

# A “Vibrant Crossroads” for Young People — All Stars Project Returns to Hell’s Kitchen



by Dashiell Allen February 21, 2024



The stars will shine once again on W42nd Street, when a performing arts center reopens this spring as a newly imagined destination for young people and a hub for other performing arts organizations.



[All Stars Project](#), a national nonprofit that connects youth with free theater programming and performance, will return to its neon-lit, star-shaped Hell’s Kitchen center, at 543 W42nd Street (bw 10/11th Ave) in June, president and CEO, Chris Street, told W42ST.

“We see it as a vibrant crossroads, where hundreds and thousands of artists and young people and corporate professionals will come together to create new kinds of programming, new solutions,” said Street, who joined All Stars in 1992 as a volunteer and was hired the following year.

The W42nd Street center comprises two theaters and office space. Prior to the COVID pandemic, the building housed the New Federal Theatre, which has since relocated to the Upper West Side. All Stars also put on productions through its in-house initiative, the Castillo Theatre.



All Stars Project CEO Chris Street with Madelyn Chapman and All Stars Alum Reynaldo Piniella. Photo supplied

In 2019, All Stars tried to sell the 44,000-square-foot center that had been its hub since 2002 as it expanded its focus into cities across the country. It closed for two years in the COVID pandemic, and was in the process of being sold — until a deal fell through last May, “based on uncertainty around real estate valuations,” Street said, and the board rethought their strategic vision.

When they first tried to sell it, “we thought the property was worth about \$14 million,” Street said, following an appraisal for \$19 million in 2017. Ultimately, they agreed to a sale for \$9 million, but after that deal fell through, “selling it just didn’t make sense.”

The organization is in the process of raising \$7 million to pay off the mortgage on the property, Street said. It also plans to renovate the offices and lease them to other nonprofits. The work is being carried out pro bono by the architecture firm HLW Architecture.

All Stars has been using the W42nd Street center for its own programming since the fall, Street said. There are afterschool and weekend classes, and a monthly drop-in performance program that connects young people with NYPD officers. Last month, All Stars co-hosted a Martin Luther King Day celebration with NYC arts education nonprofit LEAP — a performance of *The Movement*, An Acappella Musical, for more than 100 young people and volunteers.

---



Performers during an MLK Day celebration at All Stars Project in partnership with arts education nonprofit LEAP. Photo supplied

Street aims to bring the staff back to the offices by June, and open the doors to other educational nonprofits and the broader community in 2026.

“There’s not [another] community-based, theater and arts education and workforce development center that young people walk into and [can say] this is ours,” he said. All Stars’ goal is to provide young people from diverse communities with a “world-class facility that imbues them with confidence and goals, and love — all the positivity that our young people need,” added Street.

He is also looking forward to connecting with artists in the Hell’s Kitchen community, like [actor Tony Danza](#), who runs a youth theater program and has previously collaborated with All Stars, and actor Reynaldo Piniella, an alumni of an All Stars program.



Tony Danza met his The Stars of Tomorrow co-founder Brian Hills while working at the All Stars Project. Photo: Phil O'Brien

---

Sitting at the gateway to Broadway, Hell's Kitchen has long been an engine room for Manhattan's performing arts scene. It's home to countless artists and theaters like its neighbor [Theater 555](#) and around [40 other venues](#).

"The conception had always been to be a part of transforming the heart of New York City, and so that's why we took a leap of faith," Street said. "Being a part of the West Side and its development over the last 20 years has been incredible, and now to be at the precipice of a new beginning for us ... I'm excited to see what we can do in the neighborhood."



### **DASHIELL ALLEN**

Multimedia reporter with a master's in bilingual journalism from the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. My interests include politics, grassroots movements and organizing, and reporting on Latinx communities in the United States. My by-lines (other than at W42ST) include Univisión, City Limits, Gay City News, Documented NY, NACLA (North American Congress on Latin America), and more.

[More by Dashiell Allen](#)

---