Annual Report 2015

A Place to Grow

Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement









Who We Are

Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement is a community-based non-profit organization that offers educational, cultural, social and legal services to youth, seniors, immigrants and families throughout Western Queens, New York. The crux of our mission is a comprehensive strategy that addresses the whole person. We provide the resources, opportunities and supports that serve as a *catalyst* for community members to reach their greatest potential and achieve social and economic self-sufficiency.

Founded in 1899, Riis Settlement is named in honor of Jacob Riis, the Danish-American social reformer and photojournalist who advocated for grassroots reforms in New York's poorest communities through the work of settlement houses. Today Riis Settlement serves more than 1,200 participants daily through senior health and wellness programs, English language classes, afterschool activities and college access workshops.



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Grace Tully Riis Academy Program Director (Information Technology High school)

Annual Report 2015



A Message from the Executive Director

In 2015, Riis Settlement continued to expand and embrace new and innovative ways to meet the needs of its participants. Through collaborative projects with community partners and the implementation of new initiatives, the agency continued to successfully execute its mission of being a provider of comprehensive services for the residents of the underserved communities in Western Queens.

This year, as part of the Queens Connect Collaborative, we worked closely with our partners Queens Community House, Sunnyside Community Services, and Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation to solidify plans for the implementation of a borough-wide food sec-

tor-based workforce development program. The program, which was specifically designed to address the chronic lack of employment opportunities for disconnected and at-risk youth in our communities, gives our youth the skills needed to gain entry into the food business sector. The program is now on its fourth cohort, and we are already seeing great results.

Relatedly, in an effort to combat the extremely high unemployment and poverty rates that plague participants in our immigrant services program, we began incubating a worker cleaning cooperative. The venture empowers our most economically marginalized participants by helping them realize their inherent potential as business owners who can come together and pool their resources to achieve greater prosperity and upward mobility. We have great hope that we will be able to build off the success of this inaugural cooperative to help even more of our participants become self-sustaining.

While new initiatives burgeoned, our other program areas experienced enormous growth. We began administering violence prevention programs at C.S. 111 Jacob Blackwell and I.S. 204 Oliver W. Holmes; we successfully completed the first year of our after-school program at P. S 171 Peter G. Van Alst; and we began preparing for the transition to a full after-school program at C.S. 111 Jacob Blackwell. The senior services department continued to experience an increasing rate of participation, and as a reflection of the changing demographics of the neighborhood, more and more Asian and Middle Eastern participants are now availing of the agency's services.

In recognizing the year's achievements, I must also recognize the hard work and efforts of the Riis Settlement staff and Board of Directors, and acknowledge the generous support of all our donors and funders. Your collective input is essential to the agency's success and I am thankful to you all. I look forward to continuing on this positive trajectory.

> Christopher Hanway Executive Director



A Letter from our Chairman

Serving as Chairman of the Riis Settlement Board of Directors has been, and continues to be, a fruitful and rewarding experience – not solely because of the positive work the organization does but also because of the wonderful colleagues with whom I have the pleasure of working. My fellow board members are passionate and dedicated individuals whose steadfast fidelity to the agency's mission is exemplified in the many ways that they tirelessly come together, time and time again, to raise funds and solicit support for the numerous initiatives that benefit our participants. They are committed individuals who share a common belief in the importance of giving back to society.

Sadly, this year we had to say goodbye to two of those individuals – longtime board members Bob Cummings and Elizabeth McQueen – both of whom embodied the spirit of altruism, both in their work on behalf of Riis Settlement and the broader Queensbridge community.

Bob served on the board for over twenty-one years, and was a beloved member of the Riis Settlement family. He was a champion for the Queensbridge youth and established many programs that promoted positive youth development. He was a mentor to many young people and a positive influence in the lives of all who had the good fortune to know him. Similarly, Elizabeth was an integral member of the board for twenty-two years and an ardent advocate for the community. Her zeal and persistence resulted in many improvements in the neighborhood – most notably the revitalization of Queensbridge Park and its reestablishment as a welcoming space for all.

In remembering both of these individuals, we are reminded that the people make the place. I am proud to be a member of the Riis Settlement community and proud of all the individuals who come together to make it what it is. I look forward to helping carry forth the legacies of Elizabeth and Bob and continuing to strive to make Queensbridge a successful community.

> Michael Bingold Chairman, Board of Directors

A PLACE TO HONOR OUR PAST

Seeds of change planted over a century ago continue to inform our mission.



The Settlement House Movement – Forging Strong Communities

Beginning in London in the mid-19th century, the settlement movement aimed to bring the rich and poor closer together in an interdependent community. Due to increasing concerns about urban poverty in England, middle-class volunteers moved to impoverished areas in order to share knowledge, culture and resources with their lowincome neighbors.

The movement was quickly adopted by other countries, including the United States, where settlement houses were established to alleviate the effects of poverty in crowded immigrant neighborhoods. By the end of the century, there were more than 100 settlement houses nationwide offering local residents access to educational, recreational and arts programs. In 1911, American settlement house leaders united to found the National Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers of America. Now known as the Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, the national organization has a membership of 160 settlement houses in 20 states. United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), a member of the Alliance, is the umbrella organization for New York City settlement houses, providing capacity building and maintaining a transcending culture of community engagement.

For more than 100 years, settlement houses have been warm, welcoming places where community residents can find opportunities to improve their lives through education, housing, health care, employment, recreational activities and the arts. Although times have changed, the commitment to the community remains the hallmark of the settlement house.





A native of Ribe, Denmark, Jacob A. Riis immigrated to the United States in 1870 and began a career in journalism with the New York News Association. Through his work as a journalist, Riis discovered the squalid conditions of tenement houses in Manhattan's Lower East Side and devoted the rest of his life to social reform. In 1890, he published his seminal work in photojournalism, *How the Other Half Lives,* which documents the squalid living conditions of New York slums. His work created unprecedented public awareness about the reality of urban poverty.

In his role as a social reformer, Riis had a profound effect on the settlement house movement. In 1901, two Lower East Side settlement houses – the New York Tenement House Chapter for the King's Daughters and Sons and the King's Daughters Settlement – consolidated under the name Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement. During its early years, the settlement house aimed to meet the needs of recently immigrated Europeans in the city's tenement houses.

In 1950, Riis Settlement relocated to the Queensbridge Houses in Western Queens, the largest public housing development in the country, to address the needs of a changing population.

Today, we continue the legacy of the settlement house as not only a place to go, but a place to grow, for the community.

DELIVERING RELEVANT, MEASURABLE RESULTS

Ris Settlement strives to produce enduring, positive change in the communities we serve. Recognizing that the needs of the community are constantly shifting, we employ a 'theory of change' that reveals short, intermediate and long term outcomes for our participants; giving us information in 'real time' that can be used to better serve our youth, seniors, immigrants and families. This strategy uses a clear description of the demographics and baseline characteristics of each individual to help us better evaluate our programming including: how our K-12 continuum affects positive change in youth, the impacts of our activities on the overall well-being of our adult seniors and ways to better integrate civic engagement, advocacy and community organizing within our Immigrant Services department.

A PLACE TO REACH NEW HEIGHTS

We guarantee a bright future for our community when we invest in its youngest members.

Riis Academy: Helping our Youth Achieve their Goals

The Riis Academy youth program plays a crucial role in our mission to build and strengthen underserved communities in Western Queens by setting our youngest participants on an early road to success. Across five school-based sites and two center-based sites, we offer a comprehensive curriculum of afterschool programming that integrates academic enrichment activities, social and emotional learning, physical education, and civic learning – all aimed at nurturing confident and competent individuals who can succeed both inside and outside of the classroom.

Over the years, Riis Academy has grown tremendously, and this year the trend continued. We celebrated our first year of service at our P.S. 171 Peter G. Van Alst campus, and we also began the transition process from small-scale violence prevention program to full after-school program at our C.S. 111 Jacob Blackwell campus. Across all of our campuses, we continued to engage our students through fun and stimulating activities and experienced high levels of participation, as a result.

At Riis Academy - Queensbridge, students took part in the City Harvest Fruit Bowl program, which introduces afterschool students to a regular supply of fresh produce and low-fat dairy and combines a unique nutrition education program designed to teach life-long healthy eating habits. At our Ravenswood Cornerstone site, participants had the opportunity to learn the basics of music theory and different instruments through the New York Cares Music Explorers program, and gain a greater global understanding through the Partnership for Afterschool Education (PASE) Explorers program. Students at Riis Academy- P.S. 171 immersed themselves in various dance classes such as ballet and hip-hop and performed for friends and families at their very first Winter Show, while our Step teams from I.S.204 Oliver W. Holmes and P.S.111 Jacob Blackwell successfully performed at many school and community events. High school students at Riis Academy- InfoTech continued to receive valuable post-secondary guidance through career readiness workshops, academic assistance, SAT prep and college application assistance, and participants at P.S. 166 Henry Gradstein continued to engage the visual arts as part of our highly successful art program.

We are extremely grateful for the generosity and kindness of our donors and community partners whose support has helped us add another successful year to the Riis Academy annals. We thank New York Cares for providing our youth with a breadth of supplementary activities ranging from music exploration to healthy cooking to SAT prep, and we thank the Joan Mitchell Foundation for consistently supporting a visual art program that encourages the artistic ambitions and education of our youth.

Furthermore, we offer our thanks to the Museum of the Moving Image, City Harvest, Share for Life, High Water Women, the Ravenswood and Queensbridge Resident Associations, TransCanada and all our individual donors and public and private funders whose commitment to our youth and the Riis Settlement mission remains steadfast.



2015 Key Accomplishments

- 100% of our seniors from Riis Academy-Information Technology High School graduated from high school and 80% entered college or secured employment.
- At Riis Academy-P.S. 166, we had a total of 141 students enrolled (21 more than the required 120) at a participation rate of 91.7%, which far exceeded the 80% rate of participation goal.
- The Ravenswood Residents Association sponsored \$5,000 worth of life skills programming for teens at our Riis Academy-Ravenswood campus.
- Ten City Year AmeriCorps Members collaborated with Riis Academy-P.S. 171 staff to help execute a wide array of activities over the course of their first year of service.

- For the first time in Riis Academy-Ravenswood history, an all-girls basketball team, ages 13-15, was established.
- Riis Academy Ravenswood Cornerstone was selected by DYCD to host and participate in the "Over the Rainbow" panel where a group of individuals spanning the spectrum of gender and sexual identities conducted a workshop for community residents. The content of the workshop was well received and sparked the interests of many around LGBTQ issues.

2015 HIGHLIGHT : PASE EXPLORERS

For the second consecutive year, Riis Academy-Ravenswood participated in the Partnership for Afterschool Education (PASE) Explorers program, which engages youth in discovering the strengths of their own neighborhood and gives them the opportunity to explore and learn about the strengths of another neighborhood. Through community exploration, youth are able to see the larger context of the world in which they live. Our students used community interviews, photography and video, and asset mapping to engage their own neighborhood, and went on field trips to cultural institutions like York College Performing Arts Center to explore more distant places. They learned valuable technologic skills by developing their own website and shared their experience with their peers when they presented as a group at the borough-wide Explorers Expo, a cumulative event held at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center. By giving our youth the opportunity to explore and experience their surrounding communities in fresh and innovative ways, they broadened their perspective and began developing the skills needed to succeed in a global community.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Building a strong and healthy community by embracing its newest members.



Helping our Immigrant Community Acquire the Tools for Success

Since 2001, our Immigrant Services program has striven to meet the growing needs of a robust and diverse immigrant population in Western Queens by offering comprehensive services that promote success in work, education and civic life. On an annual basis, we serve over 500 individuals who speak 14 languages and come from 35 different countries. Our services include: beginner to advanced English classes for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); citizenship classes; individual case management; social action opportunities; and immigration legal services. This year we added a worker cooperative development program designed to promote autonomy, economic empowerment and strong communities among immigrants in Western Queens. And, as always, we continued to experience high rates of achievement across all of our program areas.

In 2015, we offered 22 ESOL classes throughout the year at our main site in the Queensbridge Houses, I.S. 126 in Astoria, and at the Ravenswood community center in Astoria, Queens. These classes helped nearly 400 students improve English proficiency in preparation for employment, higher education and community involvement at all levels. Under the tute-lage of our engaging and highly-qualified instructors, students learned reading, writing, speaking and listening skills with a focus on family, health, employment, community, transportation, education, safety, civic engagement and other important issues.

In addition to educational programming, immigrant community members received support navigating

essential services, benefits and institutions here in New York City. Our program's case worker/community advocate, with support from two part-time social work interns, assisted over 170 participants with accessing health insurance and food stamps benefits, researching education and job training opportunities, acquiring work readiness and employment skills and gaining a better understanding of the social and political systems in New York City. Our case management team exceeded our projected goals of enrolling 97 case management participants and obtaining measurable outcomes for 86 of those cases.

Community members also received immigration legal services from our experienced immigration attorney, who assisted participants and their families with citizenship, family petitions, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, adjustment of status, visas and other cases with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). With the assistance of some dedicated volunteers, she also facilitated three citizenship classes to over 40 students to prepare them for the naturalization exam.

Participants interested in increasing their civic engagement and advocacy activities joined our Community Action Group (CAG) and Voices United, a new group created to help participants tell their stories in the most effective way to facilitate change. Over 60 students participated in the weekly CAG meetings to learn more about systems of local government, budget cuts, immigrant rights, and other issues relevant to the immigrant community, and over 30 participated in the bi-weekly Voices United meetings to practice their public speaking skills.



2015 Key Accomplishments

- More than 90 students participated in the Community Action and Voices United groups. They attended weekly meetings, campaigned in support of immigrant communities, met with city legislators, elected officials, and various stakeholders to discuss priorities for immigrant communities.
- 88% of students enrolled in our ESOL classes improved their English proficiency.
- More than 170 participants received support from our case management team regarding reaching goals beyond learning English.

- 155 individuals received a free first-time legal consultation from our immigration attorney.
- 96 applications for immigration benefits were filed, including 40 for U.S. citizenship and 24 for DACA.
- 35 fee waivers for immigration benefits applications were filed and 15 DACA application fees covered, saving low-income community members over \$27,000 in immigration fees.

2015 HIGHLIGHT: RAISING AWARENESS OF TRUSTWORTHY AND ACCESSIBLE LEGAL SERVICES AMONG THE IMMIGRANT POPULATION

Amid the ongoing changes in immigration policies, our legal services team conducted extensive outreach to increase awareness of the availability of trustworthy and accessible legal services to low-income program participants and community members. Our efforts included ongoing outreach to ESOL program participants; placing advertisements on websites and print media; and developing partnerships with local public high schools and other community-based organizations such as Information Technology High School, High School of Applied Communication, Juventud Ecuatoriana and HANAC, among many others. Through these partnerships, we conducted multiple workshops on Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and other immigration benefits. As a result of our intensive outreach efforts, Riis Settlement received an increased number of referrals from organizations throughout NYC and helped many immigrants get access to the information they need.

A PLACE TO STAY ACTIVE AND HEALTHY

Fostering a dynamic senior community through engaging activities.



Finding joy through active aging.

The Riis Settlement Senior Services program offers a range of support services to the high concentration of seniors that reside in or around New York City Housing Authority's Queensbridge and Ravenswood Houses. The goal of our program is to help our participants maintain good health, remain socially connected, and to afford them the opportunity to "age in place." As such, activities that boost health and wellness in fun and engaging ways are diligently woven into our program design, and this year we continued to find new ways to build upon those offerings.

In 2015, we emphasized the need for our seniors to build strong muscles in order to reduce the number of hospitalizing falls and lessen the severity of injuries in general. We offered a variety of low impact exercise sessions four days a week, which allowed each participant to find something that appealed to their individual taste. Classes included Tai Chi, yoga, walking, range of motion exercises, and dance. We were also fortunate to be able to host occupational therapy interns from Long Island University who provided workshops and information sessions on flexibility training and safety in the home.

This year, with the assistance of the nursing consultants from the Visiting Nurse Service of New York (VNS) and their subsidiary, Partners in Care, we increased the overall number of hours that we spent providing health care maintenance and assistance to our seniors. In total, we provided over 510 hours of case management and 222 hours of case assistance. This included visits at the center as well as visits to our homebound elderly. Giving our seniors the opportunity to obtain medical treatment and competent health information without having to journey to the hospital is a comfort to our participants and a crucial part of our programming.

We continued to promote socialization by both hosting activities at the center and offering cultural outings and events throughout the year - all of which were enthusiastically received by our participants. With the generous support of the DJ McManus Foundation's Eleanor's Outings program, the year's itinerary of exciting events afforded our seniors the opportunity to not only socialize but to explore new cultures and art forms, develop stronger relationships with each other, and become acquainted with parts of the city they may not have otherwise known. During the warmer months, we hosted the widely popular Jazz at Riis series. Guest artists included Gene Golden, the nationally noted radio host Chico Alverez, and the Ty Stephens Band. We hosted traditional Cinco De Mayo and Chinese New Year Celebrations, and participants travelled to see the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater, the Broadway show "On Your Feet", and to the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) for the annual Dance Africa festival. In addition, we were thrilled to cheer on the home team at Citi Field courtesy of our partners at Citibank. In total, over 400 seniors participated in our scheduled events.



2015 Key Accomplishments

- The senior center served over 23,582 meals to seniors - an 11% increase from 2014. We reinstituted our sixth meal program, which provides nutritious take home weekend meals for the seniors.
- Our Grandparents Resource Project, hosted by the NYC Department for the Aging, has provided over 35 informational workshops to our seniors who are the primary caregivers to their grandchildren.
- We provided over 285 technology and 134 education sessions for our seniors last year.
- With devoted partners such as Citibank, Jet Blue, West Point Cadets, NY Cares and others, the senior center had a total of 92 volunteers contributing over 2,451 volunteer hours of service.

2015 HIGHLIGHT: PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE MEAL PROGRAM FOR OUR OLDER ADULTS

From a nutritional standpoint our meal program has continued to maintain the highest level of quality both in product and service. We serve breakfast and lunch five days a week, with a vegetarian option one day a week, and we reinstituted the sixth meal program to ensure that our seniors have a weekend meal to take home. Overall, we distributed over 1,421 meals throughout the year. The center is now serving 11% more meals than in 2014 for a total of 23,582 meals. Moreover, the head cook and kitchen staff has been trained to introduce even more fresh fruits and vegetables into our menu. We also increased the number of nutrition presentations to reinforce the value of health through proper nutrition at home. We feel that we are seeing a more active and engaged senior group at Riis because of the combined efforts of our healthcare maintenance component, the nurse consultants, and the vigilance of our case manager who regularly checks in our seniors.

A PLACE TO GIVE AND RECEIVE

We cultivate opportunity by making every donation count.

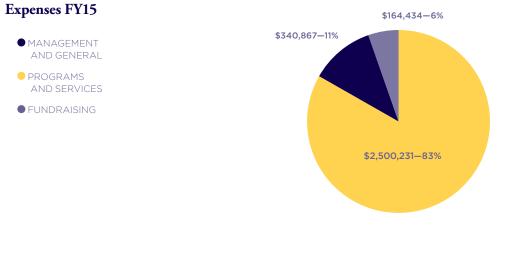


Revenue, Gains, and Other Support	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	2015	2014	2013	
Public Support and Revenue						
Government Grants	2,265,227	-	\$2,265,227	2,177,002	2,282,436	
Foundation Contributions	95,400	170,433	265,833	354,500	594,000	
Other Contributions	122,891	-	122,891	117,356	112,652	
Event Income	122,135	-	122,135	0	6,153	
In-Kind Rent	86,822	-	86,822	86,822	86,822	
In-Kind Contributions	0	-	0	0	61,567	
Participant Activities	20,023	-	20,023	18,825	16,159	
Rental Income	1,705	-	1,705	1,000	0	
Total Support from the Public	\$2,714,203	\$170,433	\$2,884,636	\$2,755,505	\$3,159,789	
Investment income						
Interest and Dividends, Net	3228	-	3228	1,940	2,971	
Realized Gain/(Loss) on Investments	-109	-	-109	4,420	(452)	
Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on Investments	-545	-	-545	5,718	4,732	
Total Investment Income	2,574	-	2,574	12,078	7,251	
Net Assets Restriction Transfers	201,970	(201,970)	0	0	0	
Total Revenue, Gains, and Other Supports	\$2,918,747	\$(31,537)	\$2,887,210	\$2,767,583	\$3,167,040	

		Temporarily	•		
Expenses	Unrestricted	Restricted	2015	2014	2013
Program Services					
Youth Services	1,711,816	-	1,711,816	1,709,553	1,958,475
Adult and Community Services	217,750	-	217,750	248,767	293,472
Senior Services	570,665	-	570,665	553,877	366,213
Total Program Services*	2,500,231	-	2,500,231 (83%)	2,512,197 (84%)	2,618,160(83%)
Supporting Services					
Management and General	340,867	-	340,867	340,709	410,416
Fundraising	164,434	-	164,434	138,693	113,623
Total Supporting Services**	505,301	-	505,301 (17%)	479,402 (16%)	524,039 (17%)
Total Program and Supporting Services					
Expenses	\$3,005,532	-	\$3,005,532	\$2,991,599	\$3,142,199
Change in Net Assets	(86,785)	(31,537)	(118,322)	(224,016)	24,841
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	(8,666)	775,742	766,876	990,892	966,051
Net Assets, End of Year	(95,451)	744,005	648,554	766,876	990,892

Balance Sheet

Assets	2015	2014	2013
Cash and Cash Equivalents	270,002	548,158	740,282
Pledges and Grants Receivable, Net	423,139	240,615	219,300
Investments, at Fair Value	28,708	45,174	58,493
Fixed Assets, Net	70,287	34,936	42,373
Total Assets	792,136	868,883	1,060,448
Liabilities and Net Assets			
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	87,504	19,296	13,518
Refundable Advances	56,078	82,711	56,038
Total Liabilities	143,582	102,007	69,556
Commitments and Contingencies			2013
Net Assets			
Unrestricted	(95,451)	(8,666)	63,511
Temporarily Restricted	744,005	775,542	927,381
Total Net Assets	\$648,554	\$766,876	\$990,892
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$792,136	\$868,883	\$1,060,448



Community Members Served vs. Dollars Raised (in millions)

\$4.0 -



A Place to Say Thanks

With the support of individuals and the community, Riis Settlement continues to forge a path for change in Western Queens.



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(July 1, 2014- June 30, 2015)

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(July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015)

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