

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped shirt, leaning over a young child. The child, who has short dark hair and is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, is holding a small book with a picture of a red dump truck on the cover. The woman is pointing at the book with her right index finger. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a classroom or library setting with colorful books on shelves. The image is framed by a teal border at the top and bottom.

OUR BLUEPRINT

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Dear friends,

Everyone should have the opportunity to be the architect of their own life.

University Settlement partners with our neighbors in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn to build a stable foundation where people can grow and pursue their dreams.

With your support, we do this with more than 40,000 people every year. In practice, this looks like: affordable, high-quality childcare; stable housing; mental health care for all; powerful young people; creative care for older neighbors; welcomed immigrants connected to resources; and arts for everybody.

Forging relationships with our neighbors to build stronger communities – that's Our Blueprint for a better NYC.

Of course, our work is never one-size-fits-all. There's no plan that fits every person.

But the values we were founded on 138 years ago, including opportunity, safety, progress, and belonging, remain vital today. Together, we're ensuring that everyone's basic needs are met so everyone can take part in culture, learning, and the civic sphere.

We build a stronger New York City by bringing these values into every interaction we have with our neighbors. And because we are a settlement house, our approaches are always collaborative, holistic, and integrated to engage the whole person, the whole family, and the whole neighborhood.

Whenever anyone walks through our door, we're always asking: what can we do together? Thanks to your partnership and support, we are empowered to continue building community strength.

In gratitude,
Melissa Aase

OUR BLUEPRINT FOR A BETTER NYC IS...



...Powerful young people building their own futures

"Equity is our guiding star – for us, that means ensuring young people in our communities have access to high-quality, innovative, customized programs where they're exposed to new ideas and growth opportunities. Last summer, more than 100 of our students from across the five boroughs participated in our free summer program in partnership with Mercy College.

Classes included cybersecurity, advanced math, PSAT prep, college readiness and access, and a commercial real estate internship with our partners at Jamestown LP."

Kay Gordon

Director of College and Academic Services, University Settlement

...Older neighbors engaged and connected through communal creativity

Across our programs, we're engaging aging New Yorkers with opportunities to build relationships and enjoy self-expression.

"Spread Love, a festival celebrating all the beauty and brilliance of Brooklyn presented by our Intergenerational Community Arts Council (ICAC), brought art-making opportunities, health screenings, and an all-ages, all levels "Move and Groove" line dancing workshop to our Cornerstone Community Centers at Ingersoll and Atlantic Terminal Houses. ICAC members also presented a song they wrote collectively, for which they later filmed a music video.

Supported by The Performance Project @ University Settlement and our partners at BRIC, the ICAC is a team of NYCHA residents and neighbors from Fort Greene and downtown Brooklyn who create values-driven arts programming by, with, and for their communities."

Baba Israel

Artistic Director, The Performance Project @ University Settlement





...Welcoming immigrants to NYC and connecting them to resources

As a settlement house, extending a hand to migrants and ensuring our new neighbors have access to necessities including food, education, childcare, and literacy is fundamental to our approach.

"University Settlement has supported and welcomed every member of our family. All the teachers are awesome, and the classes are very interactive and engaging. The staff cares about us as students, they'll ask us how we're feeling about our classes. But we don't just come here to learn English. The program provides access to additional resources, like helping us enroll in health insurance, open a bank account, and connecting us with legal assistance to change our immigration status so we can find better jobs."

Gustavo attends University Settlement's Adult Literacy Program along with his mother, his two siblings, his partner, and his brother-in-law

OUR IMPACT

CREATING SOLID FOUNDATIONS FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

There's room for everyone in Our Blueprint – University Settlement is a place where children, families, older adults, immigrants, activists, dancers, athletes, caregivers, educators, leaders, communities, and New Yorkers can build their futures.

Established in 1886 as the first settlement house in the United States, we bring the values of that movement into the 21st century by:

- Fighting poverty and systemic inequality with responsive programs and advocacy;
- Engaging all members of the community from newborns to elders;
- Joyfully nurturing the whole person by addressing basic needs including food, education, culture, learning, and community.



649



children under five years old – 73% of whom came from households with an annual income below \$30,000 – learned, played, and grew with us

5,000+



people enjoyed art-making in hospitals, community settings, and virtually through The Creative Center

490



immigrants learned English with us, and 74% of our students connected to additional resources through counseling

2,483



children and young adults had summers full of exploration, learning, and fun with us

2,131



older adults stayed active, connected, and cared for in our programs

2,491



children and adults received high-quality, culturally sensitive therapy and other mental health care at our clinic, the Consultation Center



OUR BLUEPRINT IS...

Early childhood education infused with emotional support for children and families

Parenting can sometimes be scary, and as has often been observed, children don't come with an instruction manual.

At University Settlement, educating and caring for children inevitably means building intentional, supportive partnerships with parents and caregivers.

Butterflies, our early childhood mental health program, integrates social-emotional support services into each of our 4 early childhood education center programs, which collectively served more than 300 families in our communities in 2023.

Butterflies clinicians lead programming that empowers our teachers to partner with caregivers to support our young learners' social-emotional development more effectively: "This can mean anything from helping teachers think through the ways their lessons are engaging children's emotions, to caregiver workshops, to consulting with families about behaviors they're noticing at home," said **Alice James**, who leads [Creative Steps Early Childhood Center](#), located in the heart of Greenwich Village. "We can engage families on these sensitive questions of development with a light touch, and that can be a great way to open the door to additional services if families are interested."

As Creative Steps Butterflies clinician **Christine Sneve** notes, "Every child and every family will benefit from some level of support."

A Creative Steps parent whose child attended the program for several years reflected on how working with the Creative Steps team helped her navigate a tough situation and gain confidence in her parenting:

Before I brought my son here, **I would see the Creative Steps kids and their teachers at the park, and I always thought: "Wow, they are extremely capable."** It gave me confidence in the team.

My son is my only child, and I was at home with him for the first two years, during COVID. I was anxious about bringing him to an organized care setting, but as I got to know the team at Creative Steps, I felt comfortable right off the bat.

Christine and Alice have helped us grow through some difficult experiences. I'm so grateful to them.

A few summers ago, we had a terrifying incident – he was 4, and he ran away from me, into a building, and up a stairwell. I couldn't find him. The building's doorman called the police while I ran up and down the stairs. After 45 agonizing minutes we found him in the park across the street. He had slipped out the back door.

I'll never be the same. I was terrified I'd never see him again. Only a tiny sliver of luck was the difference between finding him and a tragedy. I was so grateful we'd found him, but the police officer berated and shamed me, saying 'What kind of parent are you?' I felt like punishing myself forever.

When I talked about it with Christine and Alice, they helped me see how I did my best. Afterwards, they followed up with me and encouraged me, including by sending me articles to help me reframe the incident.

Together, we developed a strategy and language I could use with my son to respond to what had happened. I didn't want him to feel ashamed, but I needed him to understand that he could never do that again. It's a hard line to walk with a four-year-old. I said, 'you've shown us that we can't trust you yet, which means whenever we're outside, we need to hold hands, until you're ready to show us that we can trust you to walk at our sides.' We also said, 'bad guys look just like good guys and kids can't tell the difference but grownups you know can and will keep you safe.'

When we went on a family trip a few weeks later, I was terrified something would happen. **But Alice and Christine were prepared – they made a book for us to give to our son.** It was completely laminated with pictures from the area and reminders to 'stay close.' We reviewed it every day on the trip – **it was really touching to see that they cared enough about our family to create a special resource to help us talk about safety in a developmentally appropriate way.**

I've learned a lot about social emotional development through parenting him, and by partnering with the Creative Steps team.



OUR BLUEPRINT IS...

After-school programs where young people's passions are prioritized

In 2023, 3,156 students in our communities participated in one of the 17 after-school programs University Settlement operates across Lower Manhattan and in Brooklyn.

Each partners with young people to build safe and creative environments where they can explore their interests, which in turn supports academic performance and social-emotional development. Extending into the evening hours, these programs provide working parents with peace of mind.

At University Settlement, after-school programs are also driven by students' voices and choices – making each program beautifully unique.

Jamone S. graduated from North Star Academy Middle School in 2020. He shared his experience of the after-school program **Lauren Bernard** leads:

I'm a proud graduate of Ms. Lauren's after-school. Today, I'm a senior at Brooklyn High School of the Arts majoring in music and theater – each of which I was also doing at North Star – and this fall, I'll matriculate at Howard University.

I think back to after-school all the time – most of my best memories of middle school are from after-school.

I'm a theater kid to say the least. North Star's curriculum is science-focused, but I wanted to explore theater while I was a student there.

I was getting into musicals and listening to Hamilton for the first time, and I was thinking: I want to do this. I want to perform.

My friends and I were very vocal about what we wanted from after-school, and Ms. Lauren listened and made it happen. By December, we were doing part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the winter showcase.

Ms. Lauren loves to get involved and get her hands dirty. When we'd see her in her office, she'd be doing logistics or budgeting for trips. But then we'd be doing activities where we'd have to create a dance or a chant, and she'd be right there with us.

After-school felt like what school is supposed to be – fun, surprising, never the same thing twice, and educational, all at once. Being part of after-school changed my life.

Kids in our program – we were growing up in New York City. We get used to our surroundings – we know what park to go to, what deli spot is good. It's a limited perspective.

University Settlement helped open my world up. We would do things that we wouldn't normally have access to or be able to do – even when we stayed in NYC, we'd go to places we wouldn't normally go.

When our after-school program traveled to Washington DC, we went to the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture – that was the first experience I ever had of Black History outside of a textbook, it was such an immersive experience and so engaging.

We also went on a tour of colleges that was very eye opening. I genuinely loved it, every minute of it.

I even loved selling popcorn to fundraise so I could go.

It was so eye-opening. From that moment I knew I wanted to go to Howard and that I would do everything in my power to go there.

Walking on the campus, meeting the people, talking to the teachers – I fell in love with the school. It's such a unique spot. Who wouldn't want to study acting at the same school as Chadwick Boseman and Taraji P. Henson?

That trip helped me experience life outside of New York City. I got excited to dream big and find my future at Howard.

Ms. Lauren's after-school program made a huge impact in my life. The way she listened to us and built a program that responded to our interests helped me begin pursuing my dreams.



OUR BLUEPRINT IS....

Mental healthcare that makes a difference for families in our communities

Parents and caregivers of children who have significant emotional and behavioral health needs, or who are dealing with trauma, often tell us that engaging with healthcare and social services systems can feel like a full-time job – and that’s where our Care Coordination team comes in.

A vital and growing part of our Mental Health & Wellness programs for the last 28 years, Care Coordination partners with more than 400 children and families every year, advocating for people receiving medical care and ensuring that care is continuous to reduce the risk of crisis situations and prevent family separation.

Issues arising from mental illness don’t necessarily resolve quickly or linearly, meaning that our staff develop long and fluid relationships with families. More than 20% of the team has been with University Settlement for a decade or more, supporting the kind of personal continuity can make a real difference in developing powerful relationships.

Ms. Stone, and particularly her children Tony, Joseph, David, and Elijah, have been partnering with University Settlement since 2012:

When we first met Mr. Joseph, our care coordinator, we were going through a really dark time, moving shelter to shelter.

We had been subjected to domestic violence – my kids were tortured by what we went through. It was a horrible experience, and they ended up with a lot of serious emotional problems. They were diagnosed with ADHD, they couldn't focus at school. They had post-traumatic stress disorder.

Of my five boys, I could see that Tony and my triplets Joseph, David, and Elijah were most deeply affected. It harmed them academically, it changed everything in our life. Our home was often in crisis. My children weren't intentionally being destructive, but they were acting out in ways that had consequences they couldn't understand, creating safety problems.

We reached a point where there was a lot of hospitalization, my children were on a lot of medication, we were doing a lot of therapy inside and outside of the house. One of my kids ended up getting admitted to a state hospital, because sometimes things were out of control.

I never gave up on my kids. I was looking for every opportunity that I could find to help manage the situation.

It wasn't an easy journey for me – emotionally, physically, mentally, financially. But when University Settlement showed up in our lives, I immediately felt that your very professional team was personally invested in our success. Mr. Joseph became a mentor to my children with all the guidance and support he provided throughout our journey.

The most remarkable thing I can say about my experience with Care Coordination is that I've never been treated like a project or a case. **I've been treated like a human being; we've been treated like a family. We've been treated with a lot of love and support.** Mr. Joseph is the face of University Settlement to me. Every time I have felt like I can't do it, like I am going to give up, he's always there. The Care team always says: ask us for help, if we can't offer something, we have resources we can connect you to.

Today, Tony is in his third year of college studying computer science and cybersecurity. Joseph is studying justice and law, Elijah is studying computer science and engineering, and David took some time to work before college, he's at LaGuardia Airport.

We've had a lot of ups and downs, but my children have grown up to be beautiful young men. Mr. Joseph comes to check up on us and he supports their growth. If they have some crisis, if they're behaving negatively or have some issue they're facing, he gives them emotional support, shares similar experiences and resources, and helps them turn it around.

This last eleven years has taught me that there's always hope out there. Don't let anything you face in life destroy you. No matter how many doors have been shut in your face, there are people out there who are willing to help and support. I understand what so many parents are going through, because I've been there, having raised my five youngest children as a single parent. **For me to be able to stand up and thrive and say that my children are well educated – it's because I never gave up, and the reason why I never gave up is I met a lot of people, beautiful people who proved they were trustworthy and committed to helping us.**

OUR APPROACH

WHAT CAN WE BUILD TOGETHER?

Since 1886, we've been community-led. There's no wrong door – we're continually expanding upon our programs' integration with one another, so we can rapidly connect our neighbors with community, resources, and support.



WELLNESS TOGETHER

Wellness Together brings care to more than 200 homebound adults over 60, addressing immediate healthcare, nutrition, and housing needs while connecting our neighbors to community. In 2023, 33 volunteers began conducting weekly wellness checks with Wellness Together participants.

Volunteer Michael Tang shared: "I enjoy talking to the people I reach out to – I consider them friends now. This work is its own reward. As someone who is new to NYC, I get a totally different perspective on the city from them. I recently read the book *Bowling Alone*, and it made me realize how important it is to have organizations that help people build relationships. It's easy to become very isolated, especially after COVID, and this work is vital."



COLLEGE PASSPORT & FAMILIES THRIVING

A stable social-emotional foundation is one of the most vital preconditions for learning. This makes the ongoing mental health crisis for young people in NYC particularly threatening for students in College Passport, our college access program.

In 2023, the Solon E. Summerfield Foundation partnered with the Gray Foundation and Carmel Hill Fund to award \$950,000 to University Settlement over three years to increase youth mental health services.

We used this investment to deepen College Passport's collaboration with our Families Thriving community mental health and wellness program, extending services to 700 youth across 5 program sites, while embedding mental health professionals at two schools through the 2025-6 school year.



CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY CENTERS

In 2023, our 3 Cornerstone Community Centers embedded in New York City's public housing complexes served as vital support and homes-away-from-home for 4,529 of our neighbors.

Jazaiyah (pictured) grew up participating in our Cornerstone @ Atlantic Terminal. In her teens, she became a group leader in the program: "People here always told me: 'I want you to become something in life.' I still speak with most of the leaders I had here. They inspired me to want more than just a job, to want a career. Now, I try to pass that down to people who are younger than me. I feel like I'm a role model."

OUR PROGRAMS

We fight poverty and systemic inequality by engaging our neighbors of all ages, from newborns to elders, with innovative, responsive programs that address basic needs while facilitating culture, learning, and community.



EARLY CHILDHOOD

We supported more than 600 young children and their families with a spectrum of education and care services including center-based learning, neighborhood-based family childcare, and home-based assistance.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

We create safe, fun, purpose-driven environments for more than 4,000 youth annually. Our afterschool, summer camp, and college access programs are rooted in positive youth development and social-emotional learning models that build students' self-awareness, self-expression, and leadership skills.



OLDER ADULTS

We engage over 2,100 low-income seniors annually through a network of services including meals, health, wellness, recreational activities, case assistance and management, housing counseling, and referral resources.



MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Nearly 8,000 people receive mental health and wellness supports ranging from "light touches" to psychiatric services from our culturally sensitive professionals every year, helping individuals and families in our communities navigate the challenges life can present.



ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY ACTION

We strategically engage our representatives on issues including access to safe housing, healthcare, and quality education. Through advocacy, we aim to secure access to resources for thousands of our neighbors, and support policies that empower New Yorkers to achieve healthy, stable, and remarkable lives.



HOUSING SUSTAINABILITY

We combat homelessness by advocating for safe, affordable housing and identifying financial problems and solving them before they lead to eviction, keeping our neighbors in their homes in more than 90% of the cases we take on; in FY23 1,138 New Yorkers were more stably housed by partnering with Project Home.



CREATIVE ARTS

Art helps build healthy communities and we engage thousands of our neighbors with two distinct arts programs: The Creative Center, which brings art's healing power into healthcare settings; and The Performance Project, which fosters collaboration between professional artists and low-income New Yorkers.



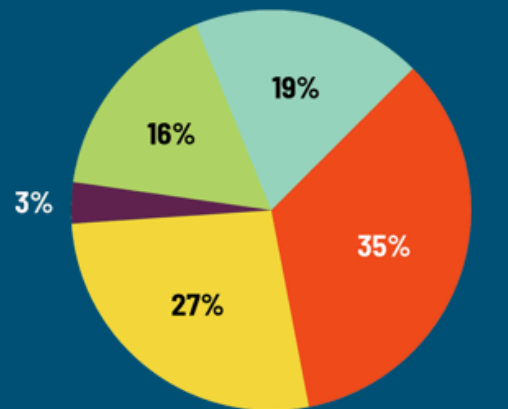
LITERACY

Nearly 500 low-income adult immigrants in NYC participate in our comprehensive 10-month English and civic education program annually — building language and systems literacy skills to navigate life in our complex city, support their families, and achieve their goals.

OUR FINANCIALS

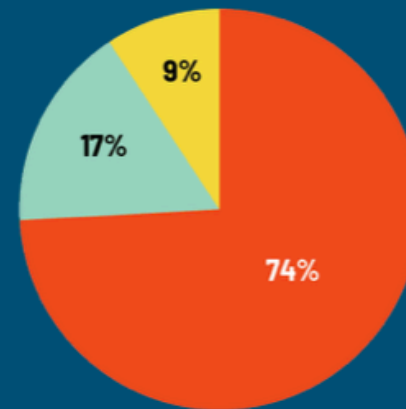
Our budget in FY23 was \$51 million.

HOW OUR BUDGET BREAKS DOWN BY PROGRAM



- Early Childhood
- Youth
- Family and Counseling
- Management and General
- Fundraising

HOW WE'RE FUNDED



- Government Grants
- Other Operating Revenues
- Private Support



Charity Navigator names University Settlement as a Four-Star Charity – their highest rating – based on our financial stability, efficiency, sustainability, and our commitment to strong governance practices and policies.

OUR DONORS

A complete list of donors who made gifts or provided funding to University Settlement during FY23 can be found at:

report.universitysettlement.org

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University Settlement is a member of [United Neighborhood Houses of New York](#), the [Human Services Council](#), the [International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers](#), the [Coalition for Asian American Children and Families](#), and the [Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies](#).

University Settlement Society of New York is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity.

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