

# His family business is the love of children

**H**ANS HAGEMAN remembers the waiting children.

It was 2000, and Hageman and his wife, Bernadette, had taken friends up on an invitation to visit Gomti Nagar, a section of Lucknow, India, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, located southeast of Delhi.

"When we went to book our flight, the Indian travel agents said, 'You don't want to go there,'" Hageman said.

Gomti Nagar turned out to be one of the places in the world where Hageman said he saw "real poverty," and where there is little or no government help to the impoverished, many of whom live on less

than a dollar a day.

"We'd see women and children sleeping in the middle of the road," Hageman recalled. "The driver would blow the horn, they would get up, then go back and lay in the street once the car went by."

The students he met in Gomti Nagar were hungry for education but had little opportunity to feed their minds. Hageman watched several students drag desks out of their homes and plop them down in a dusty lot so they could wait all day for a teacher who never arrived.

So Hageman, an African-American raised in Spanish Harlem, started a school — the Sulaxmi

School for Girls — and built it on land donated by his friends.

He and Bernadette even established the Salus Foundation (at [www.salusfoundation.org](http://www.salusfoundation.org)) to support it.

That episode was nothing new for Hageman, now 49 and executive director of Boys and Girls Harbor Inc. in East Harlem. Sulaxmi is the third school he's started — the others are the Harbor Science and Arts Charter School for disadvantaged children, which is run out of the Harbor's E. 104th St. offices, and the East Harlem School at Exodus House, which he and his brother, Ivan, started in 1993.

That school is a tribute to their parents, Lynn and Leola Hageman, who founded Exodus House in 1963 as a rehabilitation facility for drug addicts.

"My brother, sister [Ericka]

and I were raised on the second floor of Exodus House," Hageman said. "I remember my father going down all times of night to deal with some crisis or other. In high school my friends' parents would not let them visit me because of where we lived."

His late parents, pioneers in the drug treatment field and noted participants in the civil rights movement, drummed into their children the need to give back to society.

Hageman has gone well beyond anything they could have imagined.

He's a former Manhattan assistant district attorney in the Office of Special Narcotics Prosecution, former chief counsel for the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem and was minority chief counsel and staff director

of the U.S. Senate's Constitution subcommittee.

He teaches yoga to Harbor staff members and he, his wife and children — Kali, one year, and Vidar, 5 (daughter Alexis is grown and Jamila away at boarding school) — share his Harlem home with several Harbor students, including one from Hong Kong and two others who were once caught up in the city's shelter system.

He took six Harbor students to Ghana, West Africa, last year, and 10 others to Senegal, West Africa. He's expecting two African students later this year who also will live with his family.

"It's important that these students know the world economy is global, and they have a place in it," he said.

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