Capitol Hall Residence: an Exciting Transformation Underway

After more than three years of pre-development work, Goddard Riverside has begun a historic renovation of Capitol Hall, one of the first-ever supportive housing residences made available for formerly homeless men and women in the city of New York. Located on West 87th Street and home to 200 residents, the history of this building tells the story of a community that came together to fight for its neighbors, preserving the diversity and richness that is the hallmark of the Upper West Side.

Once a luxurious turn-of-the-century apartment house, Capitol Hall was in need of significant updating (the last renovations had been done in the late 1980s). Following a long and complex negotiation with the City and investors under the federal low income housing tax program, the exciting process of this $16 million renovation began earlier this year.

This renovation will result in a complete transformation of Capitol Hall, with redesigned common areas, a beautiful interior atrium and many safety improvements.

But perhaps the most welcome changes will happen in the 200 units themselves. Residents used to share common restrooms and a kitchen space at the end of each hall, an outdated feature of old SROs that needed to be changed. The renovation will include the installation of private baths and kitchenettes in almost all of the private units, turning these “rooms” into “homes” in a very meaningful way.

Construction photos courtesy of Bob Roher
The fall always brings with it a sense of a new beginning. At Goddard Riverside Community Center you can witness this when you feel the excitement of pre-schoolers on their first day of the new school year; hear the clamor of children in our afterschool centers; and see the anxious excitement in the eyes of our Options students, many of them the first in their families to go to college, as they set off on the adventure of their lives. Goddard Riverside’s focus on education has its historic roots in the early days of the settlement house movement where neighborhood centers were vehicles for recently arrived immigrants to escape the effects of poverty and build a better life for themselves.

Today, Goddard Riverside is the quintessential modern-day settlement house with strong neighborhood roots that touch the lives of over 17,000 people across generations and different life circumstances. Our reach, however, goes far beyond our neighborhood, as we have become “thought and result” leaders in areas as diverse as homeless outreach, supportive housing, food security and college access.

The entrepreneurial spirit of the early settlement house leaders who tackled some of our most vexing social issues is alive and well today at Goddard Riverside. You will see as you read through this newsletter that we are at the forefront of addressing the needs of some of the city’s most vulnerable citizens. These are people whose lives and genuine accomplishments rarely make the headlines. Some of them reside on the margins of our city, and our job as community builders is to bring them into the fold, engage them, care for them, and give them tools they need to better their lives and the lives of their children.

Today, even in our well-heeled city, one in four children grows up in poverty, and the level of income inequality grows greater each day. At Goddard Riverside, we believe that the solutions to these critical issues lie in the creation of strong communities. We find ourselves at an exciting crossroads as we prepare for new political leadership citywide. This is an extraordinary opportunity to take stock, gather our collective energies and wisdom, and lead on behalf of those who need us most.

Stephan Russo,
Executive Director
Victory For SRO Tenants

Goddard Riverside’s SRO Law Project – the legal assistance and advocacy program - recently achieved a monumental victory for single room occupancy (SRO) tenants throughout New York City by obtaining a winning decision before the state appellate division. The decision clarifies the definition of a “permanent tenant” in the Rent Stabilization Code as it refers to tenants living in SROs and hotels and how those tenancy rights are obtained. The definition of a “permanent tenant” was essentially rendered meaningless – and thus jeopardized the rights of thousands of SRO tenants – after a prior decision by the appellate term drastically altered those rights.

This victory has far-reaching effects for SRO tenants city-wide and the preservation of SRO housing, which is a fundamental component of what remains of the rapidly dwindling affordable housing stock in New York City.

Also, Marti Weithman, director of the SRO Law Project, received the 2013 United Neighborhood Houses Award for Civic Advocacy for her vigorous organizing and advocacy work fighting illegal tourist rentals in SROs and apartments throughout the City. For over a decade, the SRO Law Project has been fighting SRO landlords who harass tenants out of their homes in order to maximize their profits by renting to tourists on a nightly basis. This practice is unlawful because the buildings are required to be rented for periods of thirty days or longer based on the laws of New York, including building and fire safety laws. In addition to this practice being unlawful and putting at risk the lives of permanent tenants and the unsuspecting tourists, it is depriving New Yorkers of valuable affordable permanent housing.

Congratulations to Marti and the SRO Law Project team!

Books are Magic!

It’s almost that time again! The 27th Annual New York Book Fair returns on Saturday and Sunday, November 23 – 24, 2013. Goddard Riverside will transform into a book lover’s paradise, offering deep discounts on current best sellers, classic books and great holiday gifts. More than 3,000 people will join with fellow bookworms, local authors and members of the community for this annual fall favorite. Be sure to mark your calendars and join us!

For more information on attending, donating, or volunteering for the Book Fair, please call 212-873-6600.
A Little Kindness Goes a Long Way

Karen Pryor, Receptionist
30 years at Goddard Riverside Community Center

She is the first person that people greet at Goddard Riverside Community Center’s main office, and from staff to seniors and all those in between, she knows everyone by name. Karen Pryor doesn’t just answer the phones and operate the switchboard; she is the first face visitors see, an information hub, and sometimes a traffic cop among the energetic members of the Senior Center. This fall, Karen celebrated a milestone anniversary at Goddard Riverside and recently sat down to talk about her experience.

Tell us about how you got to Goddard Riverside.
I began with Goddard Riverside’s summer camp program in 1983, and after four years as a camp nurse and then a camp registrar, I transitioned to my current position. After becoming a mom, I needed a position that would give me a more flexible schedule and management was very helpful and accommodating. That’s how I ended up here.

What is a typical day like for you?
No day here is typical! My job is very fast-moving and requires me to wear many hats. I answer the phones and everyone’s questions, connect them to the right people, and make sure I keep tabs on everyone who walks through those doors. I also make sure that everyone who comes by is welcomed and feels good about coming here. At a place as busy as Goddard, being a receptionist requires much more than you would imagine.

30 years at one place is a long time. What has kept you here?
I love Goddard. This organization continues to do great work in our community and I’ve witnessed firsthand the way we have changed lives. Personally, staff and members have become like family to me and have been a part of many of my life’s milestones. My son has grown up here, has gone to the programs and even worked here too! I was able to get my Bachelors degree while working here full time and was supported during the process. Being here really feels like being home for me.

Congratulations to Karen Pryor on 30 years!

Home Delivered Meals: Neighbors Helping Neighbors

At Goddard Riverside, meals often play a large role in helping us build community. Through meals, we celebrate the holidays and exceptional individuals making a difference, and – perhaps most important – we provide some of our most vulnerable neighbors with the resources they need to stay safe and secure in their own homes.

Thanks to our generous supporters, our Home Delivered Meals program serves more than 450 meals a day to homebound seniors on the Upper West Side, providing a steady source of home-cooked meals for elderly women and men who face physical and financial challenges. Nutritious, delicious meals aren’t the only thing we provide through this service: our staff make regular visits each day, checking in to ensure clients are healthy and safe.

When Elba, an 80-year-old woman living alone, needed help, her neighbors turned to our Home Delivered Meals service to find it. Elba didn’t have children and didn’t have any family nearby, and her neighbors began to worry when they learned that Elba had trouble getting food, in addition to mounting financial challenges.

Thanks to her neighbors’ concerns and to individuals and companies that support us, Elba is able to receive meals every day, as well as other support from our staff and partners. Today Elba can remain safe in her home, knowing that her neighbors are not only looking out for her, but helping her during difficult times.
On June 13th, a younger-than-usual crowd filled the Senior Center as this year’s Options Scholarship recipients, looking spiffy and a little nervous, gathered for their annual awards ceremony. Each year, a committee of Goddard Riverside staff and board members selects the winners after reviewing transcripts, essays, financial need and recommendations.

Lily Owen, Director of the Options program, noted that one of the criteria considered – each student’s level of involvement in Options – was connected to thriving in college. “Understanding how to become part of a community and to take full advantage of available resources is critical to success in college and in life,” she said, and asked the students to stay active in Options’ College Success Program and to give back to those who will follow.

Options’ alumna Anna Gabriela Urizar, Syracuse University Class of 2013, was on hand to do just that. She urged those following in her footsteps to be active in campus life and seek out pre-professional opportunities such as internships.

The emotional ceremony included personal introductions by the students’ counselors and words of encouragement from Scholarship Committee member Florence Janovic and Executive Director Stephan Russo.

**Recipients of the 2013 OPTIONS scholarships are:**

**Options Promise of the Future:**
Kirti Baral, Agustin Barcenas, Meijun Cai, Giovanni Chacon, Maria Gonzalez, Aaliyah Neilan, Bushra Sarwar, and Sirine Soussi

**The Fannie Eisenstein Award:**
Ashley Perez

**Lester Martin Award:**
Alexa Marshall, Jennings McCarthy, Alessandra Rios, and Linchun Yang

**The Joe Janovic Scholarship:**
Bria Culpepper

The students are currently attending several City University and State University of New York campuses, ranging from community colleges to selective schools such as SUNY Binghamton, as well as Fordham University.

For more information on our Options program, or to find out how we can help you prepare for and succeed in college, visit [www.goddard.org](http://www.goddard.org) or call 212-678-4667.

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**Holiday Dinners, Uniting at Our Community Table**

The holiday season is fast approaching, and the Holiday Dinner Committee is hard at work planning this holiday tradition. As we do every year, we will serve Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners to more than 2,500 individuals and families in need while uniting our community during the festive season. Our committee of volunteers is responsible for organizing the dinners, raising funds and gathering the resources from local supporters and vendors in our community. This year, our team must raise at least $25,000 to cover the costs of food and supplies that are not donated.

Each year, volunteers organize and serve at our Holiday Meals event.

Goddard Riverside Community Center has been the home of the Holiday meals program since 1985 and offers a convivial environment for attendees and volunteers alike. In the more than 40 years since they began, the dinners have become a neighborhood tradition embracing the Goddard Riverside mission and carrying on the message continued on page 6.
of building community and caring for the hungry and those New Yorkers most in need. This initiative would not be possible without the commitment of and generous donations from volunteers and local businesses. With the demand for meals continually increasing, we need help from the wider Goddard Riverside community.

This holiday season we are specifically seeking donations of turkeys (preferably cooked) and desserts (packaged or homemade pies, cakes or cookies) for both holidays. We also welcome the participation of school and community groups in organizing bake sales and/or baking cookies and pies for our dinners. If you are an individual, small business, corporation or organization that can help make this year’s Holiday Meals a success, please call us at 212-873-6600, ext. 301 or e-mail us at holidaymeals@goddard.org. You may also help by volunteering or making an individual donation. Our team has welcomed volunteers from across the country and around the world, and this year we look forward to our returning and new faces! If you would like to register as a volunteer or to make a donation, please visit our website at goddard.org/holidaymeals.

We appreciate your thoughts and contributions, as we have for more than four decades. We look forward to sharing this holiday season with you at these wonderful community events.

Phelps House Celebrates 30 Years

This past July, Goddard Riverside Community Center, along with residents, friends and neighbors, celebrated the 30th anniversary of Phelps House – our supportive residence for seniors - with a multicultural celebration complete with dinner, awards and live entertainment. Councilwoman Gale A. Brewer, honored Phelps with a proclamation praising its “commitment to provide safe, comfortable housing for older adults and people with mobility impairments.”

Phelps House, built in 1983, has 167 units, and is home to men and women of 27 different nationalities. The average age of residents is 76 years old. In addition to affordable and independent housing, Phelps House provides case management services to address social service needs and offers activities that promote socialization and foster community.

Dolly, a resident for 27 years shared: “I’m in a wheelchair and this building is accessible. I have the freedom to go out and go places and nobody’s nagging me!”

Another long-term tenant, Darlene says “It’s nice and quiet here, staff looks out for you and they have different things to keep you occupied. You can’t be bored here.”

Happy 30th Birthday, Phelps House!
Your Vote, Your Choice!

On November 5, 2013 New Yorkers will be voting in what promises to be a watershed election. With term limits, there will be an almost complete change in elected NYC leadership with a new Mayor, Comptroller, Public Advocate, four of five Borough Presidents and almost half of the NYC Council. Throughout our community center, we have been conducting a non-partisan voter registration drive and providing information to assist voters on election day.

Voters are strongly urged to confirm: their registration, their polling site (where to vote) and their Election District (table where you sign in to vote). Many polling sites and EDs have changed, so it’s important to verify.

To confirm your voter registration status, your polling site and Election District go to: http://vote.nyc.ny.us/html/voters/status.shtml and follow links.

If you are temporarily or permanently unable to go to your poll site on Election Day, you may vote by absentee ballot. You must complete an absentee ballot application and mail it to the Board of Elections (BOE) to obtain a ballot. You can download an application at: http://vote.nyc.ny.us/html/voters/absentee.shtml.

For more information on the elections and advocacy on budget and policy issues, visit: www.goddard.org/page/family-council-101.html.

Your vote is your voice, don’t be silent!

Where Art & Community Connect

From Afro Root Tuesdays, to opera, chamber music, documentaries, jazz concerts, hip-hop nights, and international theater, the Bernie Wohl Center is fast becoming a vibrant space on the Upper West Side for cultural and educational programs. Recently, we exhibited an art installation, 80’s Subway Paintings, which drew audiences from all over the city and the tri-state area. If you missed that, there are many exciting events planned in our newly renovated and inviting space. This fall and winter promises to offer exciting experiences for the entire family to enjoy! Upcoming musical events include the Jambalaya Brass Band, a string octet concert by the Harlem Chamber Players, arias sung by Underworld Productions Opera, and a family square dance.

The Hudson Warehouse Theatre will take up residency at the Bernie Wohl Center this year, and for three weekends in November will perform The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged).

That is just a sneak peak at the 2013-2014 season which will be filled with provocative documentaries, dance, music from around the world, poetry nights and live theatre. Our space is open to all our neighbors and the events are free.

We are proud to offer a variety of events that unite members of our community and introduce culturally diverse art forms. We invite our community to our performing and visual arts events in our beautiful auditorium, home for artists to create and share and for audiences to view and experience a variety of art forms.

For updates on community events, visit www.goddard.org/communityarts.
Upcoming Events

Goddard Riverside hosts programs, experiences and fundraising events for the entire family to enjoy! For more information on any of these opportunities, please visit our website at www.goddard.org.

OCTOBER

Annual Gala
Wednesday, October 30

Arias & Songs by Underworld Productions Opera
Wednesday, October 30

NOVEMBER

Back Alley Players
Wednesday, November 6, 7 p.m.,
at 593 Columbus Avenue

The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Abridged)
by the Hudson Warehouse Theatre
November 7-24 (dark on 22),
Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m.; Sundays, 7 p.m.;
Nov. 9, 10, 16, 17, Matinees Saturday and Sunday, 2 p.m.

NOVEMBER continued

The 27th Annual New York Book Fair!
Get great deals on new releases, classics & best sellers!
Saturday – Sunday, November 23 & 24

DECEMBER

Family Concert Series: The Superious Experience with Wayne Garland Ventriloquist, Magician and Illusionist
Saturday, December 7, 11 a.m.

Junior Mance Trio
Thursday, December 19, 7 p.m.
at 593 Columbus Avenue