

JULY 2021

# NWSLTR

## HARLEM UNITED ISSUE 12



*James, Peer at The Nest*

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## Dear Harlem United Family,

The next mayor will dominate the public agenda with broad power over the budget and city agencies. [Eric Adams is the presumptive Democratic nominee](#) and is likely to win the general election in November. Additionally, [Kristin Richardson Jordan](#) is likely to become the new city council member for Harlem's District 9, where Harlem United's offices are located.

Regardless of the outcome of the election, Harlem United will continue to advocate for our clients and communities. Here is just a sample of the issues we will look to the next mayor to address:

**Housing:** Wide-spread gentrification continues to decrease the availability of affordable housing across the city, while the [shelter population increased during the last mayor's two terms in office and economic crisis caused by the pandemic has left thousands of families on the verge of homelessness](#). Last month, NYS legislators passed the Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act (HONDA), which would convert distressed hotels and office buildings to affordable housing; while Governor Cuomo has yet to sign the bill, we look to the next Mayor to implement similar programs in the city and expand upon HONDA. Our city needs affordable, long-term, supportive housing for those who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness.

**HIV/AIDS and Equal Access for All:** At Harlem United, we are fighting for a city where all communities have a right to access healthcare, housing, prevention, and social services equitably, without barriers of racism, stigma, or discrimination. Harlem United has been a crucial member of the NYS End the AIDS Epidemic Initiative since its inception in 2014, which has successfully linked thousands of New Yorkers to testing, prevention, and treatment. In recent months, we have advocated for the Equality Act, which would modernize federal civil rights laws to include LGBTQ individuals and offer protection from discrimination and harassment. And last month, NYS legislators enacted the Gender Recognition Act, making it easier for transgender, gender non-conforming, and intersex (TGNCI) New Yorkers to get IDs that accurately reflect their identity. The next mayor should support these and similar programs; an effective mayor for NYC must be an advocate for all New Yorkers, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, health status, or income.

**Prevention and Healthcare:** Harlem United has long advocated for a harm reduction approach to serving people who use drugs. We invite the next mayor to embrace evidence-based, proven methodologies, instead of punitive strategies that endanger communities. This includes increasing funds for harm reduction services; transitioning to social service intervention teams to deal with mental health crises responses; and continuing to decriminalize substances. [Every six hours, a New Yorker dies from a preventable overdose](#)—we call on the next mayor to be a leader in the US in favor of overdose prevention centers (also called 'safe injection sites').

**Racism as a Public Health Crisis:** Communities of color are systematically deprived of high-quality, preventative healthcare and social supports by inequitable policies and underfunding of programs. Black and Brown neighborhoods are disproportionately polluted, with poorly-funded community healthcare, public education, and social services, contributing to below average health outcomes and life expectancies. The next mayor must combat these inequities with major investment in the social safety net and fundamental changes to biased and segregated systems.

**Social Service Funding:** Across the country, investment in the social safety net has been decimated, with serious consequences for low- or no-income individuals and families. In addition to the negative impact on quality of life and community resiliency, this dismantling of resources has enormous public health consequences. In order to build a healthy future, everyone needs access to: safe and secure housing; affordable healthy food; quality education; accessible quality preventative healthcare and mental health services; and affordable transportation.

As elected official change and try to leave their mark on the NYC, Harlem United will continue to build on three decades of advocacy and services for the underserved. We look forward to future partnerships with City legislators in building that future toward a healthier NYC.

### The Equality Act

In our last newsletter, we discussed the [Equality Act](#), federal legislation that would include protections for LGBTQ people in existing civil rights law. The bill has passed the House of Representatives but faces an uphill battle in the Senate. You can help win protection against discrimination by [writing an email to our Senators](#), and encouraging your friends and family nationwide to do the same!

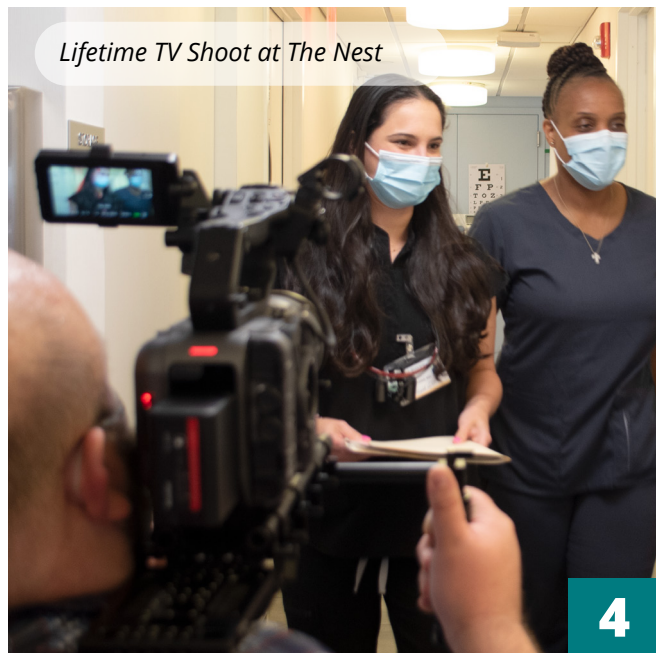


With Hope,

*Jacqui*

Jacqui Kilmer, CEO





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*Jacqui Kilmer*

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*Acknowledgments for a job well done*



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#### **Employee Assistance Program**

Licensed counselors are prepared to take calls from employees or household members who are experiencing fears or anxieties related to COVID-19 and other life stressors. Call: 800-386-7055 Visit: [www.ibhworklife.com](http://www.ibhworklife.com)



## Filming at The Nest for Lifetime TV

On the morning of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, The Nest was buzzing with even more activity than normal. Filming was underway as several floors of the healthcare center became a temporary television studio for Lifetime TV! [The Balancing Act Local NY](#), hosted by Montel Williams, will air a segment on July 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> about Harlem United to over two million households in and around the New York City area.

The segment is the result of several months of collaboration between Strategic Advancement, agency leadership, and the show's producers. Three powerful interviews will form the majority of the shoot. [Jacqui Kilmer](#), CEO, provided background about Harlem United's services and history. [Dr. Tyson Boudreaux](#), Chief Psychiatrist, spoke eloquently about the urgency of our work and the needs of the historically excluded communities we serve. And finally, longtime client and URAM Board member, Anthony Randolph, shared his deeply moving personal story, highlighting the important role Harlem United has played in his health, safety, and happiness.

After the segment airs, Harlem United will be able to share it on our social media and website. This will be a wonderful resource to promote our work to potential funders and reach out to prospective patients.

Thank you to everyone who made the shoot run smoothly and successfully, with special shout-outs to Jose Santiago, Danny Del Valle, and the rest of the Property Management team who had The Nest gleaming and looking its best! Catch our feature on [The Balancing Act](#):

**Saturday, 7/17 @ 12:00pm on WNYW-FOX**  
**Sunday, 7/18 @ 11:30am on WWOR-MyNetwork**



## Trauma-Informed Care

*Harlem United is in the process of implementing trauma-informed care (TIC) throughout the agency. To assist with this process, [Orlando Serrano](#), Clinical Director of Prevention Services, is launching new trainings on the topic. Here, we share selected learnings from that training.*

Trauma is the result of harmful or life threatening experiences and has lasting effects on an individual's mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Memories of traumatizing events often trigger responses of intense fear, anger, or helplessness which can lead to extreme stress.

People we serve at Harlem United, such as those who have experienced homelessness, chronic conditions, or extremely low incomes, have increased levels of trauma exposure:

- [According to a 2020 meta-analysis](#), more than 27% of people experiencing homelessness have PTSD;
- [According to the NIH](#), as many as 95% of PLWHA report at least one severe traumatic experience, with up to 54% meeting the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis; and
- [One NIH study](#) found that rates of PTSD symptoms were more than 60% higher for people living in poverty than those with higher incomes

Many of Harlem United's clients have experienced trauma in their lives. **To better serve our clients, Harlem United provides a trauma-informed care approach across our agency.**

Trauma-informed care is defined as a treatment approach which takes a client's past trauma and coping mechanisms into account when attempting to understand behaviors and devise an appropriate individualized treatment plan. We integrate our understanding about trauma into client and patient policies, procedures, and practices with the goal of helping our clients live happier, more independent lives.

Some examples of Harlem United's TIC implementation include: instituting a standardized trauma screening in all new client intakes; training all staff in TIC practices; and evaluating environmental factors which may trigger trauma responses.

For additional information about our TIC initiative, email [Orlando Serrano](#), Clinical Director of Prevention Services.



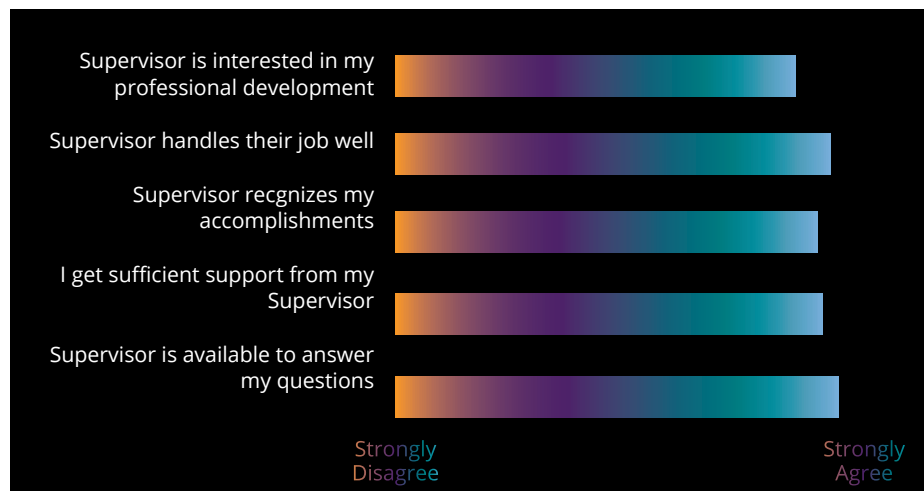


## Staff Satisfaction Survey Results

At Harlem United, we know that our staff are our most valuable resource. Every year, we ask staff to complete a brief, anonymous survey to provide essential insights into our strengths and growth areas. This year's survey was completed in May and the results are overwhelmingly positive: **90% of Harlem United staff are satisfied or very satisfied with their job!**

We're proud that our staff are united in serving our important mission and feel deeply committed to our clients. These top two elements were mentioned as points that staff like about working at Harlem United. Additionally, 93% of respondents agree or strongly agree that Harlem United does not tolerate discrimination while 82% of staff feel comfortable expressing their personal values, good indicators of authenticity in the workplace and an ease in bringing our whole selves to the office.

In particular, staff are very satisfied with their immediate supervisors and managers, as you can see in the results below:



Property Management and Maintenance teams received special acknowledgment for their roles in keeping our spaces sanitized and safe, with 86% of staff satisfied with the cleanliness of their office space.

These survey results will be utilized to inform our two-year strategic plan that will govern our agency from FY22 to FY24 and will provide critical insights to leadership and managers in understanding and improving our organizational culture. Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's survey!

To request a copy of the Staff Satisfaction Report or to find answers to any questions about the survey, reach out to [Danielle Strauss](#), Associate Vice President of Evaluation and Population Health.

**"I could not ask for a better supervisor! Always available to listen and provide answers to questions."**

**"My colleagues and supervisors make me want to be a better employee."**

*"It is the challenge to provide quality care to our clients that keeps me working here."*

## Strategic Advancement Updates

**Grants:** For FY21, we finished out the year having submitted 32 applications with an awarded amount of \$3,785,670 and \$1,124,121 in pending grants. This brings our award rate to about 1 in 4 grants submitted, which is well above the national standard of only 10% of submitted grants being awarded. We will continue to push hard in the next fiscal year to increase submissions of general operating support and private funding, so that we can use grant money in the places that the agency has the most need.

We continue to have a very busy time in grants submissions, completing 10 submissions through May to mid-July, for a total value of \$1M in pending applications. In June, we received four award notices: two in Prevention, for \$10,000 and \$22,570 and two in Health Services, for \$120,565 and \$11,000. The first grant will support existing work by providing pantry bags to Prevention clients through funding from MAC AIDS VIVA GLAM Fund, while the second will build new work by assessing women's access to HIV services in NYC in partnership with our Evaluation Team. The Health Services funding will support the COVID-19 Vaccination clinic at The Nest Community Health Center and allow for some additional vaccinations to take place at Willis Green Jr. Community Health Center. Finally, we are very happy to share that we were awarded \$3,462,500 in a five-year renewal contract to support Foundation House West's supportive housing program at the beginning of July 2021.

**Individual Giving:** FY21 has been a very successful year for Individual and online giving at Harlem United. We closed the year with a 24% increase of funds over our last year's actuals, at \$89,750. We also received \$175,000 in corporate grants and gifts, and the \$250,000 bequeathal from H. van Ameringen, which brought our total annual giving to \$339,751.

In June 2021, we were especially thankful to our committed active donors, who answered our eblast plea to help us increase donations this month – Mark Loughridge made a second donation to us of \$5,000 in June 2021 and we also received a \$5,000 gift from the Steve & Marjorie Harvey Foundation and a \$2,892 grant award from Whole Foods Market. A final special thank you to all the staff who donated this year – we are so grateful for your contributions!

## Top Social Media Posts

As we continue to grow our social media presence, we ask all staff to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#) and share our posts with your personal networks.



Facebook: We regularly share features of staff members on our social media accounts, and in May, our feature of Robert Boyett, Harm Reduction Outreach Specialist, was the top performing post with 23 engagements.



Twitter: In June, our feature of Jade Underwood, Peer Receptionist, was our top Twitter post, earning 13 engagements, and was the top post on Facebook and LinkedIn for the month as well.



Instagram: On Instagram, we shared a tweet that reads "We are not minorities, we have been minoritized. We are not underrepresented, we have been historically excluded. Language matters." Our digital community agreed, with 197 people engaging with the post.

## Strategic Advancement Updates Cont...

### Communications

**Posters:** We are in the process of outfitting all our facilities with new Harlem United posters. Based on our [2020 Annual Report](#), these posters offer an overview of Harlem United's services and trumpet the incredible impact our staff continues to make every day. With the help of Property Management, Health Services, and ADHC staff, the posters are currently hanging throughout The Nest and Willis Green Jr., and will be installed throughout all our public facing facilities in the coming months. Special thanks to the staff of Property Management and Procurement for getting these together!



**Harlem United in the News:** Harlem United is featured in [VICE VERSA: The Neglected Pandemic, 40 Years of HIV & AIDS](#), a two-hour documentary about living with HIV/AIDS today. Yonce, a former Harlem United peer, shares her story with HIV and homelessness along with her amazing

advocacy work as an HIV/AIDS activist. [Watch her interview starting at the 50:15 mark!](#) And don't forget to tune into our upcoming segment on [The Balancing Act](#): Saturday, 7/17 @ 12:00pm on [WNYW-FOX](#) and Sunday, 7/18 @ 11:30am on [WWOR-MyNetwork](#)

**Website:** During the past two months, we have created or overhauled nine new pages on our website. Highlights include launching our [major gifts page](#); updating [the careers page](#) to reflect the implementation of hiring through ADP; and a blog post about our [syringe-litter cleanup](#).

**Advocacy:** In May, Harlem United signed on in support of the NYS [Affirming Gender-Identity Name and Pronouns for Consumers/Customers Bill](#), which would require utilities and telephone service providers to allow customers to use their preferred name and pronouns. The bill has passed both the Assembly and the Senate. In June, the NYS Legislature and Senate passed the [Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act](#), which will allow the state to partner with nonprofits to convert hotels and other commercial properties into permanent affordable housing. Harlem United supports this bill, and called on Governor Cuomo to sign it.

**Event Sponsorship:** For Pride Month, Harlem United sponsored [Harlem Pride](#), a virtual celebration with the theme 'Stronger with Pride.' Throughout June, Harlem Pride promoted Harlem United's programming to their community, through [ebcasts](#) and [social media posts](#).



Left: Garth Dyer hangs a housing poster at The Nest. Right: Danny Del Valle (left) and Manny Taylor (right) hang a diversity poster at Willis Green Jr.



## Human Resources

To learn more about the roles in our Human Resources Department, we recently sat down with [Eddy Cannon](#), Senior Human Resources Director. Harlem United's five-person Human Resource department is a powerhouse, handling payroll, recruitment, employee relations, benefits, wellness and soft-skill training.

**Harlem United is unique among many other nonprofit service providers for a staff that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the people we serve. How do we approach recruiting to foster a diverse staff?**

Our general recruitment approach is to share our mission and services with candidates. We want to recruit people who are passionate about our mission and interested in giving back to the community because they are a part of the community. We often hire Peers and former clients, who are truly members of the community, while additionally partnering with recruitment organizations. For instance, we work with HRA's job placement program for people who receive public assistance and we partner with [The Fortune Society](#) to hire formerly incarcerated individuals. And we recruit from colleges, universities and trade schools.

**Why is workplace diversity important, both generally and at Harlem United?**

You have to represent the people that you serve. It is important to know the population that we serve and to reflect that. As we say in Harm Reduction, you have to meet people where they're at. It's important that clients feel comfortable coming into the space and they feel that truly people understand who they are.

**What soft-skills trainings has HR provided recently?**

We regularly provide a 'Respect in the Workplace' and 'Preventing Harassment in the Workplace' trainings, to foster a respectful working environment across the agency. Additionally, something that makes Harlem United special is our tendency to promote internally. It's a great thing about our culture that we recognize outstanding performance and

promote our staff. In order to support people who are promoted to managerial positions, we offer trainings about how to supervise staff, as well as how to interview candidates for first time managers who have never hired someone before.

**How did HR adapt to COVID-19 and play a role in shaping Harlem United's response?**

We worked with the Executive team to make sure we had the latest local and state protocols and guidance from the CDC. A lot of that research has gone into the [contingency plan](#) to make sure we are implementing the latest rules and regulations to keep the environment safe. COVID made our department stronger—it made us more experienced and knowledgeable. Everyone on the team dove right in and said, 'What do we need to do? What role do we play?' Staff were looking to us for guidance and expectations. I'm proud to be in HR in this position, because we were truly a resource during COVID-19.

If you have additional questions about Harlem United's HR Department, reach out to [Eddy Cannon](#), Senior Human Resources Director.





## Peer Program

Across the agency, Peers support and deepen our community commitment to programming that is inclusive of the people we serve. Currently, 77 Peers perform duties ranging from community outreach, syringe exchange, and maintenance for our housing programs to patient navigation, food distribution, and much more.

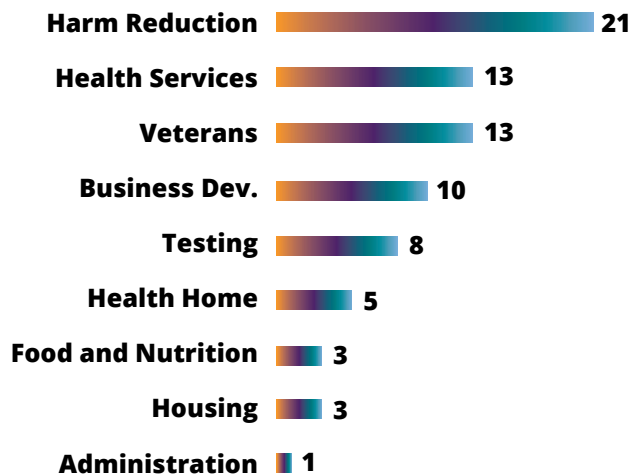
As clients themselves, Peers are essential to building stronger relationship within the community. Many of our services carry significant stigma, such as HIV/AIDS prevention/treatment and services which focus on people who use drugs. Peers help us connect to clients where they are, moving past harmful biases and working with compassion and empathy. Often, clients are more comfortable speaking to someone with shared life experiences, which increases the likelihood that the client will access and remain in care.

Through the Peer Program, our Peers build new skills and expertise in their service areas. Currently, standardized trainings are being developed and implemented around Compliance/Confidentiality, Safety and De-escalation, and Boundaries, with other trainings forthcoming. In many cases, Peers have gone on to hold full-time positions at Harlem United or at other partner organizations. Peers are encouraged to share their long-term professional goals so that staff can support and facilitate their growth.

During the COVID-19 crisis, many programs paused or reduced their Peer Program, but thankfully, all of our peers are back to work as of last month! Thank you all for your dedication and expertise.

If you have any questions about the Peer Program, please email [Kristin Goodwin](#), Managing Director of Testing Services.

### Number of Peers Contributing to Program



Jade, Administrative Peer



Tristan, Housing Peer



Ian, Harm Reduction Peer



## Staff Shout-outs

Ann Daphne Payoen, Human Resources Generalist, received her Human Resource Management Certification from Villanova University and earned a promotion to Human Resources Generalist on March 1, 2021. Well done, Ann Daphne!

Joy Wilson, Wellness Center Coordinator; Mari Eva Mendes, Associate Vice President of Strategic Advancement; and Tracy Hastings, Health Home Team Supervisor; all received personal shout outs for being great supervisors in the staff satisfaction survey!

Congratulations to Shaneequa Parker, Director of Compliance, for completing her legal studies and obtaining her law degree. Way to go, Shaneequa!



Special thanks to Alexandria Massey, Nurse Manager, and Myrthlyn Chambers, Janitorial Worker, for the unconditional compassion and care you showed recently to a patient who needed additional support. Thank you for treating all our patients with the dignity they deserve.

Congratulations to Briana Cordero, Care Manager in Health Home, for accomplishing her Master's Degree in Public Health. We're proud of your hard work to advance your career.

Thank you to Karen Kellman, Senior HARP Care Manager in Health Home, for continuously maintaining the compliance of your documentation as per CMP.

Thank you and congratulations to the Scattered Site Maintenance team for reducing work orders to record breaking low levels. We truly appreciate your hard work and dedication.

Thanks to Vanessa Edwards, Care Manager in Health Home, for your continuous efforts with maintaining the high needs/high risk clients for 80% quality compliance as per CCMP.

Laura Grund, Senior Vice President, was elected to the iHealth Board earlier this summer. In her role she'll be working to develop policy and advocate for issues impacting care management providers. Congrats Laura!



## Welcome to All New Staff



Left to right: Trevor Jones, Tanya Nieulder, Jonell Ferguson, Brian Debel, Dyneisha Brown, and Nelando Kelly



Left to right: Steven Vidal, Antonio Alicea, and Brittney Moskowitz

## Welcome, Harlem United Interns!



Shayan Huda (left) Tyler Tavares (right) have joined the Harlem United team for the summer. Shayan and Tyler are students at CCNY's Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education in a seven year BS/MD program. As part of their coursework for Evaluation in Healthcare Settings, they are working on a project with Harlem United to conduct case studies and focus groups, with the goal of increasing client compliance in medical adherence, rent collection, and client education.

## Anniversaries

We are thankful for all of our staff's long-standing commitment to their clients and working steadfastly to bring healing and support to our community.

### 3+ Years

Betsy Balkind - Psychotherapist

Tikesha Cruz - Social Worker

Steven Cuascut - Maintenance Worker

Tanya Harvey - Clinical Care Coordinator

Latisha Hopewell - Wellness Intake Specialist

### 5+ Years

Omar Campbell - Janitorial Worker

Elizabeth Furth - Program Evaluator

Kristin Goodwin - Managing Director, Prevention

Francisco Lazala - Program Coordinator

Shlomit Levy - Therapist

Esmilda Queiro - Nurse Manager

Carlos Restrepo - Dental Assistant

Ann Rivera - Administrative Assistant

Lielcy Rosa - Credentialing Specialist

Leonard Taylor - Maintenance Supervisor

Sesilia Ventura - Housekeeping Janitor

Tyrone Watson - Maintenance Worker

Preston Wholley - Managing Clinical Director, Behavioral Health

### 10+ Years

Sean Carrington - Senior Vice President of Administrative Operations

Jafiza Castro - Senior Nutritionist

Tara Pacheco - Senior Director

A very special congrats to **Benita Vera**, Senior Mental Health Specialist, for completing 15 YEARS at Harlem United this month!

## Upcoming Events - July/August 2021



### Upcoming Events

#### July is...Minority Mental Health Month

July 4<sup>th</sup>  
US Independence Day

July 5<sup>th</sup>  
US Independence Day (Observed)  
(Harlem United Closed)

July 19<sup>th</sup>  
[Eid-ul-Adha](#)

July 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Harlem United Staff Town Hall:  
[10:00 am - 11:00 am](#)  
[11:30 am - 12:30 pm](#)  
[2:00 pm - 4:00 pm](#)

July 24<sup>th</sup>  
[Asalha Puja](#)

July 25<sup>th</sup>  
[National Parents' Day](#)

#### August is...National Immunization Month

August 8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>  
[National Health Center Week](#)

August 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>th</sup>  
[NYC Black Pride](#)

August 31<sup>st</sup>  
[International Overdose Awareness Day](#)

### Staff Town Hall

On July 22nd, we are hosting Zoom Staff Town Halls on July 22nd to discuss TIC, the Strategic Plan, COVID-19 safety, and the new normal. There will be three Town Halls throughout the day. The same information will be shared at each Town Hall. Please only sign up for one of the three sessions: [10:00 am - 11:00 am](#); [11:30 am - 12:30 pm](#); [2:00 pm - 4:00 pm](#)



### The Jitney Service is Back

After pausing at the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, Harlem United has resumed our jitney van operations, offering transportation for appointments between Harlem United Community Health Centers (Willis Green Jr. and The Nest) and our emergency shelter and congregate sites. New COVID-19 precautions include: transporting clients one at a time; requiring masks for all travelers; and sanitizing the van between each client.

Rides are available Monday – Thursday, 9:00 am - 11:45 am and 12:45 pm - 4:30 pm, and Fridays, 9:00 am - 11:45 am and 12:45 pm – 3:00 pm. Rides must be scheduled by the client or case manager at least 45 minutes before the scheduled appointment by calling [Zeguime Daouda](#), Business Development Patient Navigator, at (646) 331-0614.