

THE NEW YORK  
COMMUNITY TRUST



# GRANTS

**April 2010** NEWSLETTER

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This self-portrait was drawn by a teenager enrolled in one of the Center for Court Innovations' QUEST summer art programs that help troubled youth stay out of the detention system.

## A Chance for Kids in Trouble

**T**he harm done to young people in the State's juvenile “prisons” has gotten so bad that the U.S. Department of Justice threatened to take over the system if improvements weren't made. Last December, The Legal Aid Society filed a class-action lawsuit against the State Office of Children and Family Services, which runs these residential centers, on behalf of the families of children who had suffered broken bones, concussions, and knocked-out teeth at the hands of staff. The children had also been denied psychiatric help despite diagnosed mental health problems. A February piece in *The New York Times*

**“The ultimate goal is to provide support and opportunity to troubled children and to demonstrate to the court that they can do better, and don’t need to be locked up.”**

— Al Siegel, deputy director of the Center for Court Innovation at the Fund for the City of New York

revealed that psychiatric care was virtually unavailable throughout the entire system. Although the majority of incarcerated youth have mental health problems, Julie Bosman reported, “The State does not have a single full-time staff psychiatrist charged with overseeing the treatment of the 800 or so young people who are detained in State facilities at any given time.”

Multiple studies have proven that confining youth doesn’t work. “A young person can get into a fist fight at school, be sent upstate away from their families, handcuffed, and pushed around by staff. There is no question that this system is turning young people into criminals—89 percent of boys and 81 percent of girls who go to detention are rearrested,” says DeAvery Irons, director of the juvenile justice program at the **Correctional Association of New York**. “On the other hand, only 20 percent of youth charged with similar crimes who get diverted to alternative programs are rearrested.”

Eleven residential centers have been closed and experts agree that kids should not be locked up, but counties do not have the financial incentive to fund alternative programs. Finding the funds to implement reform is crucial, which is why The Trust has given **\$100,000** to the Correctional Association and **Fight Crime: Invest in Kids** to continue pushing for the passage of the Redirect New York Bill. This bill would allow money earmarked for confinement to be spent on alternative programs, and provide financial incentives to counties that reduce the number of children in confinement by 25 percent. “We need more places for kids to go that aren’t prisons,” says Roderick Jenkins, program officer at The Trust, “and we need the Redirect New York Bill to make that happen.”

“This bill is based on a successful effort in Illinois in which a money-saving pilot program led to its implementation throughout the state,” continues Ms. Irons. “There are start-up costs for Redirect New York, but after a couple of years it will save money by closing costly

facilities. It would mean more alternative programs in the City as the State would be reimbursing most of their cost—instead of the City and private funders footing the bill as they are today.”

The coalition of police, district attorneys, advocates, and youth brought together by the two organizations are advocating for the bill’s passage by the State legislature. As Fight Crime is mobilizing local leaders and enlisting its members to support the legislation, the Correctional Association is training youth organizers to lead workshops on the need to close City detention facilities, drafting a policy brief on the economic benefits of facility closures, and pushing for a City Council hearing to discuss the brief’s findings.

### *Letting Them Know that Someone Cares*

Advocating for a more fair and humane justice system is crucial, but troubled kids facing confinement need help now. “There is a much more effective way of helping troubled youth,” says Al Siegel, deputy director of the **Center for Court Innovation** at the **Fund for the City of New York**, which has pioneered alternatives to confinement that give youth the option to stay in their schools and live at home while their cases are pending in family court. “The ultimate goal is to provide support and opportunity to troubled children and to demonstrate to the court that they can do better, and don’t need to be locked up.”

A **\$54,000** grant is helping to expand two of the Center’s successful programs. The QUEST ATD program pairs a case manager with Queens kids ages 11 to 15. “We act as advocates for these kids, and involve their parents, their schools, and therapists, if needed, showing them that the world cares about them and that we have hope for them. They respond when they feel cared about,” says Carolyn Torres, clinical director for QUEST Futures, the program’s mental health component. Case managers work with parents to make

sure that the children are attending school and after-school programs, and do curfew checks. The grant also will help expand services just for girls: new workshops on improving self-confidence and mother/daughter communication, and community volunteer opportunities.

In addition, the grant supports QUEST Futures, a program for youth who need psychiatric counseling to deal with issues such as depression, bi-polar disorder, attention deficit disorder, learning disabilities, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Living in poverty can make kids feel hopeless and depressed, and “young people often express depression through anger, irritability, and substance abuse, so it’s imperative to treat the depression if we want them to behave better,” continues Ms. Torres. “If a young person needs emotional support, it’s important to find them a psychiatric professional quickly and at a reasonable distance to where they live... These programs work because all kids need structure, even though they’ll never say that. When they know that we expect them to behave better and that we are paying close attention, they can rise to the task.”

## Providing Legal Help in Person and Online

As more New Yorkers struggle with poverty, their legal problems can multiply—evictions, domestic abuse, losing unemployment benefits—but where do New Yorkers go for legal help if they can’t afford a lawyer?

They might be referred to **Legal Services NYC** or **The Legal Aid Society**, agencies that received a grant of **\$1,200,000** to ramp up services in their field offices to meet the ballooning need for civil legal help with abusive debt collectors and trouble with unemployment insurance, for example. These and other legal services and *pro bono* programs around the City are stretching resources to help as many people as possible, but they simply do not have enough lawyers to help everyone. In fact, 2.1 million people represented *themselves* in the State courts in 2009. If people must go it alone, helping them help themselves must be part of the solution.

The screenshot shows the LawHelp.org/NY website interface. At the top, there's a header with the site name and navigation links like 'About Us', 'Feedback', 'News Alerts', and 'Brochures & Handouts'. Below the header, there are buttons for 'Impresa Para Español' and 'LawHelp How-To Video'. The main content area features a search bar and a list of legal topics with icons: 'Consequences of Criminal Charges', 'Housing', 'Public Benefits', 'Education', 'Internet Fraud: Crimes & Prevention', 'Family & Juvenile', 'Health', and 'Immigration/Immigrants'. A sidebar on the right contains 'Attorney Resources' and 'LiveHelp' chat options.

**LawHelpNY** is an easy-to-use online clearinghouse of legal resources and information. Founded 11 years ago by five City legal groups, it provides up-to-date information, self-help resources, and referrals for everything under the umbrella of civil law, including disability, health, family, housing, education, immigration, tax, and labor law.

“New Yorkers need an easy way to help them navigate the law, their rights, and their responsibilities. That’s why we have committed \$375,000 over the past decade to expand LawHelpNY,” says Jane Stern, senior consultant at The Trust. Prior Trust grants have been used to translate the site into 34 languages and develop resources to help immigrants. The agency also recently launched a live chat feature where people can get immediate answers.

Although anyone is allowed to use the site, many don’t have online access or can’t navigate the site on their own. They turn to staff at community centers, food banks, and settlement houses for the types of legal information on the site. With a grant of **\$75,000**, LawHelpNY is leading workshops for these staff. “We show them how easy it is to find things on LawHelp,” says Leah Margulies, director of the program. “A lot of people, especially those of an older generation, are not really that computer-savvy, and you need to guide people through the site before they become comfortable using it. Once you show them, they are better able to help those who come to them for legal advice.”

**“Coming out of hiding as an undocumented immigrant and applying for Temporary Protected Status is a serious decision, and Haitian immigrants need lawyers who can explain the benefits and possible risks.” — Kathleen Masters, deputy executive director of CAMBA**

## Helping Haitian Immigrants Live and Work Legally in the City

Even before the devastating earthquake, thousands of Haitians relied on money sent from family in the City, and now that support is more crucial than ever. The federal government has given undocumented Haitians the opportunity to file for Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which will allow them to live and work here legally for 18 months, so they can send remittances to desperate family and friends. **The Fund for New Citizens in The New York Community Trust** has made **\$100,000** in emergency grants to help three agencies that are offering free legal assistance to poor, fearful, undocumented Haitians who are already in the United States and can't return to Haiti and must apply for TPS by July 21.

Applying for TPS is not easy and often complicated by lack of identification and proof of income. In addition, small mistakes in the application process can result in denial. Poor applicants need immediate, competent, and free legal help to get through the process safely. But the many lawyers eager to volunteer often don't have expertise in immigration law and must be trained, their services coordinated, and their availability advertised in a short period of time.

“Coming out of hiding as an undocumented immigrant and applying for Temporary Protected Status is a serious decision, and Haitian immigrants need lawyers who can explain the benefits and possible risks,” said Kathleen Masters, the deputy executive director of **CAMBA**.

In the rush to apply, immigrants who don't speak English are more easily tricked into paying exorbitant fees or paying for help from lawyers with no experience in immigration law. Fortunately, there are legal services provid-

ers who have the expertise and the ability to train and coordinate services.

A **\$45,000** grant to **Brooklyn Defender Services** is supporting its Haitian Legal Relief Project, which held a training session on TPS on February 3 that drew more than 200 attorneys. The funding is enabling the agency to help 3,000 people apply for TPS and file petitions to bring family members to the U.S. from Haiti temporarily. It will also conduct three workshops and coordinate fifteen legal clinics in the heart of Brooklyn's Haitian community.

A **\$45,000** grant to CAMBA, a multi-service organization based in the heart of the Haitian community in Flatbush, Brooklyn, is enabling the agency to help 1,500 undocumented Haitians. CAMBA will hold individual meetings and group workshops about the TPS application process in churches, the Haitian Family Reception Center, and at offices of other community groups.

Originally established in 1987 with support from the Fund for New Citizens, the **New York Immigration Coalition** is using a grant of **\$10,000** to act as a clearing house of TPS-related information for nonprofits, law schools, lawyers, and the government, sharing information about services, events, volunteer opportunities, and contact information.

“The clock is ticking, and there are up to 25,000 Haitians eligible for this status in the City,” says Joyce Bove, The Trust's senior vice president for programs and special projects. “It is clear that the most immediate need is well-coordinated help applying for Temporary Protected Status in neighborhoods like Flatbush, Crown Heights, and Canarsie, where the majority of New York's Haitian immigrants live.”

## When Grandma Says “Eat Your Vegetables,” She Means Business

Whether it's turning home-grown vegetables into delicious, nutritious meals, or running a small business, many of our elders have a wealth of knowledge and know-how and are willing, ready, and able to help. Unfortunately, seniors are often treated as burdens, rather than assets to the community. With more than a million retirees calling New York City home, and much work to be done in our neighborhoods, helping seniors get involved makes a lot of sense. Three years ago, The Trust responded to a request for proposals and won its first Community Experience Partnership grant from Atlantic Philanthropies to develop a program that involves retirees in projects to improve their communities.

Because the members of **United Neighborhood Houses** (UNH) run programs for seniors throughout the City, The Trust chose to work with them from the initial planning phase in 2007 through the implementation phase, which will begin this year and end in 2013. Through an extensive exploration of the interests and abilities of seniors in the City's neediest neighborhoods, healthy food and its production, distribution, and preparation was chosen as the focus of the project.

“The obesity epidemic has hit poor communities hard, partially because healthy food and affordable produce is hard to come by in many neighborhoods. But groups growing community gardens and running community-supported agriculture programs in these areas have had success turning the tide,” says Len McNally, program director for health and people with special needs at The Trust. “We want to build on that success and create projects that can be done throughout the City.” After making it to the final round, The Trust is matching a \$500,000 grant from Atlantic Philanthropies to help hundreds of seniors revive and hone their skills—growing, distributing, and serving up healthy food in Brooklyn and Washington Heights.



Intern Tashaun Davis and gardener Leila Jamison sell collard greens together at East New York Farms. Photo courtesy of United Community Centers

### Grant recipients include:

- **United Neighborhood Houses of New York, \$124,000** to coordinate the program, develop evaluation materials, and provide a panel of senior consultants to the following three community projects:
- **Isabella Geriatric Center, \$70,000** to involve seniors in a program to make healthy fruits and vegetables available to residents of Washington Heights.
- **Myrtle Avenue Commercial Revitalization and Development Project, \$70,000** to help elders build community gardens on the lawns of public housing projects and work with youth to distribute the produce in Brooklyn.
- **United Community Centers, \$70,000** to train elders to be leaders in promoting and operating community gardens in Brooklyn.

# Other Grants

## REINFORCING THE CITY'S SAFETY NET

*The following grants will provide basic services across the City, including food, legal help, benefits enrollment, and cash to prevent foreclosure and eviction:*

- **Bridge Fund of New York, \$1,250,000** for cash assistance and counseling to help families keep their homes.
- **Cancer Care, \$850,000** for financial aid to needy cancer patients.
- **City Harvest, \$200,000** to get more fresh produce to emergency feeding programs.
- **Citymeals-on-Wheels, \$400,000** for weekend and emergency meals for poor, home-bound elders.
- **Food Bank for New York City/Food for Survival, \$1,500,000** to give more food to emergency feeding programs so that they can serve more people.
- **New York City Financial Network Action Consortium, \$600,000** to coordinate and expand a system that gets cash and non-cash benefits for eligible New Yorkers. The grant will also fund credit and financial counseling and free tax preparation at dozens of food pantries and community centers in all five boroughs.

*The following grants will shore up community groups that provide early childhood and after-school programs for youth, senior activities, adult education, and job workshops in the City's neediest neighborhoods.*

- **United Neighborhood Houses, \$1,000,000** to help 37 settlement houses in all five boroughs maintain critical services for poor New Yorkers.

*The following organizations provide services in needy neighborhoods that don't have a settlement house.*

- **Abyssinian Development Corporation, \$25,000** for financial counseling for poor seniors in Central Harlem.

- **Groundwork, \$25,000** for social services for families living in and near public housing in East New York, Brooklyn.
- **Highbridge Community Life Center, \$25,000** to sustain services for poor families in the Highbridge section of the Bronx.
- **Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation, \$25,000** to maintain critical services in Far Rockaway, Queens.
- **Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, \$25,000** to sustain youth and senior programs in Bushwick, Brooklyn.
- **Southern Queens Park Association, \$25,000** to help sustain services for children and youth in south Jamaica, Queens.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Blue Green Alliance Foundation, \$75,000** to involve labor unions in advocacy for chemical policy reform to ensure safety in the workplace and in consumer products.

**Clean New York, \$50,000** to build grassroots support to make consumer products safer through federal and state chemical policy reform.

**Earthworks, \$75,000** to work with communities in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia to protect their lands from the destructive effects of natural gas drilling in the Marcellus shale.

**Friends of the High Line, \$50,000** to ensure that the northern third of the elevated track is preserved.

**Good Jobs First, \$58,000** to advocate for job creation and retention as a condition for the allocation of stimulus-financed bonds.

**National Employment Law Project, \$75,000** to cover more workers in the State's unemployment insurance program.

**The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute for Government at University at Albany, SUNY, \$25,000** to bring policy experts together to develop a four-year financial plan for the State.

**Progressive America Fund, \$100,000** to create jobs and conserve energy through a statewide program to retrofit thousands of homes to be more energy efficient.

#### **ARTS**

**Downtown Community Television Center, \$120,000** for an anti-gun violence media campaign led by youth reporters. (This grant is a part of the Knight Community Information Challenge.)

**Harlem Arts Alliance, \$50,000** to work with the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance to provide 30 workshops for arts groups, artists, and musicians in upper Manhattan on topics such as marketing, fundraising, and nonprofit incorporation.

**Lower Manhattan Arts Leaders, \$38,000** to coordinate a joint marketing venture by 11 downtown arts groups including Dixon Place, Access Theater, Battery Dance Company, Children's Museum of the Arts, Dance New Amsterdam, and Soho Repertory Theater.

**National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts, \$25,000** to help shore up 50 of the City's community arts schools to maintain programs and scholarships in the face of funding shortages.

#### **HUMAN JUSTICE**

**Association of the Bar of the City of New York Fund, \$75,000** to train volunteer lawyers who will provide legal help for homeless women, especially young women, and their families.

#### **EDUCATION**

**Alliance for Quality Education, \$100,000** to ensure that City public schools are getting their share of the State education budget by fighting to preserve the equity principles in the 2007 Education Budget and Reform Act.

**Campaign for Fiscal Equity, \$75,000** to ensure that State education funds are being used in accordance with the 2007 Education Budget and Reform Act: to reduce class-size, improve teacher and principal quality, and provide programs for English language learners; and that the funds supplement, rather than supplant, City funds.

**Mercy Corps/Action Center to End World Hunger, \$40,000** to improve middle and high school global history learning through the creation of new curricula, classroom materials, and teacher training.

#### **HEALTH & PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

**Advocates for Children of New York, \$120,000** for a coalition to monitor how disabled children are fairing in the school system.

#### **SPECIAL PROJECTS AND PHILANTHROPY**

**The Toby Project, \$57,000** to offer free spaying and neutering services using a mobile veterinary van in Brooklyn and the Bronx.

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**April 2010** NEWSLETTER

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A Chance for  
Kids in Trouble,  
Helping Haitian  
Immigrants  
Live and Work  
Legally in the  
City, and More...



With support from the Knight Foundation's Community Information Challenge, The Trust made a \$120,000 grant to Downtown Community Television Center to support *Beyond Bullets*, a traveling anti-gun violence media campaign that produces and shares youth-produced videos in high-crime neighborhoods and on the Web.

The grants described in this issue were approved by The New York Community Trust's governing body at its February 2010 meeting. For grantee contact information, or for more information about the grants, please call The Trust's receptionist at 212.686.0010, ext. 0.

This issue and past newsletters can be found at [www.nycommunitytrust.org](http://www.nycommunitytrust.org).

If you'd prefer to receive our newsletter by email, write to [newsletter@nyct-cfi.org](mailto:newsletter@nyct-cfi.org).

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