Raising the Quality of Life in East Harlem

Revive: to be quickened, restored, renewed, to become active or flourishing again. This meaning embodies the rehabilitation of Revive 103 North, completed by Hope Community, Inc. this year. The three million dollar rehabilitation project was made possible through funding acquired through New York City’s Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), along with recycled bonds from The Housing Development Corporation. Once partnered with the National Equity Fund as a limited partner, Revive 103 Hope HDFC now has 100% ownership of this property.

Revive, located at 155-163 East 103rd Street, is a 4/5 story, 30 unit building with 3,000 square feet of prime ground floor retail space. The moderate rehabilitation project of Revive included exterior waterproofing, energy efficient boilers, new kitchens, new windows and a quality security system with keyless entry. “It used to be very cold in the apartments and now they have no problem with the heating,” said a tenant.

At Hope, quality repairs are executed by professional staff that believe in the organization’s mission. “I used to do high end work in Greenwich, Connecticut...I’m here because these are my people and we’re raising the quality of life for the tenant,” said Sam Gonzalez, Construction Manager.

The goal at Hope Community, Inc. is to provide tenants with an affordable place they can call home. Tenants should feel comfortable and safe. The new boilers and security system are an example of how Hope is accomplishing its goal.

Muscoota Is Complete!

The 63 residential units housed within 5 buildings that has come to be known as, The Muscoota Project, is complete. The nearly 13.2 million dollar project that began in 2010, closed February, 2013. In our last edition, we reported that Muscoota was refinanced and recapitalized to conduct major capital improvements. These improvements were made through the acquisition of federal low income housing tax credits from the City of New York, funding from Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and mortgage funding by TD Bank and the Community Preservation Corporation, through its department of Housing Preservation and Development, (continued on page 3)
I am very excited that we are able to bring you this issue of the Hope Herald. Since our last issue, Hope has continued to make internal changes that we believe will significantly improve services to our tenants and the community at-large. In this issue, you will learn about efforts to collaborate with community partners and small businesses in East Harlem. We continue to rehabilitate our buildings and to improve the living conditions for our residents. One change that has the real potential of gaining momentum is our smoke-free building at Carlos Rios. You can read about the residents at Carlos Rios’ transitioning their home into a smoke-free residence. We are also making it easier for our residents to pay their rent through the REZZCARD program. Hope is always looking for new contributors to the Hope Herald. In this issue, we are introducing a new column written by Marcia D. Codling. If you want to become a regular contributor of the Hope Herald, please contact our new Communications Associate, Angie Delgado. I hope you will enjoy our latest edition of the Hope Herald.

Board Member Kevin Barrett has 30 years of public service in education and human rights, spending the past 15 years as a real estate professional. He has been a mortgage banker, property manager, and real estate broker. Currently, he is an Associate Broker with Platinum Properties specializing in commercial real estate. Shortly after moving to East Harlem, he was introduced to Hope. Barrett was raised in the theater and still sings opera in local theaters in the New York metro area.

Board Member Brad Beckstrom is a seasoned hospital and health system advocate and government relations expert with over 20 years of Capitol Hill/State Government experience in hospital and health system advocacy and public policy, government relations, political strategy, health policy development and analysis. Currently he is the Director of Government and Community Relations at Mount Sinai Medical Center. Mr. Beckstrom also volunteers at his church and is the father of three lovely girls.

Hanna Amanuel, an undergraduate student of Harvard University completed her internship at Hope Community, Inc. Hanna began her internship with Hope on June 5, 2013. A stellar student, she received the placement through the Cashin Fellowship, organized by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), who partners Fellows with community development corporations. Michelle Raymie, Business Manager, mentored Hanna during her time at Hope. A great concentration of her internship focused on place making. Place making is a concept that brands a community by promoting its unique characteristics. Hanna reports appreciating that the concept is not just being developed for the community but from it, so that merchants are involved in the process and contribute their opinions. This concept has impacted Hanna and she plans to use it when she becomes a physician. “I feel public health is community development and I want to make sure the patients I’ll be working with have an input.” “She has been a tremendous asset!” (continued on pg. 8)
There are no felines around this place, just a gorgeous black lab (Emma) that symbolizes what this East Harlem business is all about: family, neighborhood and community. The “Kat” in Copy Kat, stands for Kathy Colacecchi, co-owner and wife to her partner, Raymond Bonhomme. Kathy and Raymond have been serving the East Harlem community for 16 years. Raymond, a seasoned senior sales representative and Kathy, an accountant by trade, both decided to leave corporate America and venture out into the world of small business.

In 1997, they began their brainchild, Copy Kat, a local copy/printing house and all around business center. They chose the location because they “saw a need for a business like this in the community,” said Raymond. Having their eye on a location, they reached out to the property management team at Hope Community, Inc., and landed the spot that made them a staple in East Harlem.

Their day to day clients include The Children’s Aid Society, City College, Mount Sinai, Columbia University, Harlem Children’s (continued pg.8)

Muscoota says, “It is finished!” (Continued from page 1)

as well as through the generous support of our Council Member, Melissa Mark-Viverito. The work ranged from a total gut renovation to a moderate rehabilitation, including the installation of energy efficient boilers for domestic hot water, and a keyless security system. In order to provide these first-rate repairs, tenants had to be temporarily relocated. As each renovation was completed, the tenants were returned to their original homes. How did these great renovation expenses reflect on the rent of each tenant? Outside of the normal New York State Housing and Community renewal rent stabilization increase that’s to be expected in any given year, Muscoota tenants experienced no rent increase due to these repairs. Affordable rents make it possible for low income families to continue living in East Harlem.
On World No Tobacco Day, May 31, 2013, Hope’s 102 unit senior resident building, Carlos M. Rios, became smoke free. Hope Community, Inc., collaborated with the Department of Health to implement a smoke-free facility. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, accounting for more than 440,000 deaths, or one of every five deaths, in the United States each year. Though some of the residents are not in agreement and contend that they will continue to smoke, overall the change has been greeted with open arms. “I feel much better because the smoke used to come in through my window”, said Zulma Salas, a resident for more than ten years.

At Hope Community, Inc. we care for the seniors in East Harlem. “It was a good move.” - Patt Moorehead Property Mgr.

If you would like your building to become smoke-free please contact Steven Cruz, Director of Property Management at 212-860-8821.

Designing Solution for East Harlem’s Small Businesses
by Hanna Amanuel

Left Michelle Raymie & SVA Students

One of only four NYC organizations accepted to the School of Visual Art’s Impact! Design for Social Change program, Hope Community partnered with SVA and designNYC this summer to create and implement a solution for East Harlem’s most pressing economic development challenges. With the support of NYC Small Business Services, Hope Community worked intensively with graduate level and professional designers to come up with an innovative and effective solution for East Harlem’s struggling business community within six weeks.

“We are very excited to be working with Hope Community this summer. We believe that positive social change starts in our own back yards and working with Hope Community around economic and community development issues is right in line with that philosophy,” said Mark Randall, chair of the program at SVA.

One of the greatest obstacles to business improvement has been a lack of awareness and activism on the impact of buying from local, independent businesses. Many residents shop at chain stores downtown and, conversely, many small businesses struggle to market their goods to the community effectively.

“When you shop or dine at a local business, not only do you support an East Harlem business, but many of the long standing businesses hire most of their employees from the neighborhood, so you also contribute to the growth of the community,” said Michelle Raymie, Business Manager. The three students from Los Angeles, Chicago and Thailand designed a marketing campaign targeting Hunter College staff and students. The design solution aims to inspire activism and awareness in East Harlem, and New York City, on the valuable impact of buying local.

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IN CELEBRATION OF WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH, THE 2ND ANNUAL WOMEN’S ENTREPRENEURIAL FORUM WAS HELD THIS MARCH AT HUNTER COLLEGE SILBERMAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK. AMONG THE DISTINGUISHED GUESTS WERE: THE HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL, CONGRESSMAN, 13TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND JACQUELINE B. MONDROS, D.S.W., DEAN & PROFESSOR OF THE SILBERMAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK AT HUNTER COLLEGE. PANELISTS INCLUDED DENISE RODRIGUEZ FROM HUDSON VALLEY BANK, AYALA DONCHIN OF EVELYN’S KITCHEN, NANCY LEPRE OF AVANTE CONTRACTING CORPORATION AND CHRISTINE MILANO OF COCO LE VU CANDY SHOP AND PARTY ROOM. MERCHANTS AND POTENTIAL MERCHANTS WERE PROVIDED WITH GREAT RESOURCES FROM NYC SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES, NYC SMALL BUSINESS SOLUTIONS CENTER, US SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, PEOPLE’S FEDERAL CREDIT UNION, EAST HARLEM BUSINESS CAPITAL CORPORATION, PROJECT ENTERPRISE, UNION SETLEMENT FEDERAL CREDIT UNION AND PROHATCH, LLC. NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES WERE MADE AVAILABLE AND EACH ENTREPRENEURIAL STORY HAD A MESSAGE THAT INSPIRED THOSE IN THE COMMUNITY WITH BUSINESS-ES OR DREAMING OF STARTING ONE. WE ARE PLEASED TO SUPPORT ALL OUR LOCAL MERCHANTS IN EAST HARLEM.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT LOCAL PLEASE VISIT: WWW.VISITELBARRIO.COM

FAQ’s (Frequently Asked Questions)

Q: Is it true that I have to put a bracket on my A/C?
A: Yes. According to Local Law 11 of the City of New York a bracket must be installed on all apartment air conditioners or there will be a $300.00 fine. Is you’re A/C being held up by a standard bracket? If not, please contact the Hope Maintenance Department at: 212-860-8821.

Q: When I recertify, will my rent increase?
A: No, FAILURE to recertify means you will LOSE your rent subsidy and your apartment rent will increase to the non regulatory rate. Read more in our next issue.

Poets Brave the Heat to Spill Words Not Coffee

Poets, artists, and their fans braved the 90 plus degree heat on Saturday July 20, 2013, for Roger Cabán’s, Poetas Con Café event. “Poetas,” as it is commonly known, was celebrating its 17th anniversary of bringing New York City poets together to recite their work, paying homage to the likes of Julia de Burgos, Pedro Pietri and many others. Mariposa María Teresa Fernández (pictured above) and Sery Colón graced the stage with poetry followed by an Open MIC portion with, Jesús Papoleto Meléndez, at which new and not so new poets were given an opportunity to share their pieces. Though there was very little “finger-snapping,” there was a whole lot of hand clapping, in acknowledgment of the depth and poignancy of the poetic pieces. It wasn’t all a deep wordy ocean, there were quite a few moments of comedy relief from Roger and Papoleto. We look forward to the next Poetas con Café, PUNTO!

MOTHER’S DAY AT CARLOS RIOS
In a collaborative effort between Hope Community, Inc. and The Blue Stone Organization, the rehabilitation project involving 23 newly constructed units, also known as The Calvert Apartments has been completed. These Certified LEED silver units are now home to many an East Harlem resident. For one family it was the miracle they were waiting on.

Jillian Rossy, an East Harlem native, was raising her daughter and younger sister when a sudden shift in her Section 8 eligibility forced her to move out of the Bronx. Though current in her rent, she was unaware that the owner of the private home where she lived could ask her to leave at any time. At an April court date, where the owners stated they wanted their apartment back, Jillian was given 90 days to vacate. She contacted Section 8 and requested a transfer. Determined, though shocked, she quickly began to look for a new home. She searched on the internet, applied for as many affordable housing companies as she could find and put the word out. The more apartments she looked at, the worse the circumstances appeared. “They were expensive, but I was thinking, I can’t just wait for Section 8...I was losing faith...my mother would say just pray.” said Jillian. Finally, after all the online searches, applications and visits; and too expensive, unkept apartments, she received a call from Hope Community. Jillian, came in for an interview and was told that someone would call to make a home visit. After what seemed like an eternity of a wait (though only a week), she received a call that she was accepted. On June 18, 2012, just 12 days before they had to vacate, the Rossy family signed their new lease.

“It humbled me. The rent was affordable; it was brand new, had a washer, dryer, security cameras, with new tenants and an intercom. I would’ve loved to move back years ago but I couldn’t afford it...Hope has given me a great opportunity...to be back in my old neighborhood.” said Jillian. The family was relieved and excited, not only would they be back to their “El Barrio” roots, they would be near their family. Jillian advises other residents to “Don’t stop! At any point in time, if I had given up, I would’ve lost it all.” Their future plans? We believe home ownership is in the works.

For more information that will make sense to you, visit: www.pharmacapsule.com

Health Sense

Is your bottled water contaminated?

by Marcia D. Codling, RPh., MSM

Is your bottled water contaminated? (Marcia is a licensed pharmacist in the East Harlem area and will be contributing an article to the Herald every quarter.)

Over the last few years bottled water has been promoted to us as the healthiest alternative to tap water. Consequently we buy bottled water without hesitation. We buy it by the gallon; we buy it by the case. We store it in the fridge; we freeze it for later and we drink it everywhere, anywhere and all the time.

What’s in your bottled water? Now we are told that the bottled water we so prize is contaminated! It is tampering with our bodies and it is affecting our food supply by freaking out the fish in our oceans and streams. Corporate promoters of bottled water tell us that the water is safe for consumption, that it is from fresh springs and that there is nothing to fear. We now know that most bottled water is actually just tap water. Many who questioned the quality of the water and the dangers the empty bottles present now find that there are even greater dangers. A recent scientific study revealed that estrogen, a female hormone, can be found in bottled water. These estrogen-like chemicals are leached into the water from chemicals in the bottle, and can cause problems such as low testosterone, unwanted breast development, prostate conditions, impotence and fertility problem.

While no plastic container is entirely safe for our use and for food preparation, softer plastic is especially dangerous. We should exercise caution in using this type of plastic for cooking or storing food.

What can we do now? The problems with bottled water will not be solved overnight. If you want to reduce your dependency on bottled water, but love the clean crisp taste, why not try filtered tap water instead. Filtered tap water is both cleaner and cheaper than bottled water - pennies per gallon. You can install a water filter, a recommendation by the Environmental Working Group (EWG), and use glass bottles for your water. Purchase an activated carbon filter, they are cheaper and easier to maintain. If you can afford it, buy a filter that uses reverse osmosis; they are more expensive but they remove more contaminants.

For more information that will make sense to you, visit: www.pharmacapsule.com

Cristo Rey New York High (continued from page 3)

Rachel shared, “He takes his job very seriously even when he hasn’t had any monetary gain. Coming to Hope, after interning with Fortune 500 companies, he’s learning what true service is about. It’s about being selfless. Working at a non-profit has taught him that.”

Ryan’s diligent efforts have paid off. Though he entered the organization with no salary, he was later promoted to a paid internship. His time at Hope has certainly impacted the staff, who have shared how much they admire his professionalism, hard work, and rapid growth.

HOPE GLOSSARY

Recertification: The process by which a tenant provides the property management team with paperwork that verifies his/her annual household income. This compliance is requested 120 days prior to anniversary date of a tenant’s lease.
Access to Capital and Credit Worthiness Panel Discussion

Learning how to assess the financial health of one's business was just one of the many topics discussed at the "Access to Capital and Credit Worthiness" Panel Discussion, held Thursday January 24, 2013. Thirty-one small business owners and prospective business owners, representatives from various organizations and financial institutions, and other interested community members came out to take part in the event sponsored by Hope Community, Inc., in partnership with SEEDCO Financial, the Office of Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez, Capital One Bank, GreenPath Debt Solutions, and Harlem Community Development Corporation, Moderated by Curtis Archer, President of Harlem CDC, the informative panel— including Aisha Benson, VP/Managing Director of Seedco Financial; Chris Dlugozima, Community Relations Coordinator, Greenpath, Inc.; and Jose Villa, Business Banker, Capital One Bank—elaborated on what banks and other institutions are looking for with respect to lending and credit-worthiness.

Although those in attendance were at different stages, they were all there for the same thing: to learn from the experts what was needed to access the capital necessary to strengthen and/or grow their business or idea. This was evident as they sat in rapt attention, jotting down notes and taking every advantage of the opportunity to ask such questions as "How does one get their credit score?", "What exactly are financial institutions looking for?", "What steps can be taken to improve your credit?", and "How do I find the right institution and the right product to meet my needs?" The event was also an opportunity for those in attendance to not only gain valuable advice and resources from the panel, but also to hear from other experts in the audience, including representatives from the NY Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration and the People’s Federal Credit Union, as well as to network and exchange information and ideas with each other. All in all, the attendees left invigorated and as one attendee said "...it really got me going."

The Access to Capital and Credit Worthiness Panel Discussion is just one of the many economic and business development events and activities planned by Hope Community Inc., as part of its mission to "...strengthen the neighborhood’s social fabric by assisting in the growth and success of local businesses."

Photo of the small business owners and perspective business owners at the panel discussion.

TOGETHER WE MOURN THE LOSS OF REFUGIO JIMÉNEZ

Hope Community has lost one of our deeply cared for and appreciated building superintendents, Refugio Jiménez. Refugio was out with his family at Bear Mountain for the Fourth of July holiday and accidentally drowned at Hessian Lake. Refugio, an employee since 2003, was an excellent super and a great family man.

“He was one of those rare supers with such special skills. Our hearts go out to the family.” –Walter Roberts, Executive Director. Craig Harty, Facilities Manager, stated that he will miss Refugio and that he was loved. Shortly after his funeral the family flew to Mexico, where they laid Refugio’s body to rest. Our deepest sympathy to the family of Refugio Jiménez.

Please Note: Though it has been some time since his passing, we here at Hope recognize that these are still trying times for the Jiménez family. To that end, we are still accepting donations for the family. If you are interested please feel free to contact our Property Management team at: 212-860-8821 Ext.126. Thank you.
Zone and other local organizations. Unfortunately, they are only partially supported by local clientele. Raymond and Kathy admit that what helps them maintain their business, are the larger design and print jobs. While this dynamic duo is extremely grateful, “it was a struggle…three years we poured out.” said Raymond. The main obstacle was finding paying customers that produced enough revenue. Soon an opportunity to acquire a large client was brought to their attention. While their two corporate competitors had great resources at their disposal, Copy Kat’s bid still tied with theirs. So what’s a hot off the press, small business to do when it’s feeling the pressure of corporate America? Read the fine print. Finding a loophole, they landed the contract that allowed them to stay in the community. It’s challenging to stay afloat as a small commercial business owner, but this team plans to tough it out as they have for these past 16 years. Kathy having family roots in the small business industry, hopes they “can remain [in East Harlem] for another 16.” Their wisdom for potential new owners, “You need to know your market, research, put together a business plan because everybody has a dream but can your dream support your bills? “So we leave with Emma waiting for her lunch, paying no mind to anyone passing by. Though not usually her style, she’s extremely lovable and adds a real home feel to this lovely neighborhood business. Kathy says, “Lots of people in the community are afraid of dogs. Emma helps people know that dogs can be friendly.” So there you have it: a place to copy, fax, design, surf the net, print and rid your phobia of dogs. Where in the world can you find that? At Copy Kat.

Copy Kat Printing, Information and Business Center, 1785 Lexington Ave., N.Y., 10029, Telephone: 212-534-1400, Fax: 212-534-8025, Please visit their site www.copykatprinting.com and “Support your community business.” –Kathy Colacecchi