutua team. We remain dedicated to the health and safety of our clients as we continue to provide essential services to support our Neighborhood House community.

Senior Center Partnerships Flourish Online

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, our dedicated teams have provided a fabulous array of virtual classes to our Senior Center members. Many of our members live alone and cherish these classes as a vital lifeline to others in their community. One exciting aspect of our remote programming has been our ability to maintain partnerships with so many diverse organizations, instructors and volunteers. We have hosted virtual classes and events in partnership with the Whitney Museum of American Art, Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana, International Print Center New York, Asian American Writers’ Workshop, the Center for Jewish History, Sing For Your Seniors and more. We also continue our classes with Ansonia Music Outreach and with Deborah and Glenn Doering, who teach our popular art history class for members to discuss and explore modern art. We are so grateful to our many community partners and volunteers who help us to provide such a robust and versatile schedule of more than 55 virtual classes per week for our older adult clients.
Neighborhood House Clients of All Ages Hone Cooking Skills with Our Teaching Kitchen Chefs

With so many people spending more time at home these days, cooking, baking and discovering new recipes have become fixtures in our daily lives. The same goes for our fabulous Teaching Kitchen team! Chefs Evelyn Garcia and Seema Pai have been sharing their how-tos, tips and new creations through a series of interactive virtual cooking demonstrations for audiences across the Neighborhood House. Our Chefs kicked off soup season in the fall with a Pasta Fagioli workshop with our older adult members; they made healthy frittatas with eager mini-chefs in our Early Childhood Center and RealArts After School program; and our staff joined the fun with a special Vegetable Biryani and Cucumber Raita workshop. We are so grateful that our brilliant Chefs can share their expertise with so many members of our community to continue to build a healthier, more sustainable and more equitable food system. Let our Chefs inspire your home cooking by visiting lenoxhill.org/homerecipes to access dozens of delicious and healthy recipes.

CARE Group Thrives in Virtual Mode

Older adults in our CARE program continue to interact virtually with our staff and volunteers who transitioned this vital program to online sessions at the onset of the pandemic to keep our clients safe, engaged and socialized. This arts-based day program for older adults living with Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia draws on a person-centered approach and offers care and socialization services to individuals while providing respite services to their caregivers and families. Though members of the group are spread across New York City, they greatly enjoy our virtual programming, such as the weekly performances with our Music Teacher Kelsey Logan. We are so thankful that our talented team can still provide a packed schedule of creative, arts-based programming to help our clients to garner the benefits of socialization and community.

Executive Chef Michael Mangieri Recognized as Rising Star in NYC Food Policy

Neighborhood House Executive Chef Michael Mangieri was selected among the 2020 group of 40 Under 40: The Rising Stars in NYC Food Policy, awarded by the Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center. This prestigious group includes policymakers, educators, community advocates, farmers and innovators who are working to transform the food system. Together, these honorees are making significant strides to create healthier, more sustainable food environments and to use food to promote community and economic development. Chef Michael, who joined the Neighborhood House in 2018, is a graduate of the Northwest Culinary Academy of Vancouver and previously worked in farm-to-table restaurants Roman’s and Marlow & Sons in Brooklyn, and in the fine dining industry in Manhattan for Aquavit and Dovetail. Chef Michael now leads our Food Services team to serve fabulous farm-to-table meals so that our low-income clients can access healthy, fresh, locally sourced and sustainable foods. This was the second year in a row the Neighborhood House was recognized; Teaching Kitchen Chef Evelyn Garcia received the honor in 2019.
Older Adults Improve Technology Skills Through One-on-One Assistance

Throughout these challenging times, the Neighborhood House continues to provide technology support to our low-tech older adult clients and neighbors. This free and individualized assistance from our Adult Education team is particularly valuable at a time when knowing how to navigate virtual programs and meetings is a vital skill for older adults and helps them to stay safely engaged and connected to their community. To ease the anxiety that comes with being a novice at technology, our staff and volunteers crafted creative ways to view clients' screens or walk them through a lesson over the telephone. These virtual sessions teach our older adult students to use Zoom and other video conferencing platforms, navigate their mobile devices, connect to the internet and send photos and documents via email. For more information about our remote Adult Education programs for older adults, please contact Sara Woodson, Director of Adult Education, at 212-218-0477 or swoodson@lenoxhill.org.

Early Childhood Center Students Benefit from Continued NYU Partnership

Though the landscape of education has changed during the pandemic, we are fortunate that our ongoing partnership with the New York University Speech-Language Pathology program was able to successfully transition and fold into our remote learning model. Working alongside our Early Childhood Center Teachers and Social Workers, bilingual speech-language pathologist graduate students facilitate weekly group classes for our three-year-old students to help our preschoolers to improve their communication skills. In these classes, our young learners listen to book readings and participate in activities based on the stories. In a session with our Sunshine and Rainbow students, for example, children learned about insects and the movements that these animals make, then mimicked the movements to fly like butterflies, walk like ants, hop like grasshoppers and roll like roly-polies. We are so pleased to continue this important partnership and offer this indispensable individualized attention to our students.
Leave Your Legacy to Ensure a Better Tomorrow for Our Community

Planned giving, or legacy giving, is a wonderful way to support Lenox Hill Neighborhood House and to ensure that future generations benefit from our life-changing programs and talented staff. Those who make a planned gift to Lenox Hill Neighborhood House are recognized as members of the 1894 Society, ensuring that their legacy is forever tied to the history of the Neighborhood House and to the improvement of our community.

“The 1894 Society reflects the wonderful history of Lenox Hill Neighborhood House and our individual commitment to ensuring that the organization will continue to meet the needs of future generations of New Yorkers.” – Helene Goldfarb, Member of the Board of Directors

For more information, please contact Derek Samuelson, Director of Advancement, at 212-218-0544 or dsamuelson@lenoxhill.org.

Neighborhood House Provides New Air Conditioners to Older Adults

In anticipation of the summer months and the danger that rising temperatures present to older adults, the Neighborhood House purchased, delivered and installed brand new air conditioners in the homes of dozens of older adult clients from our Geriatric Care Management program and our two Senior Centers. Heat can be deadly for many older adults and it was critical to provide these units to some of our older adult neighbors who lacked air conditioning and could not afford to purchase and install their own units. For many clients, this was their first time ever having an air conditioner. Our clients were all so appreciative to welcome our staff into their apartments and receive these necessary upgrades that allowed them to remain safe and comfortable at home throughout the summer.

Older Adult Neighbors Rely on Legal Advocacy Team for Medicare Guidance

Each year, adults 65 and over with Medicare are entitled to select a private insurance plan to receive prescription drug coverage. During this process, older adults compare dozens of private health plans to determine which plans cover their medications at affordable prices and with the fewest restrictions. This can be a daunting task for many, as this comparison process is best done using an online system. Neighborhood House Lawyers and Advocates, in collaboration with our pro bono partners at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson LLP and Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP again joined forces to provide individual counseling appointments for older adults to help them to review available plans and analyze the voluminous information presented in the online system. These 2020 clinics were virtual and crucial to our neighbors—securing affordable prescription drug coverage is critical to their economic stability and well-being.