



Volunteer Newsletter

Winter 2015
Volume 1 Issue 3

Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement
“Not just a place to go, but a place to grow”

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A Chat with Senior Services Director, Robert Madison



Senior Services’ Director, Robert Madison joined the Riis Settlement team on February, 2011. He brought with him an extensive and outstanding professional career. Before joining Riis Settlement, he served as Senior Manager for Harlem Children’s Zone and as the Executive Director for Project Reach Youth, Inc. He is also a proud recipient of a Masters in Public Health from Hunter College.

Besides many other challenges faced in his position, Robert Madison shared with Volunteer Coordinators an unexpected challenge he had to face entering his new position, coping with the permanent loss of his participants. He recounts how just last year about 7-8 seniors passed away. Since then, Mr. Madison made it his priority to provide services to ensure that seniors live longer, healthier, and socially active lives.

Future Plans

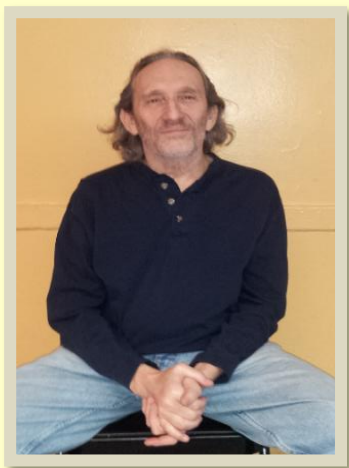
Mr. Madison hopes to create a strong and robust activities’ schedule to keep seniors engaged, entertained, and healthy. He wants to take seniors to places they never been to in their entire lives. In order to implement the number of activities and services, Robert Madison envisions an increase in the space available to the seniors. He also hopes to see an increase in the number of volunteers that come in to share their talents with the seniors. In addition, his goal is to create activities appealing to seniors who are still active in the society.

Importance of Riis Volunteers

Lastly, Mr. Madison commented: “Volunteers are life savers. Every time a volunteer steps in our center, we become a step closer to our goals. Without the skills and contributions volunteers bring to Riis Settlement, many of our initiatives would not be accomplished due to the lack of resources. Further, volunteers help seniors acquire new skills and to develop support mechanisms for themselves. Thanks to you, Riis Volunteers, critical work can be accomplished!”



*Volunteers display their
Certificates of Appreciation*



Volunteer Spotlight: Phil Braun

Tai-Chi Instructor, Senior Services Program

“You can get a lot out of volunteering. I advice volunteers to be consistent in their commitment. If you put in the time, you will begin to see the results.”

Phil has been volunteering as a Tai-Chi Instructor for Riis Settlement’s Senior Services since August of 2009. Phil came to Riis’ to equip seniors with a discipline of meditative movements known as Tai-Chi. During his service, Phil has engaged seniors in exercises that, although not rigorous, help seniors improve all system of the body. Riis staff and senior participants thank Phil for helping to keep our seniors strong and healthy!

Q: What interested you in teaching Tai-Chi to seniors?

A. I became interested in teaching Tai-Chi because it is a great exercise for seniors. During Tai-Chi sessions, seniors engage in slow moving exercises that help all systems of the body but that are not rigorous. Seniors can do these exercises without much effort.

Q: What do you enjoy the most about your volunteer work with Senior Services?

A. I enjoy being able to share with others something that has practical value.

Q: What has been your favorite memory from your volunteer work at Riis Settlement?

A. When at least 8-10 seniors come to the class. It is nice to hear their feedback once class is over; that they got something out of the class.

Q: What is something you have learned through volunteering?

A. Teaching Tai-Chi has been a learning experience for me. I had to learn how to teach to others the knowledge I had about Tai-Chi’s benefits.

Q: What advice do you have for other volunteers?

A. You can get a lot out of volunteering. I advice volunteers to be consistent in their commitment. If you put in the time, you will begin to see the results.

Q: Do you have anything else you would like to share?

A. I like to see many more people benefiting from Tai-Chi.

Thank you Phil for your dedicated service to the Western Queens community!

West Point Cadets Dedicate a Day of Service to Riis Settlement!



On Friday, November 14th, fourteen West Point Cadets from the United States Military Academy visited Riis Settlement for a full day of service. During the first half of their day, cadets assisted at the Senior Center to clean up leaves in the yard and to serve meals to the seniors. Cadets dedicated their afternoon to helping our young scholar do their homework and other fun activities.

Riis Staff would like to commend West Point Cadets for their service and commitment to acting as catalysts for change. Their service was of great value to our Queensbridge community! Thank you!

Oliver's Scholars Painting Project



Oliver's Scholars after painting project at the Senior Center

On November 26th, Oliver's Scholars visited Riis for their Annual Community Service Day. Thanks to them, Queensbridge now has a clean, painted, and well-organized storage room. This could not have been done without these young scholars' arduous work.

9th Annual Fall Family Feast



Citi Volunteers cutting delicious pumpkin pies!

On November 15th, 2014, Citibank and Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House hosted their 9th Annual Fall Family Feast at Riis Settlement's Queensbridge site. More than 50 dedicated Citi volunteers and Riis Settlement staff served free, nutritious holiday meals to more than 800 local community members! Whether in the kitchen chopping vegetables, serving turkey to our guests, or doing art activities with the children, volunteers played a key role in making this event a success! Thank you Citi Volunteers!

2014 Winter Volunteer Recognition Event!



On Tuesday, December 16th, Riis Volunteer Management office recognized and thanked volunteers for their continuous commitment to serving Riis Settlement. The event was certainly a success! This, however, was only a small token of our appreciation for your service which is unmistakably invaluable to us. Since not all of you were able to join us, we want to take this space to express our gratitude for the service hours and dedication each of you has contributed to the Queensbridge community!

More Exciting Volunteer Opportunities!

- **Friday Afterschool Tutor**
Helps students grades K-5 in their school assignments and other fun activities on Friday afternoons!
- **Spanish Workshop Leader (Senior Services)**
Introduce senior community members to basic conversational Spanish!
- **Computer Instructor (Seniors Services)**
Teach seniors computer basics and efficient ways to put them to the test!
- **Newsletter Developer (Volunteer Management)**
Assist the Volunteer Management office to develop Riis' monthly Adult Services Newsletter

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To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please visit:

<http://riisvolunteers.blogspot.com/>

Announcements:

- Please Sign Up for **Orientation** at www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0F4EA5AB2FA6FC1-jacob
- **Conversation Partners Returns!**
 - **SATURDAY'S:** January 17th - 1pm to 3pm (35-40 21st Street, Astoria, NY 11106)
 - **WEDNESDAY'S:** January 21st - 6pm to 8:45pm (IS 126, located at 31-51 21st Street in Astoria)

THANK YOU RIIS SETTLEMENT VOLUNTEERS!