

University Settlement CEO Melissa Aase named to City & State's 3rd Annual Nonprofit Trailblazers list

New York, NY – City & State has named University Settlement CEO Melissa Aase to its 3rd Annual Nonprofit Trailblazers list, the nation's first settlement house announced today.

"City & State's Nonprofit Trailblazers recognizes leaders who have dedicated their careers and lives to making New York a better, safer place to live through adherence to the principles of charity, diversity, sustainability, and governance. These are individuals who have displayed character, high standards, innovative professional practices and committed support of their local community," the publication wrote.

"I am grateful to be recognized by City & State alongside so many peers I admire," said **Melissa Aase, CEO, University Settlement**. "Helping lead University Settlement into the 21st century has been the opportunity and honor of a lifetime. Especially at a time when the social safety net that our organization and movement helped to forge generations ago is under direct attack, it's meaningful to celebrate the leaders and organizations who remain dedicated to building an equitable New York City that works for everyone."

Melissa has spent nearly her entire career at University Settlement, which she first joined in 1992 as a social work student doing welfare rights organizing before becoming a case manager and supervisor for youth development, employment, and homelessness prevention programs.

In the 11 years since she was named Executive Director of University Settlement (she became Chief Executive Officer in 2020), Melissa has grown the agency's annual budget from \$25 million to \$60 million while deepening its impact in neighborhoods across Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Under Melissa's leadership, University Settlement has made significant investments in supporting the mental health and wellness of our neighbors, including by expanding community-based programs that meaningfully democratize mental health access for children and families. Since 2013, University Settlement's continuum of Mental Health programs has grown by more than 700%. Melissa serves on the board of the International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers, a membership organization representing over 11,000 neighborhood centers worldwide, and is its past Executive Director. She has been a member of the Women's Leadership Council since its inception and sits on the board of the United Neighborhood Houses of New York, the federation of 45 settlement houses across New York State. She also serves on the Policy and Advocacy Committee of the Human Services Council.

Melissa also serves on the steering committee of the #JustPay campaign, which advocates for government funding and systemic policy change to raise the wages of City and State-contracted human services workers. Since launching in 2021, the campaign has created tangible policy

change, including by securing \$1.4 Billion in wage increases for City-contracted human services workers, alongside \$900 million invested by New York State in Cost-of-Living Adjustments for workers on State contracts. In 2023, her leadership on this vital issue for human services workers even extended to spending the night on the sidewalk outside of City Hall alongside the leaders of more than 50 other NYC nonprofits.

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About University Settlement

University Settlement partners with 40,000+ New Yorkers in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn every year to build on our collective strengths as we achieve healthy, stable, and remarkable lives.

For nearly 140 years, we've fought poverty and systemic inequality by building highly effective social services in collaboration with our neighbors.

Established in 1886 as the first Settlement House in the United States, we bring the values of our movement into the 21st century by meeting New Yorkers where they live, listening deeply to all perspectives, and creating space for responsive cooperation.

Joining with our neighbors to make stable foundations where people of all ages can grow and pursue their dreams, we build community strength.

We infuse a commitment to civic engagement, equality, and communal action into each of our programs, which include early childhood education, youth development, healthy aging, mental health and wellness, housing advocacy and benefits assistance, English classes for adult immigrants, community centers, and the arts.

#NYCisUS. What can we do together? Learn more at www.universitysettlement.org