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New York Junior League's Community Improvement Project Completes Projects with Abyssinian Development Corporation and Goddard Riverside

New York, New York (June 28, 2022) - The [New York Junior League \(NYJL\)](#)'s Community Improvement Project (CIP) committee is pleased to announce the completion of its projects with [Abyssinian Development Corporation \(ADC\)](#) and [Goddard Riverside](#), the 2021-2022 community partners selected to receive \$60,000 in supplies and in-kind services for capital improvements and a trained team of volunteers to complete the project.

"For over 120 years, our organization has been committed to improving communities through the excellent leadership of strategic partnerships and the action of skilled volunteers." NYJL President Dayna Cassidy remarked "Our volunteers quite literally rolled up their sleeves to create reimagined spaces for our community partners to ensure residents have an environment that facilitates social engagement, fosters wellness, and promotes the development of independent living skills."

Abyssinian Development Corporation Project

Beginning in early October 2021, NYJL volunteers worked to repaint and update the Community Room of Abyssinian Towers. Abyssinian Towers, located in Central Harlem, is a 99-unit residential community of ADC that offers affordable, low-income housing to more than 100 seniors and people with disabilities. The Community Room, located on the lower level of the Abyssinian Towers, serves as an area for residents to socialize, exercise and, more recently, relieve feelings of isolation or loneliness exacerbated by the pandemic.

One key feature of the CIP project was designing and painting a full-wall mural to replace the existing mural and brighten the Community Room. Being in the heart of Harlem, the ADC community felt it was important for the mural to highlight and accentuate the culture and history of Harlem. To do that, NYJL volunteers enlisted the help of Harlem native and mural artist, Marthalia Matarrita, to create a custom-designed mural. The mural showcases Harlem through a brightly colored landscape, showing important landmarks like the Abyssinian Baptist Church alongside familiar neighborhood sights and historical figures, and acknowledging the immense diversity of the Harlem community as a whole.

The CIP project grant was also able to provide updated technology, including a karaoke system, air purifier, and TV for the continued enjoyment by the residents within the space.

The NYJL thanks the entire ADC team and Marthalia Matarrita for their support and partnership during the project, completed in Fall 2021.

Goddard Riverside Projects

Beginning in January 2022, NYJL volunteers worked to completely renovate the Community Room and Outdoor Patio of Goddard Riverside's five-story residence in Central Harlem that provides affordable, permanent supportive housing for previously homeless adults with a history of mental illness. The Community Room and Outdoor Patio, located on the first floor of the building, is the main area for residents to congregate, socialize, and hold activities and events.



NYJL volunteers and Goddard Riverside staff worked with Interior Designer Claire Druga of Dwell Possible to envision and transform the space from institutional to colorful, welcoming, and functional. Inside the room, NYJL volunteers primed and painted the walls, assembled furniture, hung art, and organized the space. The art that was hung was primarily the residents' own design, created during an art night NYJL volunteers set up and led in partnership with the residents.

Outside in the adjacent patio, NYJL volunteers weeded and planted in the garden, revitalized existing outdoor benches, powerwashed the floor pavers, and assembled new chairs, tables, and lighting. The NYJL grant was also able to support new flooring and cabinetry, refinishing the outdoor patio pavers, and demolishing a dilapidated outdoor shed.

On May 24, 2022 a ribbon cutting ceremony was held to formally open the newly renovated space. The NYJL thanks the entire Goddard Riverside team and Claire Druga for their support and partnership during the project, completed in Spring 2022.

About Abyssinian Development Corporation

Founded in 1989, the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) is a nationally recognized nonprofit community development corporation dedicated to building the Harlem community. Through its initiatives, the ADC has developed and preserved over 1,000+ affordable housing units, and served more than 1,000 public school students in Harlem from kindergarten through 12th grade. Services provided include affordable housing, human services, and educational opportunities for youth.

About Goddard Riverside

For more than 100 years, Goddard Riverside has been committed to investing in people and strengthening community by meeting New Yorkers' most essential needs. Goddard Riverside provides comprehensive educational, cultural and recreational programs for New Yorkers of all ages, including early childhood education, after school, employment support, college access, youth programs, homeless outreach, housing, older adult centers and legal assistance.

About the New York Junior League

Since 1901, the New York Junior League (NYJL) has responded to New York City's most pressing socioeconomic challenges. Powered by more than 2,200 women volunteers, the NYJL works with more than 60 community-based organizations to advance children's social-emotional learning and to provide life skills programs to youth and adults who are navigating periods of difficult transition. Bringing their diverse experiences and talents, trained NYJL volunteers engage women and children in health, education, and arts workshops specially customized to their needs. The NYJL also advocates with state and city government for women- and children-centered policies and develops volunteers' leadership skills for service in the NYJL and on other nonprofit boards, all while cultivating a community that reinforces women's personal relationships and collective power as drivers of positive change.

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