

UNION SETTLEMENT

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UNION SETTLEMENT SURVEY DEMONSTRATES CONCERNS AND NEEDS OF EAST HARLEM RESIDENTS

Need to improve schools ranks as top issue of survey participants, followed by need for jobs, reducing crime, and building more affordable housing

Union Settlement Association (www.unionsettlement.org) today announced the results of its biennial Community Assessment Survey of over 1,000 individuals who utilize Union Settlement's programs and services in East Harlem. The survey was conducted with the assistance of the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, which helped design the survey and compiled the results.

The need to improve schools ranked as the top concern, with over 35% of respondents indicating that as the "most important" of 14 issues presented in the survey, and over 50% of respondents saying it was among their top three concerns. This was followed by the need to create more job opportunities (listed by 16% as the top concern and 48% as one of the top three concerns), reducing crime (14%/43%) and building more affordable housing (6%/31%).

The survey also asked residents to indicate which issues they considered "extremely important," even if it was not their top concern, and reducing crime again topped the list, as it had in Union Settlement's 2012 survey, with 77% of respondents indicating that issue was extremely important. This was followed by providing affordable health care (73%), improving schools (73%), building more affordable housing (72%) and creating more job opportunities (71%). These same five issues had all topped 70% in the 2012 survey as well.

"This survey demonstrates that the "big five" issues – schools, jobs, crime, housing and health care – have remained consistent over time," said David Nocenti, Union Settlement's Executive Director. "East Harlem is a vibrant community, and like in so many areas of the country, families want a safe and affordable place to live, work, and educate their children."

The survey also revealed differences in priorities among different groups of program participants. For example, for parents of children in the Early Childhood Education program, the most important issue was improving schools (41%), followed by creating more job opportunities (16%). Elderly residents in our Senior Services program, in contrast, listed reducing crime (35%) as their top priority followed by improving schools (17%), while the top priority for those in our Mental Health program was building more affordable housing (21.4%).

Union Settlement has been providing vital education, wellness and community-building services to the residents of East Harlem and surrounding communities since 1895. Union Settlement conducts an anonymous survey of the participants in its programs every two years,

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asking about issues of concern to the community, as well as a wide variety of questions relating to Union Settlement’s services, including which programs they utilize and how satisfied they are with those programs.

The 2014 survey revealed that 97% of program participants were either “always” or “usually” satisfied with Union Settlement’s services, and 99% would recommend Union Settlement’s programs to someone else.”

“We obviously are extremely pleased with these results,” said Mr. Nocenti. “Union Settlement has deep roots in the East Harlem community, and we consider those who utilize our programs to be part of our extended family. We work hard to ensure that our programs are of the highest quality, and it is great to get such positive feedback from those we serve.”

A team of professors and students from the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, led by Assistant Professor Nancy Giunta and Research Associates Petra Vega and Kathleen McKenna, helped to update the survey and compile the results.

"It is critical that service providers know what the community thinks it needs, and not just what we think people need," said Jacqueline Mondros, Dean of the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College. “You can see that East Harlem residents need what we all need— good schools, jobs, housing, safety. Since we relocated in East Harlem in 2011, over 100 of our students intern in East Harlem, and many faculty members are involved in projects here. Surveys like this one ensure that we have the pulse of the community as we do our work here.”

The 2014 survey included responses from a total of 1,028 participants in eight major programs – Adult Education, Early Childhood Education, College Readiness, Credit Union, Family Child Care Network, Mental Health Counseling, Senior Services and Youth Services. In addition to the substantive results, the survey provided a wealth of demographic information about the individuals served by these programs.

For example, respondents were born in over 40 countries, with only about two-thirds (61%) born in the United States, followed by Mexico (9%), Puerto Rico (7%), and the Dominican Republic (6%). Most respondents (53%) identified themselves as Latino/Hispanic, 34% as Black/African American, 4% as multi-racial, and 3% as White/Caucasian and 2% as Asian. Almost two-thirds (64%) of the respondents live in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings.

The primary language spoken in respondents’ homes was mostly English (58%) or Spanish (32%), with the remaining 10% divided among 18 different languages, with the most common being Arabic, French, Wolof and Mandarin. A large majority of the respondents were women (72%). Older adults (age 60 or over) represented 10% of respondents, and 24% were under 18 years old.

About Union Settlement Association

Union Settlement Association is an on-the-ground resource for East Harlem residents of all ages, and a passionate advocate for the needs of underserved communities. Since opening our doors in 1895, we have brought education, wellness and community-building programs to our

neighborhood, empowering New Yorkers with opportunities to better their lives. With a staff of more than 350 and services that impact 10,000 people, Union Settlement is building the vitality and success of East Harlem. For more information visit www.unionsettlement.org.

About the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College

The Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College School, established in 1958, is the oldest publicly sponsored graduate social work program in the City of New York. The school's focus is on excellence in education for social work practice, and its graduates are known for providing leadership in addressing major social problems in our ever changing society. Through its educational programs and all of its activities, the School of Social Work especially seeks to enhance the well-being of poor, vulnerable and stigmatized populations in our society. The faculty of the School of Social Work is nationally and internationally known for its teaching, scholarship and contributions to the field of study. They are focused on agency based social work practice, education of their students, and knowledge-building through research.

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