Where Is the Love? Rally for a Recreation Center

Colorful signs with powerful messages and people chanting “Where Is the Love?” filled HSTF’s Youth Community Development Center on Valentine’s Day. HSTF youth leaders rallied for a Jackson Square recreation center promised years ago. HSTF teens spoke passionately about why a youth center is needed. Edelind Peguero said, “Low-income communities like Jackson Square have fewer recreational facilities than wealthier and predominantly white communities. We have a social justice issue here. Where’s the love for JP and Roxbury?”

Local media outlets covered the event. Community organizing efforts began last fall when HSTF youth decided to focus on a $21 million recreation center promised to neighborhood youth that was never built. Youth leaders conducted research, wrote a case statement, met with local politicians, prepared speeches, and honed media skills to prepare for the rally. Youth will continue to use organizing skills learned at HSTF until they get an answer to “Where Is the Love?”

The Boston Globe gives HSTF some love—coverage of our rally!

“Teens with the Hyde Square Task Force are determined to do their part to finish a decades-long endeavor to provide their diverse community with a recreational center.”

From “Whipping up support for rec center becomes a cause celebre for teen activists” by Akilah Johnson, Globe staff, April 10, 2017

Thanks to your support, HSTF is settled in our newly renovated Youth Community Development Center! Come visit us at 30 Sunnyside Street, Jamaica Plain, MA (behind the Blessed Sacrament Church).
HSTF is one of four organizations participating this spring in Sound Lab, through an installation called “Listen Hear: The Art of Sound.” Artist Elisa Hamilton worked with Musicians in Community (MIC) youth to record the sounds of Boston’s Latin Quarter. A custom vinyl record provides an interactive listening experience for visitors.

As part of the program, MIC youth leaders performed at the Calderwood Hall of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in February. The talent of MIC youth struck a chord with one audience member who said, “I was touched by your performance and the confidence you had. The whole world should hear you perform.”

Latin Quarter Happenings

HSTF engaged more than 4,000 people at 45 events in the Latin Quarter this year in partnership with 50 local businesses and organizations.

HSTF hopes to expand Boston’s Latin Quarter designation awarded last year by the City. State designation as a Massachusetts Cultural District would recognize the neighborhood’s vibrant Latino arts and culture.

Local artist Massiel Grullon’s domino-themed table and chairs art installation will be on the Blessed Sacrament Church Plaza for the community to enjoy.

In partnership with the Jamaica Plain Artists Association, mosaics will be installed on the Blessed Sacrament Church Plaza. They are being collaboratively designed by mosaic artists, HSTF youth, and community members.

Check HSTF’s website for details about ¡Viva el Latin Quarter! summer programming. Visit www.HydeSquare.org for more information.

Juan Cantu, HSTF’s College Success Coordinator, was recently honored with a Light of Dawnn Award, given to those who demonstrate an unwavering commitment to building stronger communities. Congratulations, Juan!

We are thrilled to welcome new staff Eva Farrell, Theater Programs Coordinator (left), and Kira Rockwell, Theater Resident Teaching Artist (right).

In recognition of her hard work, Jessica Guzmán has been promoted to Communications Coordinator and Graphic Designer.
This May, HSTF will produce *El Barrio: Boston’s Latin Quarter Musical*, co-written by our youth and centered on Anthony, who faces tough choices in the neighborhood.

**How did you create the story?**

**Jonathan:** It’s about this neighborhood. We wanted to build it around the Jackson Square area, and we wanted a story personal to us. We took past events and put them into the story.

**Who’s your favorite character? Why?**

**Victor:** Anthony, because he’s Dominican, 17, and he’s the kind of person I am. I came to the US when I was seven, and I didn’t see my dad for four years. I still don’t see him that much, so I can relate to Anthony’s story.

**How did auditions work?**

**Victoria:** The process was hard, especially getting the dance choreography down. I’m used to singing, but I’d never danced for an audition. Picking up the moves as fast as expected was hard.

**What about incorporating music, dance, and theater into one project?**

**Jonathan:** It’s been a tedious, rigorous, and challenging process. But it’s great that everyone is coming together. It’s also great to work with youth who I don’t usually work with—all three arts teams are working together.

**What excites you most?**

**Victor:** How proud we’re all going to be. I’m also excited about telling the history of this neighborhood.

En mayo, HSTF producirá *El Barrio: Boston’s Latin Quarter Musical*, escrito por nuestros jóvenes y enfocado en Anthony, un joven que debe enfrentar situaciones difíciles en el vecindario.

**¿Quién es tu personaje favorito y por qué?**

**Víctor:** Anthony, porque es dominicano, tiene 17 años y es como yo. Yo vine a EE.UU. a los siete años y no vi a mi papá por cuatro años. Aun ahora no lo veo mucho, por eso me identifico con Anthony.

**¿Cómo fue la audición?**

**Victoria:** El proceso fue difícil, especialmente la coreografía del baile. Yo estoy acostumbrada a cantar pero nunca había bailado para una audición.

**¿Qué piensas de incorporar música, baile y teatro en un mismo proyecto?**

**Jonathan:** Fue un proceso tedioso y riguroso; un verdadero desafío. Es genial trabajar con jóvenes con los que no estoy acostumbrado a hacerlo; los tres equipos de artistas están trabajando juntos.

**¿Qué es lo que más te entusiasma?**

**Víctor:** Lo orgullosos que vamos a estar todos. También me entusiasma contar la historia de este vecindario.
ENJOY OUR NEWSLETTER INSIDE!

"Stepping out of my comfort zone and doing something new made a difference in my life. When you donate to HSTF, that’s what you are making sure happens.”
—Wilmin Jiminez, Alumnus, HSTF

Our Seniors Are Graduating and Going to College!

New Executive Director Celina Miranda, our Board, and staff are thrilled that 35 HSTF high-school seniors will graduate and transition to college this year. Seniors were asked to write a reflective letter to themselves.
This is John Jimenez’s letter.

A donation to HSTF helps ensure that youth in Boston’s Latin Quarter—youth like John—get the skills and support they need. Let HSTF youth know you’re rooting for them as they transform their lives and their communities.

Make a donation today!

Dear Younger Me,

Applying to college isn’t the easiest thing to do, it isn’t the funnest thing to do, and it won’t be your favorite, but it’s gonna be worth it. You’ll be the first in your family to go and graduate. Make Mami proud and especially make yourself proud. You’re gonna get lazy, and you’re gonna wanna quit, but you won’t because HSTF is rooting for you. Don’t procrastinate and don’t give up.

Sincerely,

John