

East Side House Announces a Milestone in Early Childhood Education & Community Empowerment:

The Honorable Eugene G. Oliver, Jr. Education Center

For over a century, East Side House has evolved to meet the needs of the community it serves. From its early days offering settlement house programs to its current multifaceted approach addressing education, workforce development, mental health, and family support, East Side House has remained steadfast in its mission to empower individuals at every stage of life through access to opportunities and resources. This year, East Side House announced the opening of The Honorable Eugene G. Oliver, Jr. Education Center in the South Bronx, demonstrating its commitment to providing local children with the tools to dream, thrive, and achieve.

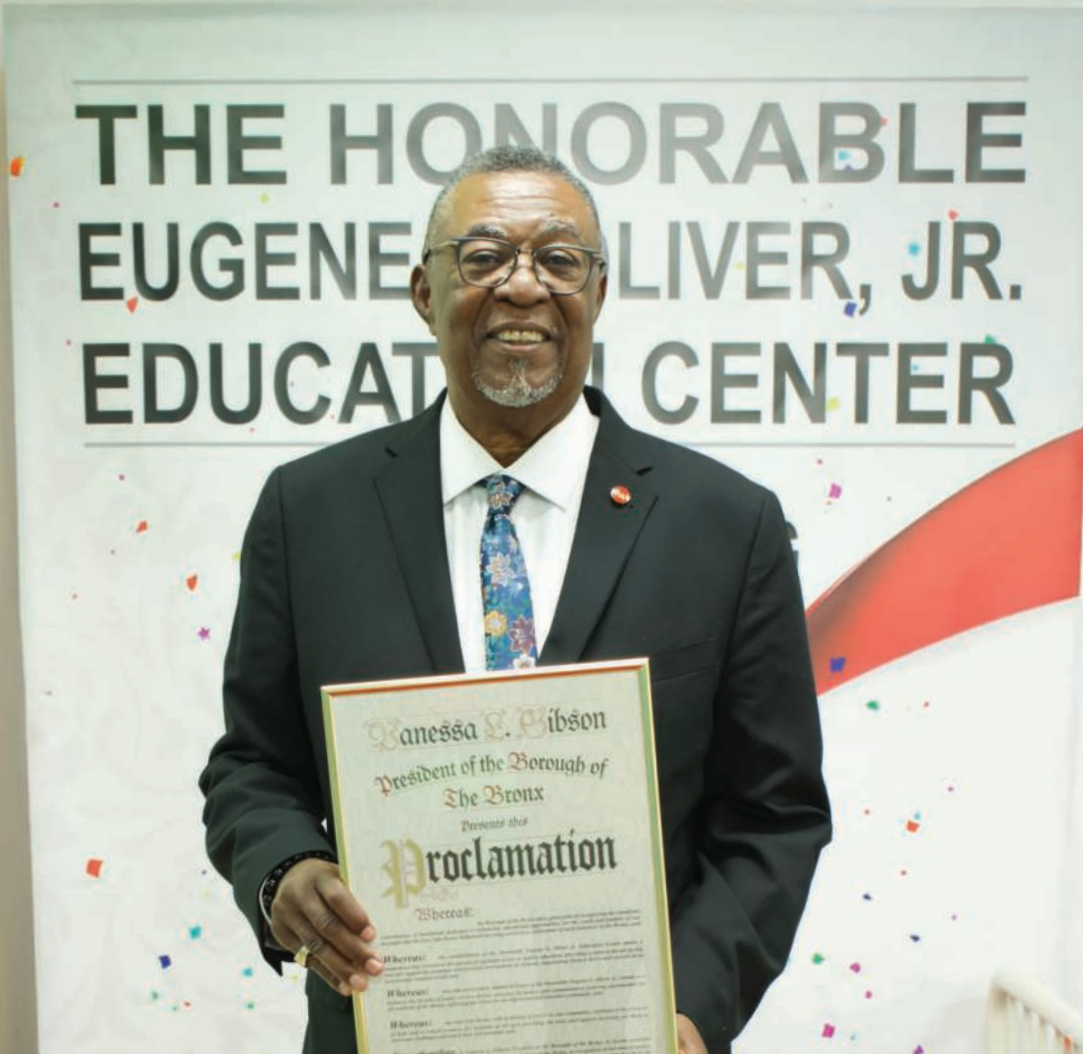
A Vision Realized: Eugene G. Oliver, Jr.

The center's name acknowledges the contributions of Judge Eugene G. Oliver, Jr. — a lifelong advocate for justice, education, and community development — to the South Bronx. Born and raised in the Mill Brook Houses, he has been both a beneficiary and a champion of East Side House's work. "This center stands as a reflection of what is possible when a community comes together to invest in its children," he shared at the opening ceremony. "It is a full-circle moment for me, as someone who benefited from East Side House's programs in my youth. To see the organization now providing this level of care and education for our youngest residents fills me with pride and gratitude."

Judge Oliver's career as a Bronx Supreme Court judge and his over 50 years of service on East Side House's board have left an indelible mark on the community. Rooted in resilience, mentorship, and service, his work epitomizes the transformative power of access and opportunity, which the center aims to replicate for future generations.

"This center stands as a reflection of what is possible when a community comes together to invest in its children" — The Honorable Eugene G. Oliver, Jr.





Meeting the Needs of the Community

The South Bronx faces significant challenges in accessing early childhood education. According to recent studies, some neighborhoods in the area have up to four families competing for every available seat in early childhood programs. The Eugene Oliver Center is a direct response to this critical need. Designed to serve children aged 18 months to five years, it provides a nurturing, inclusive environment where children can develop the skills they need to succeed academically and socially.

The center specializes in meeting the needs of children requiring special education services by offering physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, and specialized resources for children with conditions such as autism, Down syndrome, and mobility challenges. East Side House has begun to streamline the process for families to access screenings, services, and support, significantly reducing wait times and ensuring quality care.

A Legacy for Generations

The Honorable Eugene G. Oliver, Jr. Education Center reflects the collaborative spirit of East Side House, its partners, and the broader community. It represents hope for families who have long sought access to quality education and care for their children, and it embodies the belief that investing in early childhood is an investment in the future of the South Bronx. As Judge Oliver said, “When we invest in our youngest members, we invest in the future of our community.” Through the Eugene Oliver Center, East Side House continues its mission of empowerment, ensuring that every child and family in the South Bronx has the opportunity to succeed.

East Side House's Visionary Leap into the Future of Education: Haven Charter High School

East Side House Settlement announces one of its most transformative endeavors: Haven Charter High School, set to open its doors in 2025. A dual-purpose high school and community center, this innovative institution represents the culmination of years of visionary planning, a testament to East Side House's commitment to redefining education and meeting the evolving needs of students and their families.

Haven Charter High School will reimagine the high school experience, blending academic rigor with workforce readiness. Its groundbreaking curriculum is designed to prepare students for a world in which adaptability and specialized skills are essential. Offering certifications in high-growth fields such as healthcare, technology, and pharmacy technician training, the school ensures its graduates are ready to thrive in both higher education and the workforce.

"This school was a dream," said Daniel Diaz, Executive Director of East Side House, whose leadership has been instrumental in bringing this vision to life. "But dreams don't materialize without a team that's willing to challenge the status quo. Together, we've created a space where innovation meets opportunity."

Haven Charter High School represents a holistic approach to education. Anchored in East Side House's renowned Primary Person Model, each student will be paired with a mentor who will provide individualized guidance and support. Families, too, will be part of the journey, with professionals working alongside parents to foster a collaborative and nurturing environment.

Performance-based grading, a centerpiece of the school's philosophy, will ensure that learning outcomes accurately reflect students' mastery of skills and concepts, rather than relying on standardized testing. This approach empowers educators to tailor their teaching strategies and allows students to excel in ways that reflect their unique strengths.

"This school represents more than education — it represents hope and possibility," said Natalie Lozada, Associate Executive Director and co-founder of Haven Charter High School. "We are building an institution that meets the needs of the whole student, including academic, socio-emotional, and familial, ensuring every graduate is prepared to thrive in the modern world."



A New Era for East Side House Settlement

Haven Charter High School is only one part of East Side House’s bold vision for the future. The forthcoming community center will further expand the organization’s reach, offering vital services across generations. Providing workforce training and resources for the community, these projects reflect East Side House’s dedication to creating spaces where the community can grow, connect, and excel.

Building on its 133-year legacy, East Side House continues to lead with innovation, compassion, and a commitment to excellence. With Haven Charter High School and the new community center, it is both addressing immediate needs and setting a course for a brighter and more equitable future. These projects invite the South Bronx and all of New York to envision a world where education and opportunity transform lives and create lasting impact.

“This school represents more than education — it represents hope and possibility”

— Natalie Lozada, Associate Executive Director

Celebrating 20 years of Outstanding Service & Leadership: Daniel Diaz



This year, East Side House Settlement proudly commemorates a monumental milestone — the 20-year anniversary of its dynamic and visionary Executive Director, Daniel Diaz. Over the past two decades, Daniel’s devotion to the mission of East Side House has reshaped the organization, enhanced the resources available to the South Bronx, and set a benchmark for excellence in community development.

Early Years with East Side House

Daniel’s journey with East Side House began in 2004, when he took on the role of coordinator to support at-risk youth disengaged from academic life. Tasked with helping students at risk of dropping out, he demonstrated an innate ability to see potential where others saw barriers. Just four months into his tenure, he wrote his first grant proposal, which secured funding for 30 paid internships for underserved students. Reflecting on his early years within the organization, he credits working with homeless youth and serving as a deacon as experiences that shaped his dedication to education as a tool for transformation. “Recognizing the youth’s needs ignited my passion to pursue my vision,” he said.

“Daniel is a visionary leader who combines faith in his ideas with trust in his team”

—Natalie Lozada, Associate Executive Director

“He empowers us to dream bigger and to exceed expectations. Working with Daniel has been transformative — not just for the organization, but for everyone fortunate enough to learn from him”



Transforming Opportunities for High Schoolers

In 2008, Daniel played a pivotal role in a groundbreaking partnership between East Side House and the Department of Education to establish Bronx Haven High School. The school provides students with a second chance to graduate, equipping them with critical life skills and career guidance. The impact of Bronx Haven High School extends far beyond diplomas — it has become a source of hope and opportunity, empowering families and strengthening the community.

Daniel recalls one moment at a Bronx Haven graduation, when a student wore a decorated cap reading, “My mom crossed the border so I can cross the stage.” He said, “Moments like that embody the essence of our mission. It’s about fulfilling not just the dreams of individuals, but also honoring the sacrifices of the families who stand behind them.”

A Future Brimming with Possibilities

In 2017, Daniel was promoted to Executive Director. Under his stewardship, East Side House has experienced unprecedented growth, raising over \$30 million to fund critical programs and initiatives. Known for fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, he also inspires confidence and creativity among his colleagues. Said Natalie Lozada, Associate Executive Director at East Side House, “Working with Daniel has been transformative — not just for the organization, but for everyone fortunate enough to learn from him.”

In 2024 alone, East Side House achieved remarkable milestones, including the opening of the Honorable Eugene G. Oliver, Jr. Education Center — a state-of-the-art early childhood education facility — and the launch of the Harvest to Haven food pantry initiative. These projects, along with the impending opening of Haven Charter High School, exemplify the forward-thinking leadership that has defined his tenure.

Daniel’s two-decade journey at East Side House Settlement is a celebration of resilience, innovation, and the transformative power of leadership. His vision has touched countless lives, redefined what is possible for underserved communities, and ensured that the South Bronx continues to be a beacon of hope and opportunity. “The work we’ve accomplished so far is just the foundation,” said Daniel. “With every challenge comes the opportunity to push boundaries and create something greater.”

As we honor this milestone, we look ahead with optimism, confident that his impact will continue to inspire and transform for decades to come. Congratulations, Daniel, on 20 years of extraordinary service, and on building a legacy that promises an even brighter future.

EAST SIDE HOUSE'S IMPACT

The journeys of Josiah and Jefferson, two exceptional young men who participated in East Side House Settlement's programs, exemplify the organization's profound impact on its students. Their stories are testaments to the life-changing power of exposure, mentorship, and education — and to the lasting influence of East Side House on shaping leaders of tomorrow.

Bridging Borders and Building Futures: The Transformative Impact of East Side House

Josiah: Global Perspective, Local Mission

A first-generation American whose parents emigrated from Jamaica, Josiah was introduced to East Side House during his sophomore year at Bronx Legacy High School, which offered limited resources and few post-secondary options. He found in East Side House the guidance and opportunity he had sought. Through the Youth Leadership Program, Josiah became a mentor to his peers, providing support in navigating college applications, scholarships, and social challenges. His role taught him valuable organizational and interpersonal skills while igniting a passion for helping others. "My time in Youth Leadership pushed me to seek new opportunities," he said. "It taught me to challenge myself and dream bigger." These new opportunities included a life-changing study abroad program in Morocco. Immersed in the culture, Josiah learned Arabic and French, conducted research on the argan oil industry, and experienced the warmth and hospitality of his host family.

Today, Josiah is thriving as a finance major at Hofstra University, where he is deeply involved in campus life and pursuing his goal of becoming a financial advisor. He credits East Side House with shaping his character and outlook. "Without East Side House, my path would have been completely different," Josiah said. "They enrich lives and build futures, not just for individuals but for entire communities."



“My time in Youth Leadership pushed me to seek new opportunities”

—Josiah

Jefferson: Finding Confidence & Connection

For Jefferson, who emigrated from Ghana just two years before joining East Side House, life in New York was overwhelming and isolating. Navigating a new country, a new school, and an unfamiliar culture, he faced barriers in communication and confidence. His life changed after he was accepted into East Side House’s Student Ambassador Program.

Launched in 2018, the program annually selects 20 Bronx high school seniors for a year-long leadership and community engagement initiative. For Jefferson, it provided a platform to develop his skills as well as a lifeline of connection and belonging. “Before the program, I stayed in my bubble,” he said. “But the collaboration with other ambassadors taught me how to communicate, build connections, and work with people I’d never met before.”

The curriculum of collaborative projects and public speaking assignments helped Jefferson shed his inhibitions. His newfound confidence culminated in an unforgettable moment at a City Hall rally, where he spoke passionately to an audience of 350 about preserving funding for the program. “Jefferson knows himself and marches to the beat of his own drum,” said Brian Birkeland, the program’s director. His year as an ambassador ended with a 10-day trip to Europe, where he explored new cultures, food, and experiences that sparked a lifelong desire to travel. He eventually graduated as valedictorian of Mott Haven Community High School, delivering a moving speech to his peers. Now a computer science major at Hunter College, he is pursuing his dream of earning a master’s degree. The skills he developed — confidence, communication, and collaboration — continue to propel him forward.



“Jefferson knows himself and marches to the beat of his own drum”

—Brian Birkeland, Department Director, Learning to Work

East Side House’s Lasting Impact

Through programs including Youth Leadership and the Student Ambassador initiative, East Side House equips young people with the tools they need to overcome challenges. For both young men, ESH provided a sense of belonging, network of mentors, and vision for the future. Whether through global exploration or community engagement, East Side House’s programs inspire students to see the world not as a set of limitations, but as a canvas of possibilities.

To support the important work of East Side House, please visit www.eastsidehouse.org/donate.