

# Tony Hillery

## February 2014 Calendar

In 2011, Tony Hillery became the founder/director of Harlem Grown, Inc. Prior to starting this organization, Mr. Hillery had his own limousine company that served the entertainment industry. After his business began to decline, Mr. Hillery was looking for a more fulfilling purpose.

As a father of three older children, Mr. Hillery volunteered in an elementary school in Harlem, New York. While volunteering, Mr. Hillery asked about an abandoned community garden located directly across the street from the school. Many days, Mr. Hillery would walk the surrounding streets in search of lunch, finding only fast food restaurants and very limited healthful options. Stemming from the lack of healthful food choices, Harlem Grown was born.

After Mr. Hillery and his team reregistered the abandoned garden, they and 400 students planted 400 seedlings. The students took ownership and were introduced to organically grown produce.

The following year, Harlem Grown built the first and only commercial hydroponic greenhouse in Manhattan, New York, on a vacant city-owned lot. This greenhouse produces 9,300 heads of leafy greens a month, one-third of which are given away free to students and the community. The remaining produce is sold to a local restaurant. The proceeds from the produce that is sold are used to hire single mothers from the local school, at a



living wage, who learn how to be urban farmers.

Harlem Grown works with partnering schools leading the sustainability effort; reducing, reusing and recycling, as well as composting daily. With the help from its "Green Teams" and students who assist with daily effort, the organization is on course to transform the community with a generation of environmentally aware children.