From the President and CEO

Turning the calendar page to another year is always a poignant occasion for me: It’s a time to revisit the past and prepare for the months ahead.

As I review CAMBA’s achievements in 2014, I’m proud of the work we’ve done and honored to lead an organization that’s helped so many people on their path to a better future.

At CAMBA, we believe that every person has the potential to succeed. And thanks to deeply caring supporters like you, we’ve been able to provide transformative services that helped change the lives of 45,000 people this year.

Our clients are New York City’s most vulnerable residents … people moving from welfare to work, low-income youth and families, households fighting foreclosure or eviction, adults grappling with addiction and immigrants and refugees struggling to find their way in the safety of America.

CAMBA has a track record of success. But we know there is much work left to do, and we are committed to touching more lives in 2015. Your support helps CAMBA transform lives, families and communities. I am grateful for your support last year and look forward to partnering with you in the new year.

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CAMBA Gardens Phase II Breaks Ground

CAMBA Gardens Phase II groundbreaking ceremony. See story on page 4.
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CAMBA’s Cornerstones: A Hub of Activities for East New York Children and Adults

On a recent afternoon, four entrepreneurs came together in East New York, Brooklyn, to discuss plans for their new pizza stand.

Since Yelp lists more than 12,000 pizza joints in Brooklyn, such a gathering might not seem unusual.

But these proprietors-to-be are only 10, 11 and 12 years old, and they were developing their business plan at a Cornerstone program — one of CAMBA’s programs based in community centers at two New York City Housing Authority sites.

CAMBA operates two Cornerstone centers: one at the 18-building Boulevard Houses and a second at the nearby Pennsylvania Avenue-Wortman Avenue Houses, an eight-building complex. Together, these enrichment programs serve about 425 adults and children during after-school, evening and weekend hours.

The Cornerstone programs are funded by the City’s Department of Youth and Community Development. CAMBA began operating these two centers in January 2014.

The young entrepreneurs, Anthony and John, both 11, with partners YourMajesty, 10, and Edwin, 12, are members of a business club at the Boulevard Cornerstone after-school program, where they and fellow club mates were creating plans for small, kid-friendly enterprises.

The partners figure their neighborhood has enough pizza-loving people to keep their future business thriving. To have a successful business, they say, “You have to work together, decide as a group and never argue.”

That same afternoon, another group of children hosted a quiz show. In a nearby room, six-year-old Eternity and a troupe of after-school kids were dancing as part of the center’s music club. “Today was so fun,” Eternity gushes.

Eternity’s mother, Jasmine, is happy to have the center’s after-school services. “Eternity loves to come to the Cornerstone,” she says. “She is able to express her feelings — and she gets help with homework.”

Before going home for the evening, children enjoy a healthy dinner to wrap up the afternoon of homework help, art, dance, the business club and many other activities. As the younger group’s families arrive to take them home, teenagers begin drifting in for an evening of activities, enticed by dance, media and art programs, game tables, video games, sports and friendships.

“I like that I can play basketball,” says Latrell, 14, who is on a Cornerstone team that plays on a nearby court in warm weather and at CAMBA’s East New York Beacon Center’s indoor court in the winter. Latrell and his teammates take the sport seriously. They say the long hours of “practice and the discipline are worth it.”

On weekends, adults are attracted by the Cornerstone’s community events, workshops and health classes.

Summer Expansion
When the City asked Cornerstones to expand evening hours until 11 pm at Boulevard and midnight at Penn-Wortman with programming for older youth this past summer, staff at the

CONTINUED TO PAGE 6
At least, that’s how it felt to Veronica Cortez, CAMBA’s Health Link Program Care Coordinator, whose low-income, chronically ill client was distraught over a bill for dentures, which should have been covered by his insurance.

Her client’s anxiety was so disabling that he couldn’t leave his apartment, even for medical appointments.

To unravel and resolve insurance red tape, Veronica became her client’s social worker, advocate, detective and lawyer — all rolled into one. When the hard-fought claim check finally arrived, “that was one of the best days I’ve had,” she says. Instead of worrying about money, “my client is now able to focus on his health.”

This innovative new model of accessing health care helps Medicaid recipients with chronic illnesses obtain comprehensive medical services through care coordinators like Veronica, who oversee and coordinate services for every client.

CAMBA’s Health Link Program is part of the New York State Health Homes program, with services provided through a network of health providers, health plans and community organizations. Its goals are to ensure that patients receive the services they need to stay healthy at home, out of the emergency room and out of the hospital.

Started in 2012, CAMBA’s Health Link Program is one of CAMBA’s fastest growing programs. It currently helps more than 2,000 people annually receive better care, through coordinating medical appointments and care among multiple doctors and services, assisting with monitoring medication, and helping clients with government benefits, such as SNAP (food stamps), public assistance, Medicaid or Medicare, Social Security and more.

CAMBA’s Health Link Program care coordinators may also help their clients find housing assistance, child care, legal aid, employment services, transportation — whatever assistance they need to become healthier and achieve self-sufficiency.

Services are free and often help clients access additional support, while helping to reduce Medicaid costs. Clients greet our care coordinators with enthusiasm. “My doctor is a private physician and doesn’t deal with social issues, and that’s where CAMBA helps me,” explains one client. “I absolutely love CAMBA Health Link.”

CAMBA’s Health Link Program partners with the Brooklyn Health Homes/Coordinated Behavioral Care and Community Healthcare Network.

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**CAMBA Gardens II Breaks Ground**

CAMBA and CAMBA Housing Ventures (CHV) hosted a double celebration in November as we officially opened CAMBA Gardens Phase I and broke ground on CAMBA Gardens Phase II — heralding 502 units of sustainable, affordable and supportive homes for families and individuals, built on the grounds of Kings County Hospital Center in Wingate, Brooklyn.

Developed by CHV, CAMBA Gardens I and II represent over $165 million in public and private investment. It is an innovative national model, using surplus hospital land for affordable and supportive housing, co-located with preventive health care. It showcases an effective partnership between a public hospital, a non-profit developer, a social service provider and public and private partners.

CAMBA Gardens Phase I, designed by Harden Van Arnam Architects and constructed by Bruno Frustaci Contracting, opened in October 2013 and today provides 209 homes for low-income families and formerly homeless families and individuals, coupled with CAMBA’s on-site supportive services to help them rebuild their lives.

The two LEED Platinum buildings of CAMBA Gardens Phase I include community and computer rooms, landscaped gardens and a teaching kitchen. Solar panels provide nearly 50% of the common space electricity.

CAMBA Gardens Phase II will replace the hospital’s former G Building psychiatric ward, currently being demolished, and will provide 293 units of affordable and supportive housing for formerly homeless and low-income singles and families. Designed by Dattner Architects and being constructed by Bruno Frustaci Contracting, CAMBA Gardens Phase II will be completed in the fall of 2016.

See more at CambaHousingVentures.org.
Our clients are grateful to the many generous New Yorkers who opened their hearts to provide Thanksgiving meals and holiday gifts to children.

CAMBA Casino Night Out 2014

CAMBA's Casino Night Out 2014, held at Tribeca 360°, raised $465,000 to help CAMBA provide more services for our clients. Pictured here are guests enjoying the gaming tables. In the top left photo, CAMBA Board Member Bernado Mas, Mrs. Mas, left and center, talk with Joanne Oplustil, CAMBA President and CEO. Top far right is CAMBA Gardens resident Elizabeth Melendez with her daughters, Lauren and Lindsey, who were featured in our video. Honorees were Dr. David Cohen, Executive VP of Maimonides Medical Center (left, bottom center photo) and Martin Dunn, Founder and President of Dunn Development.
CAMBA Cornerstones rose to the challenge. This meant mobilizing quickly to hire and train more employees and to create new services to attract teenagers, providing services and safe spaces for teens and young adults.

Nicolas Miles, who directs the Boulevard Cornerstone, says the last-minute demand was difficult, “but it’s been a great experience. We were able to reach out to the community and let them know that CAMBA has many activities to offer.”

That opportunity to bring in more participants and grow the Cornerstone’s programming “was a benefit in itself,” he adds.

Adrian, another volunteer dog walker from 97 Crooke, bonded instantly with his charge, whom he nicknamed “Bronx.” On Adrian’s command, Bronx promptly sat and waited patiently. “He’s a very smart dog and well-trained,” says Adrian.

Adrian says volunteering is rewarding. “I love this. It’s very invigorating. “I like the idea of doing something to help, and the dogs get a chance to breathe and see the neighborhood.”

“This is therapeutic and good exercise,” says Antoinessa, who was strolling through the neighborhood with a dog named Dot. “We’ve met a lot of people, and Dot gives us something in common to talk about,” she adds.