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# The NYCHA JOURNAL

## RAISED IN PUBLIC HOUSING

### The Chief Comes Full Circle

**A**S A BOY living in Albany Houses, James Secreto knew he wanted to be one of two things when he grew up: a baseball player or a cop. Chief Secreto, who was appointed head of the NYPD Housing Bureau by Police Commissioner Bill Bratton in October, says, "My career has come full circle—I am back where I started, and it feels good."

His home, Albany Houses in Crown Heights, was more than a building—it was the world. "I grew up in the projects. That's where I learned to ride a bike, to play ball, where I knew everyone and everyone knew me," he says today. "I saw a few things that cops did that I didn't like, but mostly I saw really good things and really good people."

Chief Secreto, whose father was a NYCHA plumber for 23 years, lived in Albany Houses until he was 17 when his family moved to Flatbush. "I didn't want to leave—I went back to visit every single day because I was afraid of missing something," he chuckled. "I even tried to get out of family vacations so I could spend more time there."

After attending John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Chief Secreto joined the NYPD in 1979. He has worked in a variety of departments and locations, including as Director of Narcotics in Queens, where he spearheaded an operation that resulted in the arrest of drug smugglers running a

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)



Angiolina Turzio, Ming Dunn, Shenisha Mitchell and Benny Acevedo wowed the judges—including Lee Strasberg's widow, Anna—at the final auditions for the 2015 Lee Strasberg NYCHA Scholarship Program.

# Stars are Born!

Four residents win prestigious acting scholarships.

**R**OBERT DE NIRO, SIDNEY POITIER, ROSARIO DAWSON... these are just a few of the talented actors who have enrolled in the Lee Strasberg Theater Institute in Manhattan. Known as the school that brought "Method Acting" to America, the Lee Strasberg Theater Institute also counts Marilyn Monroe and Johnny Depp among its alumni. And soon, four NYCHA residents—Angiolina Turzio, Shenisha Mitchell, Benny Acevedo and Ming Dunn—will join this impressive list of actors.

In a partnership between the Lee Strasberg Theater Institute and NYCHA, these four actors have been chosen to participate in 12-week workshops at the prestigious acting school. The school has had a long affiliation with NYCHA, offering its first scholarships to NYCHA residents in 1983. All interested residents compete for the scholarships through auditions.

NYCHA and the Lee Strasberg

Institute first teamed up to offer scholarships in 1983. Victoria Krane, Institute President, says that this program honors Lee Strasberg's spirit: "Lee was a man of the people. He was a New Yorker. He was self-taught, educated himself here at the public library, and he always felt he needed to give back."

Offering scholarships to just two children and two adults adds an edge to the competition. "The reason for this is simple," explains D'Andra Van Heusen, NYCHA Education Services Manager. "We wanted the candidates to bring their A-Game."

President Krane adds, "What we learned when we first offered the scholarships is the way to keep things interesting is to motivate people. Rather than to offer 11 slots and make it a given that all these actors would receive a scholarship, we wanted the winners to know they deserve it."

This year, the first round of audi-

tions was held at the Straus Community Center Wednesdays and Fridays, October through December. The finalists performed on January 8, 2015 for Anna Strasberg, Lee's wife and co-founder of the Institute, who told the actors, "Those of you who don't get the scholarship are invited to come back and try again with a new eye, a new perspective, to just try something new. Thanks to all of you for this evening. You've really fulfilled everything I was hoping tonight would be."

### The winners

- No stranger to acting, 8-year-old Angiolina Turzio, Jacob Riis Houses, takes regular acting classes at the New York Film Academy's Lower East Side branch. "It was a story about me writing to Santa Claus," said Angiolina of her original, untitled piece. "Then I asked my mom to take me to the Statue of Liberty, and there were aliens, monsters,"

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)



# The Optimal Property

**M**ANAGEMENT OPERATING MODEL (OPMOM), NYCHA's new change-oriented, decentralized property management model, launched in 18 developments last month. In December, NYCHA General Manager Cecil House invited resident association leaders to meet with property managers and regional managers ahead of the launch with one another and get a preview of the new resident association Report Card.

OPMOM is designed to improve customer service and satisfaction. It empowers property managers with far greater decision making authority, including staffing, purchase of materials, and the ability to allocate their budgets to meet the needs and priorities of the residents in their developments. That means it is critical for property managers to meet with resident associations on a regular basis to understand residents' priorities and get their input into the decision-making process.

The new "report card" allows residents to communicate to property managers and NYCHA's Central Office on a range of topics including satisfaction with NYCHA staff, lobby entrances, elevators, lighting, outside walkways, lawns and even playground sprinklers. Residents meet with their resident association leadership to provide input into the report card on a monthly basis. Then the Resident Association President meets with the

property manager to provide that feedback.

Property managers should use the input on the Report Card to help determine budget priorities and areas that need improvement, as well as note areas in which NYCHA is excelling to guarantee that those procedures stay in place.

"The report card should be viewed as a tool to use together with resident association presidents, where you can track the progress in different areas. With OPMOM, you must engage residents and listen closely," General Manager House said to property managers.

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By working  
together, we can  
get it done.  
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"The report tracks progress made on items where residents would like to see improvements and also things that property managers want to see," said Shirley Dalton, Property Manager at Woodson Houses in Brooklyn, who also attended the Meet and Greet meeting with her resident association President. "By working together, we can get it done."



General Manager Cecil House met with property managers and resident association leaders to talk about collaboration on residents priorities.

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

### THE VISIONARIES



**I**N THE LAST ISSUE of the *Journal*, I introduced you to Next-Generation NYCHA, our plan to ensure that NYCHA is here for generations to come. Resetting our relationship with NYCHA's residents is the foundation of this initiative. We started last fall with residents at Ingersoll, Mill Brook, and Van Dyke Houses who participated in "visioning" workshops to develop goals for the changes they'd like to see; you can read about those sessions and the goals that they developed on NYCHA's website.

Now these residents are working on goal-specific committees to implement their vision, developing strategies to increase the quality of life in their communities. At monthly meetings they tackle topics like affordable housing, safety and security, maintenance and repairs, jobs, neighborhood services, and issues concerning our children, seniors, and the physical environment. It's exciting to see their enthusiasm and dedication and I am pleased that they have partnered with NYCHA, other City agencies, and local organizations. So far, these committees have set short- and long-term goals that they aim to achieve using the information and resources that NYCHA is helping to coordinate for them.

Latricia Berry is one visionary NYCHA resident who signed up for all six committees at her development, Van Dyke Houses. A resident for nearly 40 years, she has seen her neighborhood, Brownsville, change a lot. "I welcome change; change is good as long as it benefits the community. And we want to make sure we'll be a part of the change and can benefit from it," she said. "That's what motivated me to get involved. You need to know about what's happening where you live. The committee experience has been very positive so far. As part of the committee on jobs,

I suggested that youth be hired for the summer in the stores along Pitkin Avenue. But all the committees are great, and I want to touch base with all of them."

Yvette Anthony of Ingersoll Houses took a leadership role in the committee on affordable housing. "I believe that the only way you can be effective is by becoming involved and assisting with issues concerning the community," she said. "These are some really good topics that can improve the community. And I think there will be results—this is a team effort, and all the parties involved seem very proactive about addressing residents' concerns and meeting what

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It's residents  
who are driving  
success.  
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residents want. We've been having a really productive exchange so far. It's effective when people reach out for, and listen to, feedback." A member of the Neighborhood Services committee, Celina Lynch, persuaded a local grocer to make free deliveries to NYCHA seniors every Tuesday. Celina has long been a great role model: she works with Green City Force on Ingersoll projects, is a member of the resident watch committee and belongs to FURY, a local community organizing group. At NYCHA we are thrilled to support these committees in their hard work. Let's be clear: it's residents who are driving their successes. These three developments aren't the only places where residents can get engaged and advocate for their community—as NextGeneration NYCHA initiatives unfold across the City, there will be more and more ways for us to collaborate as partners invested in your future.

For more information on Next-Generation NYCHA, visit NYCHA's website.

*Shola Olatoye*

**Shola Olatoye,**  
Chair and CEO, NYCHA

The NYCHA **JOURNAL**

ESTABLISHED 1970 • CIRCULATION 200,000

PUBLISHED BY THE NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS

250 Broadway, New York, NY 10007 • Tel 212.306.3322 • Fax 212.577.1358



www.nyc.gov/nycha





## The Season of Sharing

**ON DECEMBER 11**, more than 750 excited children from 25 NYCHA community centers across the city celebrated the holidays with Santa and his helpers at the Williamsburg Community Center. NYCHA Talent Show winners performed; kids danced, played games and devoured holiday treats; and Santa did what he does best and handed out gifts. The kids gave as good as they got: each community center brought canned goods for the annual NYCHA Holiday Food Drive. "You're continuing a really cool tradition—this is our seventh food drive," said NYCHA CEO and Chair Shola Olatoye as she announced that Parkside Community Center in the Bronx collected 112 cans of food, more than any other center. More than 700 cans of food were collected in total and distributed over the holidays by NYCHA's Family Services Department.

## HOME COURT ADVANTAGES

**N**OW THROUGH THE end of April, more than 3000 boys and girls from across the five boroughs are competing on 250 teams in NYCHA's Citywide Basketball Program, one of the largest inner-city basketball leagues in New York City. The program is free and open to all youth age 18 and under. Participants also engage in educational and recreational workshops that are designed to improve their quality of life and ensure that their education goes beyond the basketball court. Workshop subjects include: Cyber-Bullying, Self-Aware-

ness, Peer Pressure, Community Services, and Anti-Gang education. Basketball greats who got their start in the NYCHA league include the WNBA's Shannon Bobbitt and NBA stars Stephon Marbury, Kemba Walker, and Metta World Peace (Ron Artest). Other NYCHA residents who successfully made it to the NBA include Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Nate "Tiny" Archibald, Rod Strickland, and Carmelo Anthony. For more information on the schedule of games and other NYCHA sports programs, visit **Community Programs and Services** at [www.nyc.gov/nycha](http://www.nyc.gov/nycha).



## "I wouldn't leave here for nothing."

**NYCHA Resident Board Member Victor Gonzalez talks about his beloved Wise Towers, built 50 years ago:**



**"I MOVED IN** with my wife when we got married in 1972. So I've spent my entire adult life at Wise Towers and raised three daughters here. It was a community within a community. Everyone would come out for the Tenant Association parties. We had neighbors of all ethnicities, which is what made it so wonderful. You could see it in the food: Polish, Russian, Cuban, Puerto Rican. Food contributed to the cohesiveness, and helped us tell stories

about our countries. People would fill up aluminum trays in their kitchens to bring down. We would sample things like wiener schnitzel and sauerkraut and say 'Wow, that's something.'

As TA President (which I was from 2000 to 2011), I would try to get non-NYCHA residents to join our Family Days. At first they would shy away, but soon people started coming from all over, bringing food and beverages. Characters from the neighborhood would come early to do the grilling and would be the last ones to leave. Children used to argue with their parents because they didn't want to be on vacation when we had Family Days, because all their friends would be there.

We had clowns, bouncy tents, face-painting, the NYCHA Chorus performed, and the home-cooked food kept coming. Local stores would give us food and water—one bodega gave us ice all day so there was never a shortage. On Christmas, we would all decorate the hallways together while drinking eggnog. We had bake sales, and did flea markets for a couple years—people would come from miles around to find a treasure from another's junk. A DJ did the music for free—that was his contribution. There's a mural in the TA room of these events to remind us of those great, fun days.

We had 'two-sewer' stickball contests in the middle of 90th Street. One sewer was home base, and you had to run to the other sewer, tag it, run back,

and that would be a home run—as long as you hit the ball hard enough and it wasn't caught. Cars would honk their horns and we'd move aside to let them through. But there were fewer cars back then. And everyone would hang out in the plaza and tell stories. Women would talk about fashion and the men would play dominoes.

Many people did tenant patrol even though they weren't getting paid, because they loved where they lived and wanted the buildings to remain safe. They patrolled seven days a week and won awards from the PSAs and precincts for their work. I would check on them and see if they needed anything from the store. They already had their own teapots and baked goods. It was like visiting friends.

The older neighbors were the glue that held the development together. There was respect for them. When someone passed, the entire development came out to the church across the street, which would be standing-room only.

The Upper West Side is a wonderful area; I'm so glad I stayed. It's safer now, we have an incredible amount of stores, and a lot of diversity surrounding us. People come from places like the Midwest to live around here! I love my Wise Towers. I wouldn't leave here for nothing. I have a lot of fond memories and I know the people; I know six generations of one family!"



# A Day in the Life: NYCHA Centralized Call Center Agent

**AMY CHRISTIAN HAS** lived at Campos Plaza her whole life. Prior to joining the Call Center eight years ago, she worked in a retail job without benefits. When Amy learned from a NYCHA employee that there were job openings at the Call Center, she went in person to NYCHA's 90 Church Street office to complete an application. Not long after, she was called in for an interview and "the rest is history."

## 8:30

Amy arrives at her desk. There are already almost 80 call agents receiving calls, some arriving as early as 6:00 a.m. Additional call agents arrive throughout the day to provide extended coverage until midnight, when the Emergency Services Department takes over

## 8:46

First call of the day: a heat and hot water complaint. It is 20 degrees outside and the volume of these calls increases in cold weather. Callers can direct heat and hot water calls to an automated system for faster processing but some callers prefer to speak to a call agent.



## 10:05

An older female resident reports that one burner on her gas stove isn't lighting. After checking to see if there is a gas outage at the building, Amy schedules an appointment for a NYCHA maintenance worker to evaluate the problem. Amy asks the caller what kind of stove she has and includes that in the work order so the maintenance worker knows what parts may be needed.

## 10:23

A woman resident states she is keeping her New Year's resolution by trying to finally fix her leaky faucet in the kitchen. Before scheduling a repair visit, Amy asks if the caller has already reported the leak so that a duplicate work order is not filled out for the same problem. Most general repair visits can be scheduled for within 11 days.



Amy consults with her supervisor, Bart Reyes, when she needs additional information or assistance with calls regarding maintenance appointments.

## 11:16

Another heat and hot water complaint, this one from a disabled senior. The temperature outside is dropping as the day goes on. Amy reminds the caller about the automated self-service option, where residents can also check for utility outages and their status.

## 11:30-12

Lunch: A "DiMaggio sandwich"—chicken cutlet with roasted pepper and fresh mozzarella cheese, herbs and mayonnaise. "Delicious!"

## 1:42

A man who says he's a retired transit worker calls with a complaint about a ceiling leak. He reports that it was fixed about a year ago, but is broken again, and he sounds very angry. As a resident, Amy understands his frustration, but she also wishes residents understood how much Customer Contact Agents really do want to help.

## 2:36

According to the caller, a maintenance worker has not yet responded to a previous report about a broken shower head. For calls like this, Amy consults with Bart Reyes, her supervisor, before following up with the property manager to see if the resident missed the appointment, the part isn't yet available, or an emergency at the development required all available staff.



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21,000 calls each month are answered by translators who speak 180 different languages.

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## 2:53

The caller speaks very little English and tells Amy he speaks Chinese. Amy places a conference call to NYCHA's contracted interpretation services and stays on the line until an interpreter can assist them. The CCC handles approximately 8,000 Spanish speaking customers a month with its own certified translators and refers approximately 13,000 calls a month to contracted language services that translate more than 180 languages.

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The Call Center manages nearly 300,000 calls each month.

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## 3:11

A woman in a Section 8 apartment calls to report that her external door isn't locking properly and her landlord has not made the repair. Section 8 calls are usually routed to a separate section but sometimes one comes to Amy's area. Amy notifies Section 8 staff that an inspection to check this. The CCC also receives calls from applicants to both the Section 8 and public housing program.



## 3:25

A young man is the first emergency caller of the day. He reports a toilet stoppage. Emergency calls are responded to in 24 hours or less. Most emergency calls are for conditions that threaten the life or safety of residents, like gas leaks, elevator outages, or floods. When these calls come in after normal work hours, the CCC contacts the appropriate NYCHA staff or agency.

## 3:37

Second emergency of the day: a Resident Association President reports a gas smell in the community center. Residents may call the CCC for emergency repairs in NYCHA public spaces as well as their apartments.

## 4:15

Another heat and hot water call. Initially the caller was upset, but when she recognized Amy's voice from a prior call about a stuck cabinet door that was later fixed, she thanked Amy for being helpful. Amy is delighted, since CC agents do not normally get thank-yous.

## 5:30

Time for Amy to clock out. It was a rough day. On a normal Thursday, the CCC handles 6,000–7,000 calls. However, today almost 18,000 calls were received due to the cold weather conditions. A normal volume of calls for Amy is from 80–120 calls a day.

Reach the CCC at **718-707-7771** to schedule your service requests



# Residents' Corner

## "SHOWING A BIT OF GRATITUDE"

As NYCHA launches an innovative food business development program for residents, one participant from St. Mary's Houses wants to make sure that we know what it means to her.

**From:** Vanessa Dixon

**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2015 3:49 PM

**To:** Riche, Jeanique

**Subject:** Showing a bit of gratitude.



Good afternoon Ms. Riche, its Vanessa Dixon again. I never got a chance to formally thank you for considering me for the course and ultimately choosing me as one of the students to receive this valuable information .

Opening my business, the Queen's Palace, is something that I have always wanted to do and have always done, off and on, in and out, throughout my young teen life and even to this day. I never had the courage to try to venture out beyond catering and party planning. If in a million years someone told me that I would have this opportunity I would laugh and tell them that they were crazy.

I grew up in the restaurant business. My mom in her own moms and pops, bed and breakfast type of place in Darlington, SC. My brother worked at the Marriott as a chef. I've always admired the culinary field because it is so versatile and you are able to make it your own. If it had not been for this opportunity I don't know when I would have ever had the courage to step out of my comfort zone and step up my game.

Although it has been more than a passion and more than an enthusiastic drive for me, I'm realize how hard it is to get noticed and how hard it is to really get started. I've always had faith in myself and in my abilities to not only cook and cater but in learning every aspect of the business even if it was on my own through textbooks, networking etc. But having this opportunity has not only boosted my self-confidence, my morale, but charged my enthusiasm through the sky and gave me more faith and more of a drive to go and get what I want and deserve.

I am eternally indebted to you and all of the organizations that came together to make this possible not only for me but my fellow classmates. You will never understand my level of enthusiasm and appreciation for the opportunity to do something that I love. Thank you so much and to all of the companies involved, I aim to not only make you proud but myself.

Your future personal chef, party planner and show stopper/silly student,  
Chef QUEEN. Better known as Vanessa Dixon Munford

Excerpted with permission of the author.

**For more info on the Food Business Pathways program, contact REES 718-218-8100 or visit [opportunitynycha.org](http://opportunitynycha.org).**

## THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

The tenants of **Penn Whortman Houses** would like to express their appreciation of Miss Ellen Hall, caretaker. Miss Hall decorated the lobby for the Christmas holidays. This is the first time ever that the lobby was decorated. Tenants expressed joy and our spirits were uplifted. We felt connected with celebrating the holidays, extending holiday greetings and smiles with one another. She really did put happy smiles on our faces. Thank you, Miss Hall!



## THE PASSING OF A RESIDENT LEADER AND MENTOR



I was saddened to learn of the passing of Ms. Delores Townsend, a former and longtime Resident Association President at Davidson Houses in the Bronx. A graduate of College of New Rochelle, Ms. Townsend served as a resident leader until 1998. She then moved to Moore Houses where she lost her life last November in a fire confined to her apartment.

A dedicated resident leader, Ms. Townsend devoted her life to fulfilling the needs of the **Davison Houses** community. Ms. Townsend's record of service included supporting youth sports teams and working for improvements in the buildings' boiler and elevator systems.

As my mentor, she helped me learn the protocol and develop leadership skills which I continue to apply in my current position as Chief Executive Officer at Housing NOW, an education and advocacy organization for public and HUD assisted housing, located in Humble Texas. When I first met Ms. Townsend, I was young and had a lot to learn. She took me under her wing and taught me a lot. I hope NYCHA continues to develop resident leaders like Ms. Townsend who work to improve the community and also to develop a new generation of leaders to carry on that work.

**Eric C. Crawford**

Chief Executive Officer

**Are you a resident with something to say or a letter you'd like to share? Send it to [journal@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:journal@nycha.nyc.gov). Please include your contact information.**

# REES Hosts First-ever NYPD Recruiting Event

**I**N DECEMBER, REES (Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability) hosted its first-ever employment recruiting event with the NYPD. More than 60 NYCHA residents attended a 2 hour introduction to the range of career opportunities at NYPD which includes school safety and traffic officer positions, jobs as emergency assistance (911) operators, and the police officer career ladder that extends from officer to captain. On hand from NYPD were Sergeant Stephanie Berry, Officer Basil Omisanya, School Safety Agent Douglas Rudolph, and School Safety Agent Edna Lopez.

"Hearing from the NYPD recruiters who began in entry level positions and rose through the ranks provided NYCHA residents with real examples of how they too can begin their journey towards stable and secure employment," said Shanna Castillo, REES Assistant Director of Intake and Outreach.



**Officer Basil Omisanya talked about his career growth as an NYPD officer.**

Following the presentations was a lively discussion session during which attendees asked questions about testing and fee waivers, salary and benefits and eligibility requirements. Each resident received a NYPD tote bag with important information and giveaways. REES will continue to work with the NYPD recruitment team to host similar events throughout 2015.



**This event was one of the most popular career events that REES has hosted. The next NYPD recruiting fair is scheduled for February 20, 2015.**

(CHIEF, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

multi-million dollar heroin business. Most recently Chief Secreto directed the Manhattan North division comprised of 12 precincts.

"Throughout his 35-year career, Chief Secreto has proved to be an excellent leader who is devoted to all communities within New York City," said Commissioner Bill Bratton in the announcement. "As Chief of Housing he will continue to foster relationships throughout the many diverse neighborhoods the Department serves, as well as continue to keep the residents

of New York City Housing Authority safe."

In fact, the Chief sees fostering relationships as the key to success in his job. "In the housing bureau, we are part of something much bigger than ourselves, and we can make a big difference in people's lives," he explains. "The job of a housing police officer is never routine, but we don't want it to always be about crisis. I tell my officers to treat everyone as is they are family. Residents are willing to be partners with you."



**Chief Secreto with his father, Van Dawson, at a family event in the 1970s. "I feel like this job is my destiny. I have to do good, I have to deliver. You never know, maybe there's some little boy living in one of the developments now who wants to grow up to be a cop someday."**

## PROGRESS REPORT: 2014

**N**EXTGENERATION NYCHA IS all about collaboration between NYCHA and residents, elected officials, community-based organizations and other City agencies to improve quality of life in our communities. In 2014 NYCHA partnered with the NYC Department of Health to develop a mold remediation policy, standard procedures and training for staff and are actively working to remediate residents' homes. In collaboration with the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, we provided DV training to 550 employees working in our developments so they can recognize the signs of DV and know what to do to help and we offered a full day conference attended by more than 600 NYCHA residents. \$101 million provided by Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. is funding security improvements at developments throughout the five boroughs. See below for more accomplishments.



### MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

We reduced open work orders from a peak of more than 430,000 last year by more than two-thirds and improved service speed from approximately 150 days to 9.6 days on average. A newly created independent assessment unit will inspect the physical state of all 178,000 apartments over the next two years. More than 22,000 apartments in 93 developments were inspected in 2014.



### SAFETY AND SECURITY

NYCHA completed all 49 2014 CCTV projects slated for completion by year's end on December 23, 2014 bringing the total number of cameras throughout our buildings to more than 12,000.



### SIDEWALK SHEDS

NYCHA developed a plan to remove all sheds where there is no active construction work by this coming spring. When NYCHA began its sidewalk shed removal initiative in May 2014, there had been 53,000 linear feet of "legacy sheds." In 2014, we removed 27,000 linear feet of these legacy sheds. When residents see sheds today that means there is either work underway or work imminently scheduled to address building conditions that represented a hazard to pedestrians below.

## MEETING THE GOAL IN 2014: 100% OF CAMERA SYSTEMS INSTALLED

### How NYCHA buildings get camera systems

FROM FUND ALLOCATIONS TO MOUNTING  
CAMERAS, HERE ARE THE STEPS



### PROGRESS TO DATE (12.23.14):

**100%** of 2014 installation projects completed  
**12,000+** NYCHA-wide (multi-year) installations

find more information online  
[nyc.gov/nycha](http://nyc.gov/nycha)



### LIGHTS

NYCHA installed 185 light towers at 15 targeted developments as part of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP), a comprehensive, citywide plan to reduce crime in NYCHA developments, focusing on developments that account for nearly 20 percent of all violent crime in public housing



### CAPITAL REPAIRS

Thanks to new funding obtained through a bond issuance, NYCHA completed roof repairs and brickwork at 18 buildings and started work at 99 others. Thirty out of a total 310 buildings have been completed.



### SANDY RECOVERY

In September 2014, NYCHA reached an agreement with FEMA to fund Sandy repairs at Coney Island Houses. The agreement grants NYCHA \$108 million to repair and protect five buildings in the Coney Island Houses where Sandy's storm surge caused significant damage. The Coney Island agreement served as a model to obtain necessary funding for repairs and resiliency at other severely damaged developments in NYCHA's portfolio. NYCHA submitted \$4 Billion in FEMA applications for 35 Sandy-impacted developments based on the Coney Island model.



# New Program Provides Stability for Ex-Offenders

**R**AUL BURGOS IS a busy man: he works at Exodus Transitional Community as a re-entry vocational counselor and job developer; manages a youth mentoring program; is starting a local food pantry and soup kitchen at his church; and is studying to become an ordained minister. What's really remarkable is that he's managed to accomplish all this in just the past two years, since he was released from prison after serving 19 years for a felony conviction.

Raul credits his success in large measure to the NYCHA Family Re-entry Pilot Program, a collaboration between



HUBERTO ARELLANO

NYCHA and the Vera Institute for Justice which enables formerly incarcerated people to return home and reunite with their families after their release from prison. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) encourages public housing authorities to adopt programs

that enable some formerly incarcerated individuals to gain stability and reunite with family living in public housing. Research shows that the re-entry approach strengthens families and enhances safety in communities.

Until this program launched, former NYCHA residents released from prison

were barred from returning to public housing for six years. Housing and family support, especially immediately following release from prison, provides the critical stability ex-offenders need to find work, establish supportive, healthy relationships, and resist a return to crime.


"This program makes a huge difference for me. I can save some money instead of scrambling for rent, and help my mother out with bills and meals, and getting her to and from work," Raul explains. "Coming out of prison, being 20 years behind everyone else, you need the help and support of your family to get back on your feet. Without this program, I would have been living paycheck to paycheck; now I have the stability to help others."

Only ex-offenders released in the past 36 months or those about to be released are eligible for the program. They may be

former NYCHA residents or individuals who have relatives living in NYCHA housing. All program participants and their families receive case management services, and access to an array of support programs.

This program can also help New York City save about \$700,000 it spends annually to house recently released ex-offenders who have nowhere else to live; in fact about two-thirds of the program participants are expected to come out of shelters. Additionally, NYCHA residents who are already housing recent ex-convicts will no longer face eviction if the ex-offender meets other program criteria.

For more information on the Re-entry Pilot Program, please **contact Johanna Solano at 212-306-3507** or **Johanna.Solano@nycha.nyc.gov**.



## NYPD SCHOOL CROSSING GUARDS

**HELP YOUR COMMUNITY WHILE EARNING GOOD PAY AND BENEFITS!**

School Crossing Guards help children safely cross busy intersections on their way to and from school. School Crossing Guards control traffic flow around schools in the morning, at lunch time and at the end of the school day.

Take advantage of these excellent Civilian **PART TIME JOBS with the NYPD!**

- **GOOD PAY - \$10.33/HOUR TO START, \$13.49/HOUR AFTER 3 YEARS**
- **HEALTH BENEFITS-HEALTH INSURANCE WITH 20+ HOURS WORKED PER WEEK**
- **WORK CLOSE TO HOME**
- **SUMMER WORK ALSO AVAILABLE**


There are no formal education or experience requirements for this job, but all candidates must be able to understand and be understood in English.

Prospective candidates must pass a qualifying medical examination, which includes drug screening and a character/background investigation, prior to appointment. You must also complete six (6) days of training at the Police Academy once appointed.


If you are interested in applying for a School Crossing Guard position please visit:

**<http://nypdcivilianjobs.com/schoolcrossingguard/>**

and provide your information and you will be contacted by an NYPD representative.



The New York City Police Department is an Equal Opportunity Employer



## INTERESTED IN A CAREER WITH THE NYPD?

NYPD is joining REES to connect NYCHA residents with information about the following positions:

- Radio Repair Mechanics**
- School Crossing Guards**
- School Safety Agents**
- Traffic Enforcement Agents**
- Police Officers**
- Police Communications Technicians (911 Operators)**

If you are interested in learning about opportunities to join NYPD's finest and you're a NYCHA resident, please join us to learn how you can apply.

Friday, February 20, 2015

10 a.m. to 12 noon

NYCHA

787 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11238

Photo ID is required to enter the building.

Space is limited, so register today!

Please RSVP by calling **718 289- 8100** or by visiting us online at <http://tinyurl.com/NYPDSession>

You can also visit [NYPDrecruit.com](http://NYPDrecruit.com) and [NYPDcivilianjobs.com](http://NYPDcivilianjobs.com) for more information on positions with the NYPD.



## Give your children the school they deserve and the future they choose.

Put your child on the path to college at an Ascend public charter school.



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Attend an information session.

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Six beautiful privately-leased facilities in Brownsville, Bushwick, Canarsie, and East Flatbush

Apply now at [ascendlearning.org/enroll](http://ascendlearning.org/enroll)

# Peer to Peer Diabetes Prevention Program Saves Lives



“We see the toll every day: amputations, wheel chairs, hospitalizations.”

**Darlene Cruz**  
Peer Educator Supervisor



“This program is changing lives. It’s work, but it’s not hard if you’re committed to making a change for your health.”

**Gwen Kennely**  
Health People staff, Millbrook resident



“My parents and my brother died of diabetes so I am going to do everything I can to help the community fight this.”

**Delores Graham**  
Lifestyle Coach



“The support group really becomes your family, we all help one another.”

**Wanda Williams**  
Lifestyle Coach, Bronx River Houses resident



“You always hear that people in poor neighborhoods can’t lose weight but the people in our class sure have.”

**Loretta Fleming**  
Lifestyle Coach, Co-teacher,  
St. Mary’s Houses resident

**EVERY WEDNESDAY MORNING** at the offices of Health People, a Bronx-based community health education and support organization, five or six women gather to talk about how their friends and neighbors are doing. This isn’t small talk; it’s serious business with life-altering consequences. These women are peer educators working with public housing residents throughout the Bronx to help them make healthy lifestyle changes and lower the risk that they’ll develop diabetes.

The Bronx has a higher rate of diabetes than any other borough in New York City. People who are pre-diabetic—meaning they have an elevated risk of developing diabetes—are more likely to develop heart disease, Alzheimer’s disease and several kinds of cancer. With a few simple changes to their daily habits, pre-diabetic individuals can turn their health around.

Health People’s Diabetes Prevention Program peer educators—called Lifestyle Coaches—go through six weeks of training developed by the National Centers for Disease control to understand the disease and healthy living habits, develop teaching skills, and to learn to work as coaches and mentors for participants. Each DPP program is comprised of 22 one-hour sessions covering the causes, symptoms and effects of diabetes, how to make and sustain lifestyle choices.

“Our Lifestyle Coaches have gone everywhere—door to door in NYCHA

buildings, to bus stops, train stations, groceries, churches—to recruit people for our program,” says Darlene Cruz who supervises the Lifestyle Coach training. “It’s so important, it’s easy to learn, and if you have the support, you can really change your life.”

At the start of the program, participants receive the CDC curriculum divided into weekly lessons plus a Weekly Food & Activity Tracker to keep count of their calorie intake and exercise, and the “DPP Bible”—The Calorie King Calorie, Fat & Carbohydrate Counter that provides nutritional information on thousands of different foods, plus items served at over 200 fast food restaurants. (It’s available on Amazon.) They also receive the total devotion of the Lifestyle Coaches to their success. All coaches are available to talk with participants between sessions for extra support and encouragement.

Through modest behavior changes such as improving food choices and increasing physical activity to 150 minutes per week, participants have lost an average of 8 pounds each and reduced the chance that they will become diabetic by 58 percent. Exercise can simply be taking a half hour walk five days a week; making a health food choice might mean switching from white bread to whole wheat bread, or from one fast food restaurant to another.

For more information or to join the program, call Health People at **718-585-5041** or visit **healthpeople.org**.

**30%**  
of NYCHA residents  
have diabetes.

**31%**  
of NYCHA residents  
are pre-diabetic.

**You might be pre-diabetic if:**

- you had a baby who weighed more than 9 pounds at birth or had gestational diabetes.
- have a parent, brother or sister with diabetes.
- are younger than 65 and get little or no exercise in a typical day.
- are overweight (if you weigh as much or more than the weight listed for your height, you are at increased risk).

Height	Weight
4’10”	129
4’11”	133
5’	138
5’1”	143
5’2”	147
5’3”	152
5’4”	157
5’5”	162
5’6”	167
5’7”	172
5’8”	177
5’9”	182
5’10”	188
5’11”	183
6’	199
6’1”	204
6’2”	210
6’3”	216
6’4”	221

## BAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE BRONX

**JAYNINE TAYLOR**, a resident of Castle Hill Houses and a participant in The NYCHA Food Business Pathways program, plans to capitalize on the growing interest in healthier diets by opening a bakery that produces comfort-food baked goods and specialty baked goods (gluten-free, fat-free, sugar-free and organic) that taste good and are affordable. “The Bronx has the highest obesity rate in the entire New York State, which speaks volumes. There is little access to health food stores here in the Bronx and the ones that you do find are extremely expensive,” says Jaynine. “Implementing a healthier lifestyle in the form of a bakery is an awesome idea. By combining taste, accessibility and an economical product, we are going to bake a difference in the Bronx and we will be a batch made in heaven!” The NYCHA Food Business Pathways Program is a collaboration between The NYC Department of Small Business Services, The NYC Economic Development Corporation, The Citi Foundation, Hot Bread Kitchen and NYCHA REES to provide a pathway into food business ownership for NYCHA and NYCHA Section 8 residents. **For more info on the Food Business Pathways program, contact REES 718-218-8100 or visit [opportunitynycha.org](http://opportunitynycha.org).**



### Counting Calories, Having Fun

I enjoyed this program. It inspired me to learn more about myself and how to eat and count my fat grams. It takes me a lot more time now to shop for groceries because I look at the fat grams and sodium – and that’s a GOOD thing! I want to make the smart choices and choose the right foods. With the program’s encouragement, I reached my goal weight in a couple of months. I lost ten pounds with eating right and exercising. I got on the scale and I could not believe it!!!! The holidays came;

I gained a couple of pounds. The holidays passed and I got back on the wagon and got back into control. I am an inspiration to a lot of people. I talk about how I eat and exercise. I show them my Calorie King book. This program needs to progress in more areas because low income people don’t have a lot of resources to learn about diabetes, exercise and portion control. I thank all my coaches and everyone who had a hand in this program.

—**Heidi Rodney**, program participant



# Help with Your Taxes

APRIL 15 IS AROUND THE CORNER, BUT HAVE NO FEAR, PLENTY OF HELP IS HERE TO GET YOU THROUGH THE TAX RETURN PROCESS.

At [nyc.gov/taxprep](http://nyc.gov/taxprep), you can:

- File your return yourself for free if you earn less than \$53,000 a year.
- Request free tax preparation help from certified volunteers.
- Learn whether you qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the New York City Child Care Tax Credit, which could add up to thousands of dollars in refunds.
- Learn how to report health care coverage through the Affordable Care act, a new requirement for 2014 tax returns.

Several NYCHA sites are also offering free tax preparation help with the assistance of the Food Bank. At the sites, tax documents are scanned into Food Bank's secure system and the resident's tax return is completed by an IRS-certified Food Bank tax preparer remotely. This program, which launched last year, results in decreased waiting time for the resident as well as greatly enhanced tax preparation experience. The goal is to serve 1,300 residents at these sites, enabling them to claim tax credits and refunds and become more financially stable. For more information, visit [OpportunityNYCHA.org](http://OpportunityNYCHA.org).

	BOROUGH	ADDRESS	HOURS
St. Mary's Community Center	Bronx	595 Trinity Avenue, Bronx	MWF 6 pm–10 pm
Edenwald Community Center	Bronx	1150 East 229th Street, Bronx	TuF 6 pm–10 pm; Sat 11 am–2 pm
Bushwick/Hylan Community Center	Brooklyn	50 Humboldt Street, Brooklyn	Tu, TH, F 6 pm–10 pm; Sat 11 am–3 pm
Penn-Wortman Community Center	Brooklyn	895 Pennsylvania Avenue, Brooklyn	MW 6:30 pm–10 pm; Sat 2pm–5 pm
O'Dwyer Community Center	Brooklyn	2945 West 33rd Street (between Mermaid and Surf), Brooklyn	TuTH 6 pm–10 pm; Sat 1 pm–5 pm
Boys and Girls Republic	Manhattan	888 East 6th Street, Manhattan	M-F 7 am–11 am, 6 pm–9 pm; Sat 10 am–3 pm

## Working toward a Healthier Harlem



**BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY 2015**, residents in Johnson, Lehman, Taft, King, and Clinton Houses can receive help managing asthma, diabetes, and high blood pressure, thanks to a new pilot program sponsored by NYCHA, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Community Service society, Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, the City University of New York, and New York University. Community health workers who live and work in Harlem will provide the services. For more information, call Elizabeth Drackett at the East and Central Harlem District Public Health Office at **212-996-8648**.

## ONLINE HELP FOR SANDY STRESS

**MORE THAN 700,000** New Yorkers, including thousands of NYCHA residents, were impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Many are still struggling with anxiety, depression, insomnia and other mental health issues related to the storm. The Mental Health Association of New York City has launched a free, online mental health program called iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief. Available in English and Spanish, the site guides users through exercisers designed to reduce stress and improve mood. **Google iHelp: Sandy Stress Relief.**



## SCORE A JOB WITH THE NFL

**THE NFL FOOTBALL** Officiating Academy is once again looking for recruits. This co-ed, eight-week summer program, co-sponsored by NYCHA, offers 30 NYCHA residents ages 17-30 the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to become a game official. Participants also learn valuable life skills that enhance a game official's performance—confidence, decisiveness, and integrity—and are eligible to apply for officiating job opportunities with local PSAL and Pop Warner leagues, as well as the NFL. **To arrange an interview, contact Angelina Gonzalez at 212-306-3390 or Beltha Hernandez at 212-306-3342.**



(STARS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

and zombies everywhere." While she's not practicing acting with her mother and father, Angiolina enjoys listening to music. Like former Strasberg student Johnny Depp, she aspires to be both a rock star and an actor one day.

- Shenisha Mitchell, age 15 and a resident of Wyckoff Houses, has no formal acting experience. She performed For the Love of a Mother, a piece she wrote herself about a young woman who confronts her mother for using drugs. "This win meant so much to me. This is my dream! I'm so happy I have the chance and that I can pursue it."
- When asked about what this opportunity means to him, Buenaventura "Benny" Acevedo, age 26, Grant Houses, stressed that it means he can keep learning. Having been bitten by the acting bug in high school doing a series of variety shows, Benny starred in a number of plays throughout college while trying to make the transition into films. For his audition, Benny performed Caliban's monologue, 'The Isle is Full of Noises,' from Shakespeare's The Tempest. "I felt very connected to the character because

he was very caged in, very trapped," Benny explained. "That feeling always resonated with me and my day-to-day struggles. It just called out to me."

- Growing up, Stephanie "Ming" Dunn, age 29 and a resident of Breukelen Houses, did a lot of church productions, ranging from nativity and morality plays to musicals. "When I saw the flyer for these auditions in my building, I was like, eh, I don't know. But my philosophy is, go to ALL the auditions because you never know," said Ming. "I'm passionate about acting, singing, dancing—I love it, I breathe it. So I said, well...let me just give it a shot. And, look!" Ming performed a piece called "Safehaven" from the broken motherhood museum written by Miriam Tabb. The play tackles the tough balancing act of self-preservation and motherhood in the African American community. "I was so scared," she explains. "But to go through all those people's names, sit through all the auditions and then to hear your name called? It's truly a blessing. It's amazing. I'm so excited and I'm ready to work!"

## ***FREE 14-week job training program for homeless & low-income women***

### **First Step Program**

Computer Training - Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook  
Internet Research • Resume Writing • Interviewing Skills  
Job Placement Assistance • Self-Esteem Building  
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GED not required • New class starting soon!

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## CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

# What's in a Name?

The legacies of great African Americans inspire those who live in NYCHA developments named for them.



1817–1895

### FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Born into slavery, he learned to read and write before escaping in 1838 from Maryland to New England. He teamed up with *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison. Together they worked for social reform and the abolition of slavery. Later he worked for the desegregation of schools, housing, employment and the right to vote. He was an adviser to President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War and afterwards became Minister and Consul General to Haiti and the U. S. Marshal for the District of Columbia.



1848–1928

### LEWIS H. LATIMER

Born to runaway slaves in Chelsea, Massachusetts, Latimer invented and patented an incandescent light bulb with a carbon filament in 1881. He was a skillful, self-taught mechanical draftsman. He served as an engineer for the Edison Company where he supervised the installation of the electric light system. He also made patent drawings of the first telephone for Alexander Graham Bell. Latimer was also an accomplished poet, painter and musician. Latimer Gardens is in Flushing, Queens.



1854–1911

### JAMES ALAN BLAND

American composer of popular songs, including "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny," was born in 1854 in Flushing, N.Y., the son of free Americans. After graduating from Howard University's Law School, he was the first Black man appointed examiner in the United States Patent Office. Later he worked in minstrel shows throughout Europe and the United States. He was often called "the World's Greatest Minstrel Man." He died of tuberculosis in 1911.



1864–1943

### GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER

African American botanist, agricultural chemist and educator, born a slave. Developed hundreds of uses for the peanut, soybean and sweet potato, prompting Southern farmers to produce these soil-enriching cash crops. Director of agricultural research at Tuskegee Institute, he developed the crop rotation method of preventing soil nutrient depletion. Discovered 325 different uses for peanuts, ranging from cooking oil to printers ink. Devoted his life to improving the lives of Black Americans.



1871–1938

### JAMES WELDON JOHNSON

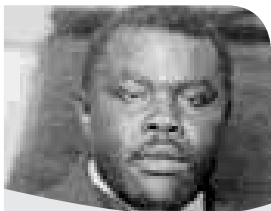
Poet and civil rights leader, Johnson, a Black intellectual, played a vital role in the civil rights movement as poet, teacher, diplomat and NAACP official. He is perhaps best remembered as the lyricist for "Lift Every Voice and Sing," the poem which is often referred to as the Black National Anthem. From 1916 to 1930, he was the key policy-maker for the NAACP, and later became the Civil Rights groups' Executive Director. Johnson Houses is in Manhattan's Spanish Harlem.



1875–1955

### MARY MCLEOD BETHUNE

The 15th of 17 children of former slaves, she was a Black educator who sought improved racial relations and educational opportunities for Black Americans. She was part of the U.S. delegation to the first United Nations meeting in 1945. In 1935 she founded the National Council of Negro Women, was a special advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and in 1940 became vice-president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).



1887–1940

### MARCUS GARVEY

Garvey, a leading proponent of Black Nationalism, founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association to build unity and establish the greatness of African heritage. He urged a "back to Africa" movement. A brilliant speaker, Garvey was prominent as publisher of his newspaper, *Negro World*. He was the most influential Black leader in the early 1920s. He was later jailed and deported to Jamaica where he died in relative obscurity.



1889–1979

### PHILIP RANDOLPH

The principal organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), Randolph led efforts to end segregation in the Armed Forces and in schools. The BSCP came to be viewed as a symbol of the African American's claim to dignity, respect and a decent livelihood. It took some 12 years for Randolph to unionize the Pullman Company, the first such contract between a major national employer and a predominantly Black union.



1900–1971

### LOUIS "SATCHMO" ARMSTRONG

The great African American jazz trumpeter, singer and bandleader, was born in New Orleans where he became known for his improvisational genius and the melodic development of jazz. Probably the world's greatest jazz musician, Armstrong influenced generations of musicians with his inventive musical mind and technical abilities. On July 6, 1971 Armstrong died in his sleep in his Queens home. Armstrong Houses is in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant section.



1902–1967

### LANGSTON HUGHES

African American poet born in Joplin, Missouri. He recalled his grandmother taught him to grow up courageous with a will to fight for his beliefs. She also taught him to judge a man by his actions, not by the color of his skin, and that all people deserved to be free. A major figure in the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes depicted African American life in his poems. His collections of verse include "The Weary Blues" and "One-Way Ticket." Among his other works are plays, children's books and novels.



1908–1993

### THURGOOD MARSHALL

One of the best known figures in the history of civil rights in America and the first Black Supreme Court Justice. He served in the Supreme Court for 24 years until June 1991 when he announced his retirement. As legal director of the NAACP in 1954, he won *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark case that demolished the legal basis for segregation. Marshall Plaza is in Washington Heights, Manhattan.



1919–1972

### JACKIE ROBINSON

The first African American to play in the major leagues. Robinson excelled in sports at the University of California, Los Angeles. He signed a minor league contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers farm team and in 1947 joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in what was a precedent-shattering move. A fierce competitor, daring base runner and solid hitter, Robinson led the Dodgers to six World Series appearances. In 1962 he was the first African American to be inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.



1929–1968

### MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

An American Baptist minister whose eloquence and commitment to nonviolent tactics led him to set up the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which formed the foundation of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Among the many peaceful demonstrations he led was the 1963 March on Washington, at which he delivered his "I have a Dream" speech. He won the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize, four years before he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.



## CELEBRATING WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

# NYCHA Residents Break the Glass Ceiling



## Michele Roberts Makes Sports History

**MICHELE ROBERTS IS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** of the NBA Players' Association and the first woman to head a major professional sports union in the U.S. Roberts spent her childhood at Melrose Houses before attending college at Wesleyan University in Connecticut. She then earned a law degree from the University of California, Berkeley. Roberts' career as an attorney began in Washington D.C. where she served in the office of the Public Defender, eventually becoming chief of the trial division. Last July she was voted to succeed Billy Hunter as the executive director of the NBA Players' Association, receiving 32 out of 36 possible votes. Roberts recently returned to Melrose Houses to film an ESPN segment for Outside the Lines. To watch her interview, visit [espn.com](http://espn.com) and search for "Michele Roberts."

## Ursula Burns, First African American Woman to Become Fortune 500 CEO

**RAISED BY HER MOTHER** in Baruch Houses, Ursula Burns attended Cathedral High School before obtaining a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Brooklyn Polytechnic and a master's in mechanical engineering from Columbia University. Starting as an intern at Xerox, she worked her way up the ladder in product development and planning, then moved to management as the executive assistant to senior staff and the CEO. Eventually she was promoted to senior vice president and then CEO of Xerox, the first African American woman in history to head a fortune 500 company. In 2014 Forbes named her the 22nd most powerful woman in the world. Ms. Burns was just named by Mayor de Blasio as a co-chair for the 2016 Democratic Convention Committee, a group of community leaders that also includes Lloyd Blankfein, CEO of Goldman Sachs, who also grew up in NYCHA housing.



Mark Your Calendars!

## 13TH ANNUAL NYCHA Grows With its Gardeners Conference

March 28, 2015, 9:30 am–4:00 pm

**James Weldon Johnson Community Center**  
1833 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10029

For more information and to register, please call **212-306-3511**





Department of Community Programs and Development  
Community Operations

# 45<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL TALENT SHOW COMPETITION

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**JANUARY 20 - APRIL 3, 2015**

**Straus Performing Arts Center**  
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(212) 306-3368/2864  
or (212) 683-3647  
or visit [www.studionycha.org](http://www.studionycha.org)

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