When I first stepped into the offices of East Harlem Interfaith in 1966 I was privileged to meet Norman Eddy. I remember the various committees addressing housing, emergency boiler repair, homelessness, food pantries, protest marches, prayer groups, public school over crowding and many other sub-committees addressing the needs of East Harlem residents. Not to mention friends and allies visiting his office for personal mentoring and advice.

What is a Spiritual Coordinator? Every committee mentioned above was established due to Norm’s special ability to bring people together. He helped us incorporate a contemplative moment (silence, prayer, reading from Scripture) and reminded us to Listen to the Holy Spirit (no matter what one’s faith) for guidance. He listened to the concerns of individuals wanting to work for change, offered his techniques in organizing allies, and provided ideas and suggestions on how to approach city officials, elected politicians and most importantly, on how to get the grass roots people mobilized. This method of coordination was not intrusive nor was it demeaning but rather, it planted a seed and was then left to those with the passion to work towards change to develop and grow. Or, he would bring his own concerns to the table and from there; a leader would emerge and take charge.

In 2001 the East Harlem Coalition to Improve Our Public Schools (District #4), coordinated by Norm Eddy, realized that the best way to help the children in East Harlem’s public schools was to bring to the forefront the problem of overcrowding and the need to provide more space in the public schools. I was one of the members of this committee of volunteers. The questions was “How do we go about publicizing this crisis?” With Norm’s experience in coordination, the group was guided, not pushed, into action. Suddenly, we understood exactly how to proceed. He then left the group to its own development. From his spiritual coordination, the facts of overcrowding were documented and made available to the public.

Why is it hard to point to one particular success of Norm Eddy’s? I believe this is so because being a Spiritual Coordinator is difficult to describe but is best seen in the accomplishment of others and the benefits gained by the people they helped.

Written by Lydia Lopez