

Harlem News

"Good News You Can Use"

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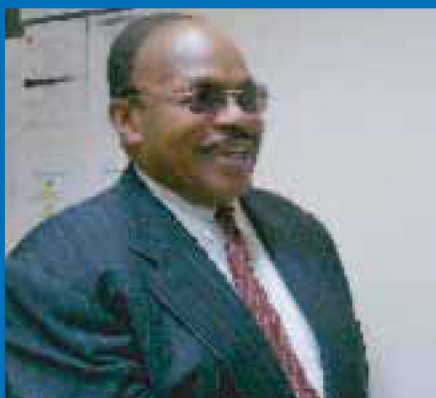
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HCCI President Adds a Personal Touch - Derek E. Broomes Makes Time To Visit HCCI Residents

In December of 2011, Derek E. Broomes, was promoted from Chief Financial Officer of Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement Inc. (HCCI) to President and Chief Executive Officer. He went from managing the company finances to providing oversight for all aspects of a multifaceted community development agency. One might assume that a numbers man would rule with an iron fist. However, Derek Broomes has proven to run HCCI with a spirit of compassion and humility. Late last year, he started to visit HCCI's Resident Association meetings to get to know the community he passionately serves.

"This is the first time that a president at HCCI has taken the initiative to meet with tenants, before major issues arise," said Donald Mack, Director of Resident and Community Services.

For 16 years, Mack has been charged with developing Resident Associations where he helps tenants to structure themselves into autonomous Resident Associations and offers strategies for: improving the quality of life in the buildings, preventing evictions, presenting repair issues and addressing community issues. So far, he has established 20 active resident associations in HCCI's 50 buildings. Broomes has decided to visit each one.

"He started visiting the buildings in November 2013. So far he's been to 15 buildings," said Mack. "He's a hands-on

President, which is good for tenants, and it's good for HCCI. It shows that he cares."

The tenants agree. "It was good that [Derek Broomes] came to the meeting," said Carolyn Reed, a resident at 208 West 149th Street. "A lot of things have been completed, that weren't done. Now, we get an immediate response when we request an exterminator, they installed new cameras in the building, and they replaced our keys with key fobs which increased security. Mr. Broomes was very pleasant and he listened to our concerns."

A London School of Economics trained Development Economist, Broomes leads by consensus and has made efforts to impact the culture of HCCI. He solicits the opinion of his staff when making executive decisions and empowers his employees to make key decisions for their departments. However, he started attending the Resident Association meetings to boost accountability. Both HCCI's real estate staff and the firms hired to manage HCCI's building are required to attend the resident association meetings, note the issues, and work with tenants to resolve issues immediately. His goal is to involve all of the stakeholders. "The answers rarely come from staff or consultants," he said. "The answers usually come from the people we're here to serve."

After each meeting, he gives the residents his direct number and tells them to call him, if their issues go unresolved.

Broomes adheres to a double bottom line. "I go to the meetings because I care," said Broomes. "The way I see it, if the apartments aren't good enough for my family to live in, then they're not good enough for our residents." According to Broomes, something as minor as a loose doorknob can result in a violation, which will raise insurance premiums. "By keeping abreast of small issues, we have developed improved tenant-landlord relations, and decreased our insurance premiums substantially."

Broomes has also increased transparency with the Board of Directors, inviting them to participate in all agency functions, as well as outside workshops and conferences.

The Board is pleased with Broomes' approach. Dr. Charles Curtis, Chairman of the Board of Directors of HCCI stated, "Derek Broomes is a gifted manager whose leadership has strengthened and enhanced our ability to work with community groups, agencies and our interfaith leaders."

Broomes cites his faith is his guiding light. When making decisions, he said he asks God for wisdom. "My guiding principal is to always do what's right."

Founded in 1986, HCCI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded by a coalition of inter-faith congregations that has implemented a comprehensive portfolio



of programs to provide affordable housing and safe streets. HCCI's real estate office has developed more than 3,000 units of low, moderate and middle-income housing and nearly 50 commercial spaces including a 45,000 sq. ft. Pathmark supermarket.

HCCI's social service programs offer opportunities for individuals and groups to become and remain economically independent; increase understanding of and access to health care; and provide substantive educational programs for adults and young people. Through alliances with other community organizations, elected officials and local residents, HCCI has also helped reduce crime in the community; increase public sanitation; and preserve and transform open space. To learn more about HCCI programs please visit www.hcci.org.

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Community Works Spirit of Community: "Women & Their Art" Exhibition at the interchurch Center

On March 13, 2014 over 200 guests comprised of Manhattan's cultural leaders joined Community Works and its Community Matters NYC partners at the Interchurch Center for a special reception and meet the Artist event for its Spirit of Community: Woman and Their Art exhibition. This special evening was in celebration of Woman's History Month. Joining artists Vickie Frémont, Tomo Mori, Janice Patrignani and Alez Unthank were Voza Rivers, Chairman of the Harlem Arts Alliance, Reverend James Parks Morton, Karen Witherspoon, Vice President of City College, and Kathy Benson Haskins, Board Chair of Community Works.

This exhibition is part of Community Works' lauded Spirit of Community visual arts series which features specially selected works chronicling the sights, sounds, colors, textures, cadences, and people of the city and beyond. Contemporary artists lend their imagination and innovation to capture the pulse and rhythm and the humanity that has kept the city vibrant and thriving.

