

# COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY NEIGHBORS

WINTER/SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER



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On October 19, 2025, Columbia partnered with JCC Harlem for **The Longest Table**, a joy-filled community event that brought people together for a shared potluck on 118th Street.

## Columbia's Little Lions Camp Offers Scholarships for Local Kids



Every summer, dozens of local children spend their days swimming, playing, and exploring through Columbia's **Little Lions Camp**. And, since 2009, Columbia has offered more than 360 scholarships to those who live in **Manhattan Community District 9** through a partnership between the University and the **West Harlem Development Corporation** (WHDC).

"We're honored that Columbia University can collaborate with WHDC and Community Boards 9 and 12 to offer 25 scholarships to the Little Lions Camp throughout the summer," said Matt Hall, Camp Director.

Scholarships provide free, full-day summer camp experiences for children entering grades 1–7, giving young neighbors the chance to explore Columbia's Dodge Fitness Center and enjoy a classic summer camp experience close to home.

"The campers are exposed to the lifestyle that is at Columbia University," said Hall. "They see student life happening, they see student athletes at work, and they really get engaged with the entire campus. We want to inspire all our campers to lead lives of service and leadership and eventually become athletes, student athletes, or University participants themselves."

General camp applications for Summer 2026 open in January 2026. Learn more at [perec.columbia.edu/littlelionscamp](https://perec.columbia.edu/littlelionscamp) and [neighbors.columbia.edu/little-lions](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/little-lions).



## Little Lions Summer Camp Lottery Opens in February

Families living in Manhattan Community District 9 can apply for the Little Lions Summer Camp Lottery through the West Harlem Development Corporation. The program helps ensure that local children can participate in summer recreation and enrichment opportunities at no cost. The application can be found at [westharlemdc.org](https://westharlemdc.org).

## A Lens on Local



From school-supply giveaways to celebrations of Uptown culture, recent Columbia-hosted and community events brought neighbors together to connect, learn, and celebrate. Clockwise, from top left:

### **Taste of Harlem | July 2025**

Guests sampled bites from local restaurants and soaked in the sounds of summer at this culinary celebration of Uptown's vibrant flavors at the Lee C. Bollinger Forum on Columbia's Manhattanville campus.

### **Backpack Drive | August 2025**

Hosted by the 26th Precinct, the 10th Annual Back-2-School Block Party in Harlem offered school supplies, music, and joy to hundreds of families, with support from Columbia Community Service, Columbia University Facilities and Operations, and Columbia's Department of Public Safety.

### **Morningside Lights | September 2025**

A luminous procession of handmade lanterns from Morningside Park to Columbia's campus once again lit up the night sky, honoring creativity and collaboration.

### **Harlem Holiday Lights Legacy Awards | November 2025**

The 125th Street BID, Columbia University, and Community Board 9 co-hosted the Harlem Holiday Lights Legacy Awards, honoring Pastor Michael A. Walrond Jr., Senior Pastor of First Corinthian Baptist Church.

## Meet the 13th Cohort of A'Lelia Bundles Community Scholars

Columbia's A'Lelia Bundles Community Scholars program welcomed its newest cohort of Upper Manhattan–based scholars, each pursuing independent projects that explore and uplift their neighborhoods' cultural, social, and historical legacy.

From artists and activists to educators and historians, the cohort joins a community of more than 70 Bundles Scholars who have used Columbia resources to advance their work.

This year's scholars and projects are:

**Gail Admiss** is working to increase public awareness of the importance of Revolutionary War sites in shaping northern Manhattan's public parks.

**Miles Edwards** is researching the history of financial institutions serving the Harlem community to conduct an analysis of the current landscape of financial services and develop solutions to address any gaps for both the general public and small business owners.

**Dan Gluck** is creating a multidisciplinary nonprofit volunteer community to explore small-scale nuclear fusion to retrofit fossil-fuel plants, aiming to cut emissions and combat climate change.

**Gretchel Hill** is developing two



healthcare-related components: a wearable biosensor embedded in a sanitary pad with 3D absorbent cores, and a wireless real-time mobile app that monitors key health metrics.

**Kristina Maria Lopez** is writing a memoir and developing a workshop series that investigates the psychological and spiritual toll of gentrification in New York City.

**Natasha Sutherland** is addressing gaps in menstrual health education, wellness, products, and resources available to New York City youth through her Menstrual Equity project.

## Next Bundles Scholar Applications Open February 23, 2026

Every spring, Columbia invites our neighbors to apply for the A'Lelia Bundles Community Scholars program, which is open to Upper Manhattan residents who are pursuing independent projects that benefit the local community. The program provides campus access, research support, and opportunities for collaboration across disciplines. Learn how to apply at [communityscholars.columbia.edu](https://communityscholars.columbia.edu).

## Expand Your Mind Through the Manhattanville Auditing Program

Whether you've always wanted to dive into art history, learn a new language, or explore climate science, Columbia's Manhattanville Auditing Program offers residents of Upper Manhattan, including Randall's Island and the South Bronx, free access to University courses each semester.



Through the program, participants are able to join Columbia classes to study alongside undergraduate and graduate students. No grades or homework required!

For many, the experience is transformative.

"Throughout my career, I always planned to 'move to a college town when I retire,' in order to remain intellectually vital and entertained," said Roy Byrd, a retired computer science researcher and Columbia neighbor. "Living near Columbia helps me achieve that and the courses are part of the intellectual stimulation."

Learn more and check your eligibility at [neighbors.columbia.edu/auditing](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/auditing).

## Get Around with Columbia's Free Shuttle Service



All local community members who are disabled or senior citizens (including attendants) are welcome to ride Columbia's shuttle buses. The ADA-accessible Intercampus Shuttle is free and connects 96th Street, the Morningside campus, 125th Street, Columbia University Irving Medical Center in Washington Heights, and Harlem Hospital, with stops at nearby subway and transit hubs.

Shuttle bus service runs Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except on state and federal public holidays. View and download the map and schedule at [transportation.columbia.edu](https://transportation.columbia.edu).



## Putting Community-Driven Music Education Center Stage

Since 2003, **Jazz Power Initiative** (JPI) in Inwood has been bringing music, culture, and community together across Upper Manhattan. Co-founded by jazz composer and educator **Eli Yamin** and **Clifford Carlson**, the nonprofit provides free and low-cost programs that introduce youth to jazz, improvisation, and music rooted in African American and Latin American traditions.

Yamin shared his early connection to music with Columbia Neighbors: “I started playing the piano as soon as I could reach the keyboard. Music was very important to my family. It was kind of like our family religion, and we leaned on the art form as a source of support.”

Programs for youth include hands-on workshops, ensemble rehearsals, and

community concerts where students learn not just technical skills but also storytelling, collaboration, and cultural history.

JPI’s “Jazz Power Tools” (teaching techniques like stomp clap, shuffle, call and response, improvisation, and polyrhythm) give participants a framework to explore rhythm, melody, and expression. By blending music education and cultural context, JPI empowers students to build confidence and experience the joy of performance.

“We want our kids to know the arts are a source of strength and a way of connecting with their community,” Yamin said.

Learn more about the program at [neighbors.columbia.edu/jazz-power](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/jazz-power).

IN CONVERSATION WITH . . .

## Quenia Abreu, President and CEO, New York Women's Chamber of Commerce

**Quenia Abreu**, the president and CEO of the **New York Women's Chamber of Commerce** (NYWCC), has been a transformative figure supporting women and minority entrepreneurs across New York City.

In 2002, Abreu founded the NYWCC to address the lack of organizations focused on women-owned businesses in the area. Her initiative has been key in advocating for economic empowerment and providing resources to women entrepreneurs.

Abreu has been instrumental in organizing the annual **Taste of Harlem** event, which celebrates the vibrant culinary scene of West Harlem. Held at Columbia University's Lee C. Bollinger Forum, the event showcases local restaurants and vendors, highlighting the neighborhood's diverse flavors and cultures.

Abreu emphasizes the importance of community involvement, telling *Columbia Neighbors*: "From the partners



to vendors and attendees, we want to make sure everyone is involved because this is really a community-driven celebration."

Learn more about Taste of Harlem and Abreu's work with women entrepreneurs at

[neighbors.columbia.edu/taste-of-harlem](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/taste-of-harlem).

## Host Your Community Event at Columbia

Local nonprofits serving Manhattan Community District 9 (Morningside Heights, Manhattanville, and Hamilton Heights) can request free event space at Columbia University through its In-Kind program, offered in partnership with the West Harlem Development Corporation and Community Board 9. Applications open the first week of each month.

Learn more at [neighbors.columbia.edu/in-kind](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/in-kind).

## Sowing Seeds of Community Care

In Central Harlem, the **Saint Nicholas Miracle Garden** has blossomed into a hub of education, sustainability, and food justice.

Originally cultivated in 1958 by students of the now-shuttered P.S. 157, the garden fell into disrepair until 2021, when Brooklyn native **Judi Desire** revived it

through her nonprofit, **Uptown & Boogie Healthy Project**. Today, the garden hosts youth programs, seniors' initiatives, and farmers markets that bring fresh produce to the community.



“We take a grassroots approach to everything we do,” Desire said. “We need to give the Harlem community what it’s asking for. The conversations are there, but there needs to be more effort around access and education, and that’s what I feel food justice is.”

Recent projects include vertical gardens, a greenhouse with automated watering, and collaborations with local artists and engineers to create habitats for birds, bees, and butterflies. Through these efforts, the Saint Nicholas Miracle Garden continues to nurture both the land and the people of Harlem, planting seeds for a healthier, more connected community.

Read more at [neighbors.columbia.edu/miracle-garden](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/miracle-garden).

## Finding Community (and Chickens) in Morningside Heights



Just a few blocks south of the Saint Nicholas Miracle Garden, you will find the **Gatehouse Garden** (directly across from Columbia’s Morningside Heights campus), which offers a green gathering space for neighbors and students.

What began as a small gardening project has blossomed into a hub for sustainability and connection, complete with chickens who have become neighborhood favorites.

“It is kind of a comfort to know there are people you are going to see so regularly,” said Buyi Wang, a Columbia staffer and garden volunteer. “It makes the city a little bit smaller.” Read more at [news.columbia.edu/gatehouse-garden](https://news.columbia.edu/gatehouse-garden).

## Professor Hisham Aidi: Harlem's Influence on His Life and Work

**Hisham Aidi**, senior lecturer in the discipline of international and public affairs, has spent his life tracing the sound waves and indelible spirit of global Harlem all the way from his homeland of Tangier, Morocco, to Columbia University's Morningside Heights campus.

He originally chose Columbia for graduate study in part because it sat at Harlem's edge. As a scholar of international relations, Black studies, music, and political economy, he mixes street-level

insight with academic analysis. He traces global stories from Harlem's perspective: UN summits, African leaders visiting Uptown churches, the migration of ideas between the Global South and the city's neighborhoods. He also serves as academic advisor to the **Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Education Center**.

A prolific journalist, DJ, and documentarian, Aidi has cast a spotlight on overlooked figures in Harlem and beyond. He works to preserve elders' archives (vinyl, flyers, photographs), ensuring the cultural memory of the neighborhood endures.

Walking the streets late at night, he sees the intersection of the sacred and profane: churchgoers setting up at dawn, clubgoers drifting home, mosques glowing, music flowing. For Aidi, Harlem is not just a place of study; it is home.

Read more at [neighbors.columbia.edu/aidi](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/aidi).



### IN MEMORIAM



## Lloyd Williams, Harlem's Cultural Champion

Columbia University joins community members in remembering **Lloyd A. Williams**, the late president and CEO of the **Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce** (GHCC), who passed away on August 5, 2025.

A vocal advocate for economic development, education, and cultural programming, Williams helped shape Harlem's latest renaissance through initiatives like Harlem Week, one of New York City's largest community celebrations.

Following his passing, GHCC Executive Director Winston Majette released a statement about his impactful legacy, sharing that Williams "worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life and shape both the cultural and economic identity of not just Harlem but the city as a whole."

Read more at [neighbors.columbia.edu/lloyd-williams](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/lloyd-williams).



## Programs and Resources Directory

To find details on more than 100 public programs, resources, and services at Columbia University that are available to Upper Manhattan residents, visit our directory at [neighbors.columbia.edu/resources](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/resources), which includes everything you need to know about programs like these:



### **Columbia Employment Information Center**

connects neighborhood job seekers with résumé help and assistance in finding employment opportunities at Columbia University.



### **Community DentCare Network**

provides preventive and restorative dental care to northern Manhattan residents through mobile clinics and community partners.



### **Freedom and Citizenship**

offers a free summer and academic-year program at Columbia for high school juniors that explores philosophy, civic leadership, and college readiness.



### **Housing Legal Assistance**

offers free legal support for Manhattanville tenants facing eviction or harassment, in partnership with P.A.'L.A.N.T.E. Harlem.

## Guide to Local Representatives

Need to contact your local elected officials? *Columbia Neighbors* maintains an updated list of city, state, and federal representatives who serve Upper Manhattan. Find a full list of names, districts, and contact information in our directory at [neighbors.columbia.edu/local-representatives](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/local-representatives). Representatives listed below, as of January 1, 2026:

### Governor Kathy Hochul

New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12225  
Phone: 518-474-8390  
[governor.ny.gov](https://governor.ny.gov)

### Mayor Zohran Mamdani

City Hall  
New York, NY 10007  
Phone: 212-788-3000  
[nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor](https://nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor)

### Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

1 Centre St., 15th Floor North  
New York, NY 10007  
Phone: 212-669-7250  
[advocate.nyc.gov](https://advocate.nyc.gov)

### Comptroller Mark D. Levine

1 Centre St.  
New York, NY 10007  
Phone: 212-669-3916  
[comptroller.nyc.gov](https://comptroller.nyc.gov)

### Manhattan Borough President

#### Brad M. Hoylman-Sigal

1 Centre St., 19th Fl.  
New York, NY 10007  
Phone: 212-531-1609  
[manhattanbp.nyc.gov](https://manhattanbp.nyc.gov)

### City Council Member Gale Brewer

(District 6)  
563 Columbus Ave.  
New York, NY 10024  
Phone: 212-873-0282  
[council.nyc.gov/district-6](https://council.nyc.gov/district-6)

### City Council Member Shaun Abreu

(District 7)  
500 W. 141st St.  
New York, NY 10031  
Phone: 212-928-6814  
[council.nyc.gov/district-7](https://council.nyc.gov/district-7)

### City Council Member Elsie Encarnacion

(District 8)  
105 E. 116th St.  
New York, NY 10029  
Phone: 212-828-9800  
[council.nyc.gov/district-8](https://council.nyc.gov/district-8)

### City Council Member Yusef Salaam

(District 9)  
163 W. 125th St., 2nd Fl.  
New York, NY 10027  
Phone: 212-678-4505  
[council.nyc.gov/district-9](https://council.nyc.gov/district-9)

### City Council Member Carmen De La Rosa

(District 10)  
618 W. 177th St., Ground Fl.  
New York, NY 10033  
Phone: 917-521-1293  
[council.nyc.gov/district-10](https://council.nyc.gov/district-10)

## Voting Resource Guide

Keep exercising your right to vote! Stay updated on future elections and get the resources you need in our online guide:

[neighbors.columbia.edu/vote](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/vote).





## Manhattanville Community Day 2026

Columbia's Manhattanville Community Day returns this spring with a full afternoon of activities for all ages, including food samplings, music, art exhibitions, and family-friendly science activities.

The annual event celebrates all the connections between Columbia and its Upper Manhattan neighbors, welcoming community members to explore the campus and meet staff from local organizations.

Find more details at [neighbors.columbia.edu/events](https://neighbors.columbia.edu/events).

### COLUMBIA NEIGHBORS



[neighbors.columbia.edu](https://neighbors.columbia.edu)  
[neighbors@columbia.edu](mailto:neighbors@columbia.edu)

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