

HARLEM COMMONWEALTH NEWSLETTER

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Publisher's Note

HCC is a community organization with an untarnished reputation for over 40 years. Its survivability has been based on two factors: 1. Its strict adherence to the principle on which it was founded "Economic Development for the Harlem" community and 2. Its adaptability with regard to time and circumstance.

The last five years have been transformational as we have maintained our uniqueness among community organizations by selective and high quality programs geared to the stated needs of the community.

The economic downturn of the past six months has demonstrated our foresight to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged among us. Our programs have been educational, designed to give our constituents tools to enter and survive in a fluctuating job market, to foster professional growth in the health-related fields and to provide financial and educational support for small minority-owned businesses.

I have had the honor and privilege to lead this organization as President and CEO with the full support of the Board of Directors for the past 4 years while the transformation was implemented.

The response by the community to our progress has been so overwhelming that in order to address the demands adequately, the Board of Directors has approved the concept of expanding our space by new construction. This decision was not lightly made considering the state of the economy.

Below is a list of the programs and services that have been implemented in the past four years with minimal external funding support. The programs are affiliated with our educational and business partners:

- The Summer Internship Program: With the support of our business partners, we provide a quality internship program for high school juniors and seniors.
- English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Pre GED, Basic Computer Classes. These courses are all geared toward our immigrant population and are generally regarded as among the best and most comprehensive in our target area.
- Educational partnerships with SUNY, Harlem Hospital, Helene Fuld College of Nursing, Sophie Davis Biomedical, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute and P.S. 154. We have provided financial support for people who have graduated as professional health care providers (RNs, Radiology Technicians and Nurse Practitioners). We established an after school program "Think and Create!" at P.S. 154 which exposes students to a variety of hands-on learning experiences such as robotics, photography, science and math games, soccer, dancing and drumming—broad-based activities designed to foster students independent thinking and ability to work collaboratively with their peers to enhance academic and social skills.

In terms of business-oriented programs we provided:

- The New Ventures Programs- a 16-session training program for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund-- In six months this small business loan program has provided low interest loans totaling \$140,000 and created new jobs.
- Financial Literacy Seminars for youth 12-20 years old.

In terms of Community Outreach, we were participants in Fundraising for:

- Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Partnership with Lee National Denim Day
- Food Drive in partnership with the Food Bank For New York City
- Thanksgiving baskets for needy families
- Holiday entertainment (Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday, Black History Month for Senior Citizens)

Additional information on all our programs can be obtained by visiting our website at www.harlemcommonwealth.org.

I started this newsletter in the Spring of 2006 as a means of sharing community information and to document our quality programs and accomplishments. The time has come for me to pass the baton on to a new president, Mr. George Marquez. George has a wealth of experience and is well suited for this leadership role. He has great ideas and I am sure he will build on the firm foundation he has inherited.

Thanks for your help, your cooperation and your support.



DR. JOSEPH L. TAIT
PRESIDENT/ CEO

HCC UNVEILS TECHNOLOGY CENTER

The message on the gigantic billboard was simple and direct:
"HOLLA = VOTE"



Robert Fauser (center) with HCC Board Members L-R Jonnie Marshall, E. Randy Dupree, Dr. J. L. Tait, Zelda Owens and Gloria Hartley

With visually arresting white letters against a stark black background, billboards and telephone kiosks throughout Harlem and the Bronx carried Harlem Commonwealth Council's (HCC) message urging residents to register and vote during the 2004 election cycle. HCC's voter registration campaign was all underwritten courtesy of Robert C. Fauser and Van Wagner Communications. This was but one highly visible example of Robert "Bob" Fauser's active and continuing support of HCC's community-based initiatives.

On Thursday, September 18, 2008, Dr. Joseph L. Tait and HCC showed deep appreciation for the kindness and generosity of Bob Fauser and his wife, Arlene, by unveiling the **Arlene and Robert C. Fauser Technology Center** located on the third floor of HCC's building. The celebratory unveiling was well-attended by Bob's colleagues, associates and friends, many of whom told tales out of school during their toasting of Bob's achievements and good works. Two high school students who participated in HCC's Summer Internship Program as paid summer interns in Van Wagner's business offices spoke glowingly of their exposure to the business world and the fruitful experience they had working at the company. "They had us doing a lot," said one young lady, "and, I learned a lot."

Dr. Tait eloquently expressed his feelings toward Bob, stating "I know I can count on Bob, he is truly my friend; I call him brother."

The Fauser Technology Center offers hands-on computer training and literacy classes for many Harlem residents who do not have access elsewhere. For more information about the Fauser Technology Center, please visit HCC's website at www.harlemcommonwealth.org or call (212) 749-0900 Extension 124.

HCC ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW

The Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC) Adult Basic Education Program continues to grow and maintain high levels of student success. HCC initiated its Adult Education program in August 2006 with 30 students in a daytime ESL (English as a Second Language) class. We now offer nine classes during the course of a week and serve over 250 adults during each 12-week class cycle. The class offerings include: ESL – Beginner, ESL – Intermediate, ABE (Adult Basic Education) Conversation ESL and Introduction to Microsoft Office.

The major force behind HCC's success is the dedication of our teaching faculty. One of these instructors, Richard Polanco, shares his thoughts on the process of teaching ESL to adults, and his first experience at Harlem Commonwealth Council.



ESL Beginners Class celebrate the season and their graduation.

As an ESL teacher, one is faced with many challenges when working with a diverse population. One of the challenges is how to effectively create an environment where all of the students feel comfortable enough to learn a new language. My main concern was to make sure that my students comfortable and at ease.

It is extremely impor-

tant that all of the students become active ESL learners. Based on my past experiences, the tone that is set during the first week of class will resonate throughout the entire twelve-week cycle.

As I stood in front of the class, I noticed that the Hispanic students were more outgoing, while the African students were very reserved,

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Summer Intern Attends an Afternoon Tea for Young Ladies



Clockwise from top Author Ellen Easton with LMLI Board Member Pauline Gilbert-Bader, HCC Intern Tenisha Morrison and a beautiful array of finger sandwiches and desserts for the occasion.

On Friday, November 21, 2008, 70 middle and high school girls attended the second Annual Formal Afternoon Tea for Young Ladies hosted by Dr. Lorraine Monroe and the Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute (LMLI). LMLI Board of Directors member Mrs. Pauline Gilbert Bader funded the event. Ellen Easton, author of the book, *Afternoon Tea: Tips, Terms and Traditions* and a consultant at The Plaza and Waldorf-Astoria hotels, led an interactive workshop. She shared her knowledge of the history of tea, told great stories and taught the young ladies the proper etiquette for a formal afternoon tea. The event provided the attendees with great exposure to the world of tea and its fascinating history that dates back to China 350 A.D. or, according to popular Chinese legend, around 2737 B.C.

The young ladies and the invited adults enjoyed a delicious menu of tea sandwiches, mini

deserts, fresh fruit and of course, delicious teas. The guests included 2008 HCC Summer Intern, Tenisha Morrison, young ladies of the LMLI Harlem Demonstration Schools and other special guests. Recruitment efforts are underway for the 2009 HCC Summer Internship Program.

Summer 2009 will mark the fourth consecutive year that Harlem Commonwealth Council will offer significant opportunities to a new group of highly motivated teens residing and attending schools in the Harlem community. The 6-week program is open to high school sophomores and juniors, ages 15 to 18. Applicants should be highly motivated teens who have at least a "B+" average in school and two recommendation letters from teachers or school counselors. Interested and eligible teens should contact Elisa Moore at (212) 749-0900, extension 111. Please visit www.harlemcommonwealth.org for an application.

Think and Create Continues to Provide Support for the 2008-2009 School Year

This year schools have been victims of the economy. We have experienced severe budget cuts that have impacted many instructional programs and extended day enrichment activities. In the midst of these drastic cuts to schools' budgets, Think and Create continues to provide a source of stability and support to our students to enrich their academic and physical lives. With the support from Harlem Commonwealth, the Think and Create program caters to the physical and social-emotional health by providing soccer class two days weekly before school (7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.). Students in grades 3 through 5 can be found in the Gym each Tuesday and Thursday morning exercising their bodies and demonstrating their physical dexterity manipulating the soccer ball and their emotions.

Soccer has been a great motivator for some of our youngsters who have had difficulty managing their emotions. The guidance and support of the coach and teachers have enabled our youngsters to show greater self-control when working with peers.

The soccer program has had a positive effect on one of our students, Mohamed Doukoure, 8, that resulted in him writing a story about his experience after his first day with soccer. *It is fun to go and play soccer. When you play, you have to be very careful. You have to wear soccer shoes, pants and shin guards. If you are not careful, you can hurt yourself. If you want to win, you have to try to beat the other team and have fun too. There is a coach in your soccer program. There are 12 people on the team. There are two sides that play each other. I remember the day my team won the game because the number 8 shirt was on our team. He made 3 goals for our team!*

The students look forward to the soccer program and are often punctual for school.



Mohamed Doukoure with his coach



Black History Fun Facts

Pelé, (Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento 1940, Brazil) the legendary football (soccer) player, is the all-time top scorer in the history of the Brazil National Football Team and is the only footballer to be a part of three World Cup-winning

teams. He is recognized as the greatest soccer player of all time.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has said, "Heroes walk alone, but they become myths when they ennoble the lives and touch the hearts of all of us. For those who love soccer, Pelé is a hero."

While he played, Brazil won the World Cup, which occurs every four years, three times in 12 years. He scored five goals in a game six times, four goals 30 times and three goals 90 times -- making him the only player in the world to have three World Cup-winning medals.

In 1993, Pelé was inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame.

THE ART OF STORYTELLING AT HCC!

On Friday, December 12, 2008 joyous sounds could be heard streaming from the auditorium of the Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC) at 361 West 125th Street in historic Harlem, New York. It was the sound of children singing to the heartbeat of a drum, while adults cheered *Aché, Aché, Aché* in celebration of the lives and contributions of the ancestors who were being remembered and honored through the ancient art of storytelling. (Note: The term *aché*, pronounced ah-SHEH comes from the Yoruba peoples of Western Africa. It is the name they give to the life force.)

The event was supported and attended by Dr. Joseph L. Tait, President and CEO of the Harlem Commonwealth Council and hosted by an HCC tenant, the Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute (LMLI) in association with the Rev. Malika Lee Whitney. *The Art of Storytelling* brought wonderful storytellers to HCC to perform to a multi-generational audience that included The Significant Elders, The Apollo Thea-

ter Oral History Project, students from The Harriet Tubman Learning Center-P.S. 154, leaders, students and parents from LMLI schools, P.S. 107X and The Sojourner Truth School-P.S. /M.S. 149. Also attending was Maitefa Angaza, author of *Kwanzaa: From Holiday to Everyday*.

The event commemorated the 30th anniversary of Rev. Whitney's performing company, Pickney Productions, a group of stellar storytellers and musicians who had performed earlier that day to a sold-out audience at Aaron Davis Hall. As Dr. Lorraine Monroe, President and CEO of LMLI, said in her opening remarks: "Storytelling connects us to the values and ideals of our traditional heritage as human beings. Stories inspire hope and point the way to a better future for us all." At the end of the evening, the *Kwanzaa* candles were lit and everyone joyfully chanted *The Nguzo Saba*, the Seven Principles of *Kwanzaa*. It was a wonderful memorable occasion!



Storyteller and Finah (traditional poet and historian), Kewulay Kamara from Sierra Leone, teaches children a song from the Motherland at *The Art of Storytelling* at HCC.

HCC SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT GRADUATES WITH HONORS



Dr. Tait with Latonya Tenorio-Simpson

Sunday, November 16, 2008 was a chilly day weather-wise, but a warm and joyous at the Helene Fuld College of Nursing graduation held at Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Harlem. Nearly 100 nursing students and their

families and friends enjoyed an emotionally-charged graduation ceremony.

LaTonya Simpson-Tenorio, an HCC Scholarship Program recipient, as well as the recipient of many Helene Fuld clinical awards, expressed her thanks to Harlem Commonwealth Council and Dr. Tait in the letter below:

Dear Dr. Tait,

I am so much honored to have been the recipient of both your Scholarship and Award of Excellence. I had waited for more than 15 years for the day to complete my Associate's degree in nursing and I never believed anything could outshine that day, but I was so wrong. Your generosity will long live past my graduation day.

Back in 1990, I received my G.E.D. and now I am making preparations for the G.R.E. exam for future entry

into the Nurse Practitioner Program. Thank you for your thoughtfulness of explaining to me why becoming a Nurse Practitioner would be better suited for my future career plan of working with individuals with Special Needs, as oppose to my original idea of becoming a Nurse Educator. From G.E.D. to G.R.E. is just unimaginable, until now.

The main quote that comes to mind when I think of the kindness and benevolence of you and the Scholarship Committee, is the words of Sir Albert Einstein, "It is every man's obligation to put back into this world, at least the equivalent of what he takes out it."

We congratulate LaTonya on her fantastic success and look forward to her future achievements as a Registered Nurse Practitioner.

HCC encourages and supports

Harlem residents pursuing careers in the healthcare industry by providing scholarships. For more information about the HCC Scholarship Program please visit website www.harlemcommonwealth.org or call (212) 749-0900.

Did you Know.....

Mary Eliza Mahoney was the first African-American registered nurse in the U.S.A. She was born free on May 7, 1845 in Dorchester, Massachusetts and became interested in nursing when she was a teenager.



Mary Eliza Mahoney

In 1878, at the age of thirty-three, she was admitted as a student into the hospital's nursing program. Sixteen months later, she was one of four students who completed the rigorous course. The initial class enrollment was 42 students!

In 1976, Mary Eliza Mahoney was inducted into the Nursing Hall of Fame. This honor was bestowed 50 years after her death in 1926 at age 80.

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HCC ADULT BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAM CONTINUES TO GROW

(I could hear them whispering amongst themselves in various African dialects). I was very impressed with the brightly colored headwear and dresses worn by the African women, and the fact that the HCC students hail from a wide assortment of countries. The class is like a

mini-United Nations.

In order to break the ice during that first week, I began class by sharing some of my experiences growing up in the United States as a second generation immigrant. As I was telling my story, I noticed how all of the students were eager to share their own stories, in spite of their limited English proficiency. I have worked with immigrant students of all ages and the common denominator that they all share is the willingness to talk about life "back home" and the struggles

that they face as new residents in the United States.

After a certain comfort level is achieved, I focus on creating an environment where the students naturally support one another. This is accomplished by partner and group projects, as well as role playing, music, games and 'Fun Fridays'.

It is very important that students enjoy and look forward to class every day. For the majority of the students the HCC ESL class is the only reprieve they have in

their very hectic lives. Therefore it is important that I create a learning environment where students will take risks. Small successes are celebrated and a learning community is formed. At the end of each class cycle the experience is a rewarding one for all.

For more information about the HCC Adult Education classes please contact Wendy King at (212) 749-0900 X 124, or visit us at www.harlemcommonwealth.org

NEW VENTURES STUDENT ON THE MOVE



Nicole Gray

As a retired high school dean, educational leader and life-long student it was my intention to live my life by example i.e. by practicing what I have often encouraged others to do-- "be your own boss." To this end I enrolled in and completed in June 2008 the New Ventures Program, a 16-session intensive program given by Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC) for people interested in beginning their own businesses. Since then, I have established my own educational consulting business while working as a consultant under the guidance and direction of the Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute (LMLI).

The New Ventures Program has given me the inspiration to take the law school examination in February 2009 while simultaneously preparing for a second

Masters Degree. Since completing the New Ventures Program, I have had my business cards printed, am developing my business website and am networking with many business owners who have offered their support. I recently conducted a workshop for the most recent New Ventures Program where I shared my experiences as a new entrepreneur and provided the students with encouragement in their new endeavors.

The latest cycle of the New Ventures Program ran from September 23 through December 16, 2008. Twenty-one adults were enrolled in this intense, 16-session entrepreneurial training program. The business interests of the students included: Event Planning, Day Care, Auto Glass & Detailing, Wellness Products, Café/Bookstore, Natural Beverages, Artist Management, Fashion Stylist, and a Production Company.

The New Ventures Program provides aspiring and experienced entrepreneurs with the tools necessary to start and maintain successful small businesses using the Fast Trac® curriculum and other program enhancements. The students learn how to write effective business plans

and listened to presentations from seasoned entrepreneurs who share the joys and challenges of entrepreneurship.

The New Ventures Program participants ended the program expressing a variety of emotions:

Proud – that they completed the intense training program successfully.

Excited – to start or improve their business ventures.

Anxious – to take the next steps to success.

Fear – of failure, and sometimes the fear of success.

The next cycle of the New Ventures Program starts Tuesday, March 13, 2009.

Recruitment efforts are currently underway for this 16-session entrepreneurial training program. Seats fill quickly. For more information regarding the New Ventures Program, please visit www.harlemcommonwealth.org or call Elisa Moore at (212) 749-0900, extension 111.

Sociallite Accessories Bags A Loan From Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund



Yenitza Tanco

Have you ever sought for that perfect complement to your evening gown or professional outfit, but dreaded the inevitable hours spent scouring the entire city in search of that elusive "it" item? Well, Harlemites no longer have to look farther than their backyard. The Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund announces the completion of a small business loan to Sociallite Accessories, a trendy boutique located in East Harlem. The proceeds of the loan will provide Sociallite with the necessary funds for business expansion to serve the needs of the style fashionistas residing in the Harlem community.

Sociallite Accessories offers, at affordable prices, designer handbags, jewelry, hats and other accessories comparable to merchandise found in down-

town Manhattan's trendy boutiques. "This loan will allow us the chance to expand our merchandise offerings," said Yenitza Tanco, Sociallite's owner, "and offer our customers quality goods and the exclusive personalized shopping experience to which they are entitled." Sociallite Accessories, located at 1699 Lexington Avenue, joins the ranks of outstanding businesses which are a part of the ever-growing East Harlem business community.

About The Harlem Entrepreneurial Fund

The HEF loan program is Harlem Commonwealth Council's latest economic development initiative to stimulate and promote commerce, industry and job creation in Harlem by helping small businesses succeed through access to loan capital and technical assistance. HEF micro-loans primarily serve eligible minority- and women-run small busi-



ness owners and entrepreneurs operating businesses located between 110th Street and 155th Street, river to river. Loans can be used for business expansion, machinery and equipment purchases, inventory and working capital. Each prospective borrower must commit to creating at least one job for a TANF recipient or low-income person.

To learn more about HEF's small business loan program please call (212) 749-0900 X122 or go online at www.harlemcommonwealth.org.

HCC Rallies to Put On Their Jeans and Help Lee National Denim Day



Richard Polanco with ESL Beginners class pose with their Denim Day Appreciation Certificates

Passersby of the Harlem Commonwealth Council Building noticed its occupants had certain sameness in their attire-- denim jackets, blue jeans, blue jean skirts and denim patches affixed to the lapels of their jackets. What was this "field of blue" phenomenon? A curious fashion statement dictated by contemporary stylistas? Well, yes and no. Friday, October 3, marked the 13th year of the Lee National Denim Day, a grassroots single-day fundraising program in support of Breast Cancer Awareness and Research. Harlem Commonwealth Council employees, students in its education programs, friends and tenants wholeheartedly embraced Denim Day 2008 and joined in solidarity with hundreds of thousands of American citizens nationwide in the symbolic gesture of putting on their favorite jeans and donating \$5 to help raise crucial funds for the fight against breast cancer.

Through its participants, HCC raised \$355 which was donated to the Women's Cancer Programs of the Entertainment Industry Foundation. The WCPEIF net proceeds will fund research focused on developing less toxic, more effective treatments for breast cancer, developing a blood test for earlier detection of breast cancer and supporting breast cancer awareness nationwide.

HCC sincerely thanks its staff, students, associates and friends for the inspirational example they set in participating in this event and the generosity of spirit they demonstrated in donating to this worthwhile cause. Together, we can make a difference.

HCC Honors Harlem Seniors with the 3rd Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration

Harlem seniors will once again be honored during an afternoon of festivities at Harlem Commonwealth Council's Third Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration. On Monday, January 19, 2009, over 100 senior residents of the Harlem community will attend this invitation-only event in the newly-renovated HCC auditorium.

The entertainment for this fun, educational and thought-provoking event will include a dynamic performance by the Uptown Dance Academy and presentations of jazz, poetry and African dance. If you are a Harlem senior and interested in acquiring an invitation, please contact Elisa Moore at (212) 749-0900, extension 111.

DID YOU KNOW.....

If Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was alive today he would be celebrating his 80th birthday on January 15, 2009.

HCC Partners with the Food Bank For New York City

In an effort to help New Yorkers in need, Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC) partnered with the Food Bank For New York to help families at risk of hunger. HCC's food drive and clothing auction raised 134 pounds of food and \$235 in cash contributions during the 2008 Thanksgiving holiday period. HCC's contribution will benefit the Food Bank's network of over 1,000 community feeding programs in New York City, including soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters, low-income day care centers and senior, youth and rehabilitative centers.

Every day the Food Bank distributes enough food to serve 300,000 meals daily to New Yorkers. The donations delivered by HCC will strengthen the Food Bank programs that comprise a food safety net for hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who might otherwise go without. Indeed, HCC's contribution helped serve over 250 meals.

HCC extends thanks to each and every person who generously gave from their hearts and pockets to help fellow New Yorkers. HCC especially recognizes and thanks Joan Blake who, in the spirit of giving, donated the clothing to the auction that raised \$235. By making such personal sacrifices, the Harlem community responded to the inspirational message and mantra of President-elect Barack Obama by proving "Yes, we can" make meaningful inroads to effect change in the challenges faced by our community.



Shannon McCardle, our ESL teacher, was auctioneer for the HCC Food Drive

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