2012:
A Time of Expansion,
In Reach,
Opportunity and Hope

East River Development Alliance
Annual Report
Dear friends,

2012 was a year of expansion. Expansion of opportunity for those we serve, expansion of services and programs, and expansion of our reach and scope.

I am particularly proud of our new Workforce1 Career Center, which is connecting residents of public housing neighborhoods with jobs, many with benefits. This year we’re on track to place hundreds of community residents in jobs as we develop new partnerships with employers from all over the city.

We also opened a Financial Empowerment Center under the same roof as Workforce1, a first in the city of New York. Together they make up a powerful one-stop resource for job seekers and those looking to put their finances on track. In 2012 alone, we returned almost $2 million to the community through our free tax preparation service and provided nearly 5,000 one-on-one financial counseling sessions to help people reduce their debt and increase savings.

The ERDA Federal Credit Union has grown steadily. We now have over 1,000 members and are approaching $750,000 in assets. We have been making small loans to individuals and families as well as working with residents to improve their credit scores and achieve long-term financial stability.

Our College Access program is making college a reality for young people. We’ve helped improve the SAT scores of students in their junior year by an average of 145 points. And in the past year, all 20 of our seniors were accepted to colleges throughout the country.

I am so proud of all that you have helped us accomplish. But there is still a great deal of work ahead of us, and we hope that you will continue to work with us to tackle poverty and change lives.

All the best,

Bishop Mitchell G. Taylor
Founder & President, East River Development Alliance
**Tackling Poverty, Changing Lives**

ERDA works to improve and transform New York City public housing neighborhoods by providing residents with tools and opportunities that are necessary for self-reliance and economic mobility.

Our work encompasses five areas:

1. **Financial Fitness**
   We offer free tax preparation, one-on-one crisis counseling, individual long-term asset-building counseling, community-based financial educational workshops, public benefits screening and enrollment, and public housing-specific tenant advocacy services geared toward resolving financial crises.

2. **Workforce Development**
   Using a case management approach, we offer job readiness and placement assistance for the unemployed and underemployed. We also provide training on soft skills such as interviewing skills and resume preparation.

3. **Youth Development & College Access**
   We provide in-depth SAT tutoring, college preparation, and college retention services, and one-on-one counseling on financial aid for high school students and their parents. We also run a Youth Leadership and Employment Program, which includes groundbreaking internship opportunities in collaboration with the NYC Civilian Complaint Review Board.

4. **The ERDA Federal Credit Union**
   Revolutionizing the way public housing residents manage their money, build capital, and achieve their financial goals, the ERDA Federal Credit Union offers federally insured savings accounts, money orders, personal loans, and other financial services. Public housing residents and others can join as a member with a combined membership fee and deposit of $25.

5. **Community Revitalization**
   We are organizing to ensure public housing neighborhoods have access to mainstream assets such as financial services, fresh food, and robust retail stores. As part of this effort, we’ve organized and recently incorporated the Long Island City Merchants Association and are now working with local business owners to establish a Business Improvement District.
For Christina Barron, college was unchartered territory. No one in her family had received a higher education, and in Astoria Houses where she lives, most of her neighbors had never set foot on a college campus. Inspired by a young woman in similar circumstances who made it to college, Christina set out to do the same. She enrolled in ERDA’s College Access Program, went on college tours, learned about financial aid offered at different colleges, and got help preparing for the SAT. Applying to college, Christina said, was “challenging and frustrating” but she knew she could always count on ERDA’s counselors for encouragement and support. She also made new friends who shared her dream. Today Christina is a freshman at New York University, the recipient of a full scholarship. She wants to make sure others have the same opportunity, so she’s a mentor to high school students in Strive for College, a new ERDA program.
2012: Expanded Opportunities And Hope For

Public housing residents and others looking to land a job that promises a better future, thanks to our new Workforce1 Career Center launched in early 2012

Young adults ages 18 to 24, thanks to our new Youth Employment and Leadership Program

Immigrants seeking a path to citizenship, thanks to the ERDA Credit Union’s new loan program that chips away at the financial roadblocks to citizenship.

Those needing help to avoid eviction, climb out of debt, take control of their finances, and build assets for a better tomorrow, thanks to our new Financial Empowerment Center, which opened in early 2012

Local merchants through our newly incorporated Long Island City Merchants Association, the first business association in our community

In 2012, we tackled poverty and changed lives together.

Approximately 4,500 public housing residents and other low-income men, women and children - with an average annual income of $14,120 - were put on a path to a brighter future.

1,180 men and women received help creating a budget, reducing debt, gaining public benefits, and taking other steps to get their finances in order.

220 men and women found jobs, most of them with benefits.

1,026 community members received job counseling, acquired job search skills, and moved one step closer to employment.

1,640 residents received help filing their taxes and getting close to $2 million in rebates — money they used to provide for their families, save for the future, and support the local economy.

More than 300 men and women, many without previous access to bank accounts, opened savings accounts and gained access to personal loans to pay for the truly important things in life, like school. They also built a credit history … all made possible by the ERDA Federal Credit Union you helped launch in 2010.

20 young adults — most of them public housing residents - got into college.
Good food for thought

Constantina Hernandez has two young children and she had little income coming in. She knew about food stamps but the paper work to apply was overwhelming for her. An immigrant from Mexico, she speaks limited English – another barrier to navigating access to food stamps. Then a social worker at her daughter’s school told Constantina about ERDA. She was assigned a financial counselor who helped her fill out the application for food stamps. Now that her crisis has passed, Constantina is working on a long term financial plan. She opened a savings account at the ERDA Credit Union and is beginning to save. Her dream is to start her own business selling Mexican food.
I get to keep my home in Queensbridge Houses.

Iesha

Getting back on track

Iesha Richardson, a 39-year old single mother and a resident of Queensbridge Houses, was on the brink of eviction from her home of 20 years when she turned to ERDA in late 2012. Her date in housing court had been set, which further fueled the sense of panic she felt. To make matters worse, the hours at her job at a car service company had just been cut and she’d recently lost her food stamp benefits. Plus she owed $1,877 in back rent. ERDA's financial counselor worked with Iesha for more than two months. By early 2013, she was caught up on rent. ERDA is now working with Iesha on a long term financial plan, building a credit history and creating and sticking to a realistic budget. “I really thought I was going to lose my apartment,” said Iesha.
Driving into the future

Dion Moore, a longtime resident of Queensbridge Houses, was laid off from a job he held for 13 years when his company went out of business. He turned to ERDA for help, where he received one-on-one job counseling and access to training on a broad range of job search skills. He retooled his resume and role-played in mock interviews so he could put his best foot forward when meeting potential employers. This hard work paid off in a big way when Dion landed a job at Fresh Direct as a truck driver. He recently got promoted to crew leader, overseeing 5 other drivers.
Winning the fight for financial health

Joanne Butler calls the ERDA Federal Credit Union a “caring institution.” She opened a savings account at the credit union in early 2012, after hearing about it from an ERDA financial counselor. Since then she’s been diligently saving 20% of her income. “It’s a good start for me, a good stepping stone,” Ms. Butler said. “They don’t just take your money. They show you how you can make your money grow.” To date, Ms. Butler has saved more than $1,500. She even opened an account for her grandson to teach him the importance of saving. And she tells everyone who will listen why they should join the Credit Union. Thanks in part to word of mouth, the ERDA Federal Credit Union now has 1,000 plus members and is growing strong. “I’m fighting for my financial life and I’m fighting for a healthy life,” she said. “I think I can do both.”
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You and many other individuals and organizations make our work possible. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to our mission.

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