



Healthy Food for Upper Manhattan
Summary of the first meeting
April 20, 2015

On April 20, 2015, advocates for healthy food in the upper Manhattan region formally organized as Healthy Food for Upper Manhattan (HFUM). HFUM is a collaboration for communication between public health practitioners, health care providers, community stakeholders, and policy makers, which aims to raise awareness of the role of food policy in our communities and to build strategies to create healthier food environments in the Harlems and upper Manhattan. The first group convening was hosted at the Johnson Community Center in East Harlem, and organized by the NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College, Mt. Sinai Hospital, and Supportive Children’s Advocacy Network NY (SCAN NY).

The overall objective of the group is to coordinate strategies which increase the availability and quality of healthy foods in Upper Manhattan. At the first meeting, the members in attendance shared:

1. Some of the ongoing community activities in the community that are aimed at building or promoting healthy food environments (See table below).
2. Funding and collaborative opportunities
3. Goals for moving forward

Ongoing Community Activities

While most of the activities are aimed at increasing healthy eating, increased access to food, and youth and early intervention strategies in eating healthier food environments, some are in the community are seeking to make a case for the connection between good food environments and crime reduction, and others are working to provide legal and business support to new food retailers.

First HFUM Meeting Attendees and Activities for Promoting Healthy Food Environments in Upper Manhattan

Name	Affiliation	Ongoing Activities
Boa	Bethel Gospel Assembly	Boa runs a basketball program at Bethel Gospel Assembly and promotes healthy eating practices for the kids he coaches. He is also a participant in Project HEED - Help Educate to Eliminate Diabetes - in East Harlem.
Mac Levine	Concrete Safaris	Concrete Safaris is transforming open spaces for growing flowers, fruits and vegetables and herbs. They promote healthy food choices by making it more visible in the neighborhood, and are interested in exploring the relationship of changing landscapes with crime reduction. They aim to recruit children in



		gangs in the local area and teach them to grow and sell food.
Ricardo Concepcion	East Harlem Counsel for Human Services, Inc. (EHCHS) - Boriken Neighborhood Health Center	At the Boriken Neighborhood Health Center, Ricardo and Christine are involved in in-reach and outreach activities around nutrition and health education. They serve many who are pre-diabetic and diabetic, and are also involved in sugary drink counter marketing.
Christine Santisteban		
Catarina Rivera	Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)	HCZ is host to many initiatives for promoting a healthier food environment, some of which include distributing Health Bucks to families, exposing children to new foods through cooking classes, and administering fitness programs at the Harlem Armory.
Maritza Owens	Harvest Home Farmer's Market	Maritza oversees the Harvest Home Farmer's Markets which have several markets in East and Central Harlem.
Marissa Feder	Hunter College	Marissa is a MPH student at Hunter College and an organizer of HFUM.
Cappy Collins	Mount Sinai Hospital	Cappy Collins represents Cada Paso, a walking program for families in East Harlem which includes educational sessions about health, nutrition. The program also runs a community garden with a compost.
Kent Li		Kent Li is a medical student concerned about the food environment in East Harlem and its impact on health.
Emily Hanlen		New program manager at Mt Sinai
Lisa Herron		Co-organizer of HFUM and Project Coordinator, Community Outreach and Engagement Core at Mount Sinai.
Jackie Spinner		Jackie is a public health student at Mount Sinai
Nita Vargeepuram		A pediatrician, Nita is involved in a youth diabetes prevention program in East Harlem.
Michael Vishnevetsky		Michael is a medical student who is directing a course called "Food as Medicine", aimed at education hospital staff and improving their knowledge of healthy food options for patients.
Dana Keufner		NY Common Pantry
Judy Chang	NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene	People at the Harlem District Public Health Office are involved in disseminating Health Bucks, creating a healthier retailer environment by bringing Shop Healthy in bodegas. Other work includes tobacco
Rebecca Lee		
Laena Orkin		



		control, promotion of healthy beverages, and interventions to scale up community cooking classes in East Harlem
Nevin Cohen	NYC Food Policy Center	The NYC Food Policy Center is looking to develop a metric to assess changes in the food environment in East Harlem, and aims to identify the impact of various food programs and gaps in the healthy food landscape. Another projects includes recording household food inventories, and a different project aims to identify barriers in the distribution mechanisms in bringing produce to East Harlem retailers.
Nicholas Freudenberg		
Anastasia Jelatis-Hoke		
Diana Johnson		
Apoorva Srivastava		
Deborah Scott	NYCHA Resident Engagement	Deborah is involved in promoting healthy environments around NYCHA housing, empowering residents to make better health and lifestyle choices, and advocating landlords to support initiatives that promote these practices.
Charles Cheeseboro	Project Head, Department of Youth Services	Works with youth in Harlem to promote physical activity and health.
Rebecca Gildiner	Red Rabbit	Red Rabbit is involved in serving healthy school meals to kids in NYC and offers cooking lessons to children as well. Their program has a gardening focus with the aim of connecting them more with the earth.
Jennifer Plewka		
Bill Fink	SCAN NY	SCAN NY is a youth service organization serving nine sites in East Harlem. With its current healthy food activities thanks only to partnerships, the organization is seeking to expand healthy cooking programs due to the interest expressed by youth and teenagers.
Martin Graz	Union Settlement Association	Martin is a part of HEED and supports youth and senior services around healthy eating at Union Settlement Association.
Erin Schwartz		Erin is a legal fellow who provides legal and educational support to small businesses entering healthy retail landscape.
Carla Ana	United Way of NYC	Carla is involved in connecting people with local food resources and nutrition education programs.
Lesley Barewin	West Harlem Group Assistance (WHGA)	WHGA provides a centralized hub for people to get information about food activities happening in the neighborhood, and operate a food pantry in the area.

[Funding and Collaborative Opportunities](#)



The collective also strategized about combining interdisciplinary strengths and collaborating on finding and submitting funding opportunities that would promote a healthier food environment in East Harlem.

- Currently, Mount Sinai has three grants through CDC to explore what food access means in terms of desirability and affordability.
- The Harlem DPHO, New York Academy of Medicine, Mount Sinai, and NYC Department of City Planning have secured the New York State Health Foundation grant, which will be disbursed in the coming weeks to interested community partners involved in healthy neighborhood initiatives.
- In September, United Way of NYC will be funding organizations who aim to start a new urban agriculture program.
- NYCHA usually helps set up new gardens in their facilities, including help with purchasing gardening supplies and materials.

Conclusion and Next Steps

- In the coming months, HFUM members will identify and share resources that harness the collective interdisciplinary strength of the community partners.
- The group will create a virtual platform to share ongoing projects
- Meetings will be held on a bi-monthly basis
- At the next meeting, the group will look at the impact of initiatives in creating a healthy food landscape, and will collectively come up with goals for moving forward.
- HFUM website will live on the NYC Food Policy Center's website.