

February 2010 NEWSLETTER

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Hundreds of people in Washington Heights wait for hours to receive free groceries from a food pantry run by the **Community League of the Heights**. When the food runs out, many are turned away.

Reinforcing the Front Line

Known, trusted, and close by, community groups are often the first place that people go to for help. Already operating on tight budgets, these groups are facing a surge of new people whose lives, jobs, and homes have been jeopardized by the recession. “With our food pantry, the line is unbelievable,” says Yvonne Stennett, executive director of **Community League of the Heights**. “The line has quadrupled in size. People will get in line at 6:00 AM, and we don’t open the doors until noon. I am nervous that this is just the tip of the iceberg.”

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The **Fifth Avenue Committee** offers free classes in cable installation for unemployed job-seekers.

In its 31st year, The Trust's **Neighborhood Revitalization Program** is making 14 **\$40,000** grants to community groups meeting poverty, hunger, and unemployment head on. Staff of these organizations help prevent foreclosures and evictions, provide counsel in housing court, hold computer literacy classes, notify people of their rights, organize tenants, and help workers prepare for and find jobs. "We are finding creative ways to address growing demand with constrained resources," says Sally Dunford of the **West Bronx Housing and Neighborhood Resource Center**. In her 16 years as executive director she has observed that residents often turn to clergy first with domestic problems, but by the time they come to the Center, it is often after eviction notices have been posted. Sally continues, "We became overwhelmed with people facing eviction, which is very labor intensive for a staff of four people. The earlier people come in, the easier it is to help them, and the more people we can help." A Trust grant will help expand the Center's program to train clergy and community leaders to identify and refer families needing help. "Thus far this program has worked very well and we are seeing far fewer people coming in at the last minute."

Serving several neighborhoods in south Brooklyn, the **Fifth Avenue Committee** is seeing a sharp increase in demand. "We are seeing far more people who have been laid off from long-time employment seeking new careers; tenants needing eviction prevention services due to drastic changes in their family's economic status; and

more individuals in need of legal assistance because their unemployment claims are being challenged by a former employer. We are also seeing more cases of labor exploitation, especially related to back wages owed to immigrants as businesses try to shrink their bottom lines through skimping on wages," says executive director Michelle de la Uz. A grant from The Trust will strengthen the group's multiple employment projects, which have already successfully placed 2,500 Brooklynites in jobs.

At **Erasmus Neighborhood Federation** in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, multi-lingual housing counselors, tenant organizers, and lawyers help homeowners in this largely immigrant community with loan modifications and other ways to prevent foreclosure. Counselors also help tenants in foreclosed or abandoned properties stay put. "In the past, when a house or apartment building was foreclosed on and sold, both the tenant and the landlord would be evicted," says Yeneika Puran, assistant director of the Federation. "But because of the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act, tenants now have a voice. They cannot be evicted from the property without a 90-day notice to vacate. Tenants with absentee landlords can put their rent in escrow, which puts them in a better position to remain in their homes when the ownership of the building changes hands."

Recipients of Neighborhood Revitalization grants not mentioned in the article are listed below. All grants are for \$40,000.

- **Abyssinian Development Corporation**, to provide services to a naturally occurring retirement community in Harlem.
- **Cooper Square Community Development Committee and Businessmen's Association**, to facilitate a limited equity cooperative conversion in the East Village, giving current renters an affordable option to buy their apartments.

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- **Eviction Intervention Services**, to provide housing services for elderly tenants on Manhattan’s East Side.
- **Mount Hope Housing Company**, to help South Bronx families get benefits and financial services.
- **Northfield Community Local Development Corporation of Staten Island**, to help homeowners avoid foreclosure.
- **North Brooklyn Development Corporation**, to provide housing, employment, and benefits counseling services to residents of Greenpoint, Brooklyn.
- **Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation**, for housing and employment services for residents of northern Washington Heights.
- **Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation**, for housing and employment services for public housing residents in Far Rockaway.
- **Queens Community House**, for housing and employment services for residents of Jackson Heights and Corona.
- **University Neighborhood Housing Program**, to help preserve affordable housing and expand financial services for residents of the northwest Bronx.

Helping Principals Lead

Parents know that a strong principal is the lynch pin to a successful school, and after years of burdensome, bureaucratic regulations, City principals now have unprecedented autonomy in running their schools. They have the freedom to hand-pick teachers, introduce new technologies and curricula, manage the budget, and hire support organizations. In exchange for this freedom, school leaders are held responsible for improving test scores, particularly in reading and math. It’s a lot to handle for even the most seasoned school administrator, but principals are younger and less experienced than ever before—with 80 percent on the job less than eight years—and many are overwhelmed. There is help out there, but principals must ask for it. Kim Nauer, education project director at the New School’s Center for NYC Affairs explains, “The school is given a budget to buy services

from one of eleven school support organizations, and is required to hire at least one, but it is up to the school to make use of those services, or not.”

Are Principals Getting the Help they Need?

In order to gauge whether schools are getting the help they need, a **\$38,000** grant to **The New School’s Center for NYC Affairs** will fund an evaluation of the Department of Education’s (DoE) support system for principals in poorly performing schools. While experienced principals take advantage of the support, others are floundering. “We have found that oftentimes, it’s the principals who most need the help who are least likely to ask for it,” Nauer continued. “They think, ‘I should be able to do this, why can’t I handle this?’ The current system relies solely on the principal asking for help, but it’s not easy to get principals to say ‘this is what is working and what isn’t.’ When schools are in big trouble, some outside groups don’t want to help because it might look bad on their record, and so it really is incumbent on DoE to step in.” The Center’s report, which will be released in the spring, will include recommendations to DoE and excerpts from interviews with teachers, parents, DoE staff, and principals.

Helping Schools Harness Learning Technologies

Even principals who are on top of their jobs need help navigating the rapidly changing world of learning technologies. “Nothing convinces a principal that they can do something new more than seeing another principal do it,” says Lynette Guastafarro, executive director of **Teaching Matters**. Bringing principals into other schools to see technology at work is a central part of a **\$50,000** grant to Teaching Matters, which will work with leaders in 40 middle schools to create school-wide plans to integrate Internet research, open publishing, and other tools that improve students’ grasp of English, science, and social studies. A class in social studies might introduce students to a story about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and then guide them in drafting and sharing their own writing about today’s human rights struggles in a citywide e-zine. Publishing for a general audience, rather than just their teachers, gets



As the cost of hardware plummets, **Teaching Matters** is helping City school leadership integrate new technologies into curricula.

students more excited about writing. Guastaferro continues, “At night kids are voluntarily blogging about school projects and commenting on each others work.” In addition, tools for English language learners abound on the Internet, giving teachers more options in matching students with the right programs.

The cost of hardware has plummeted—“100 dollars per student per year will provide a laptop for every student in a school,” says Guastaferro—but getting principals to let students make full use of these computers is still a challenge. “One school was not comfortable with 7th-graders going online at school. I am taking their leadership to a South Bronx school where 3rd-graders are doing online research. If they can do it, 7th-graders can... But you don’t just send them on the Internet; you create a limited, structured learning environment that gives students some freedom but keeps them on task. Going online and finding connections to today’s world makes class work much more relevant for kids, who are always asking, ‘why do I have to learn this?’”

Building Relationships, Cutting Conflict

Poorly performing schools tend to have high leadership and teacher turnover, fostering poor classroom management and inconsistent disciplinary policies—which alienate students and exacerbate bad behavior. Bringing order and better attitudes to schools is the key to making them safer, friendlier, and more engaging places in which to learn. “Building a cohesive

community within school walls, and strengthening relationships between and among students, teachers, and principals can transform schools into places where students are motivated to do their best and feel supported to succeed,” says Kavitha Mediratta, program officer for education at The Trust. “The first step to creating a more positive learning environment is to replace top-down punishment with student-led resolution when conflict occurs.”

With a **\$50,000** grant, the **National Economic and Social Rights Initiative** will lead a pilot program with principals, teachers, and other staff of over a dozen City high schools to develop strategies for relationship-building, conflict intervention, and mentoring. “If there are two students who are talking to each other a lot in class and disrupting the other students, the teacher may lack the tools and support to resolve the problem. Using the Initiative’s training, the teacher could assemble with the students in a circle and ask them to talk about how they might resolve the issue,” says the Initiative’s Liz Sullivan, “They might suggest sitting farther apart and making a list of ideas for how to stay more focused in class—simple solutions—but the fact that they proposed it themselves makes all the difference. When they participate in solving their problems, they are more likely to take part in the solution.” Sullivan went on to emphasize that these methods of community building work best when they are implemented consistently and school-wide. She continued, “The only way to get the whole school on board is to get the principals on board.”

“A big part of improving education for City students is to help principals with their spectrum of responsibilities, especially in schools that have a high percentage of English-language learners, students with learning disabilities, and high drop-out rates,” continues Mediratta, “It’s a tall order, but The Trust is committed to helping principals fill it, or at least figure out what responsibilities they need to delegate, and to whom.”

“It’s about being reached by someone you know and trust. We have to mobilize trusted community voices and institutions across the city to allay fears... and explain the concrete benefits of an accurate count to each community.”

—Stacey Cumberbatch, coordinator of the City’s new census office.

You’ve Got to Be In It to Win It

For the past decade, the most important number in New York City hasn’t been 911, or even 311—it’s been 8,008,278—the City’s official population according to the 2000 census. About \$40 billion in federal funds are allocated based on census data every year, coming out to \$2,000 a head for health care, transportation, and other programs. With political representation also based on the census, New York is at risk of losing congressional seats if the population count dips.

Immigrant and other minority communities have historically been undercounted, and when The Trust helped the City update its mailing list for the 2000 census, it added 370,000 people that the census bureau couldn’t find on its own. This resulted in an additional \$600 million for New Yorkers over the past 10 years, according to the director of the Department for City Planning’s Population Division, Joe Salvo. “Folks did incredibly diligent field work and tried to uncover every possible address. They would go to houses that have illegal conversions and 47 door bells at a single address,” recalls Karen Kaminsky of the Immigration Coalition.

Joe Salvo continues, “whether we get an accurate census in the City in 2010 is dependent on whether we get a response or not.” With barely half of households completing the questionnaire in 2000, The Trust and the New York Foundation formed the **2010 Census Funders NYC Initiative**, bringing together the New York State Department of State, the NYC Census Office, and a number of funders. The Initiative is working to improve the response rate by funding 35 grassroots groups in neighborhoods and among constituencies with historically low response rates. “It’s about being reached by someone you know and trust,” says Stacey Cumberbatch, coordinator of the City’s new

census office. “We have to mobilize trusted community voices and institutions across the city to allay fears... and explain the concrete benefits of an accurate count to each community.”

Although the personal data collected on the census questionnaires is confidential and cannot legally be shared with immigration, housing, or other authorities, many people remain skeptical. Families doubling or tripling up in one home fear that information could be given to the buildings or fire departments and get them evicted. Undocumented immigrants fear detention and deportation. Public housing residents are wary of reporting any residents not on the lease. “Say your friend was incarcerated, he can’t get on the lease [in NYCHA housing], but he’s living there anyway... it’s very hard to convince them that the census data does not go to the housing authority,” says Pat Simon, the executive director of **Ocean Bay Community Development Corporation**. “People are also not aware of the benefits that come with filling out the questionnaire. We’ll tell them that if they don’t tell us about that extra person in their household, the employment, day care, and other programs they rely upon will be underfunded. They get that.”

Grantees, such as **Chhaya Community Development Corporation**, will target specific ethnic groups or geographic areas while others, such as the **New York Taxi Workers Alliance**, will focus on constituencies dispersed throughout the City. In conjunction with the U.S. Census Bureau’s broad national ad campaign, the **Immigration Coalition** and the **New York Community Media Alliance** will run a series of print ads to reach smaller ethnic groups in the City. These ads will be printed in less-common languages and feature respected community voices. “It’s about taking people by the hand and telling them, ‘It’s okay to acknowledge your existence, you won’t be penalized,’” says the Coalition’s Norman Eng, “but if you aren’t in the census, it’s as if you don’t exist for 10 years.”



New Immigrant Community Empowerment members helped get out the vote in 2008. With a Trust grant, the group will be doing similar outreach for the 2010 census.

Members of the 2010 Census Funders NYC Initiative include:

Durst Foundation, Foundation to Promote Open Society, The New York Community Trust, New York Foundation, Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Census Outreach Project at Public Interest Projects, and Tisch Illumination Fund.

The Initiative has given **\$562,000** to the groups mentioned in the article and to the following groups:

Adhikkaar for Human Rights and Social Justice, African Refuge Inc., Arab American Association of New York, BronxWorks (formerly Citizens Advice Bureau), Brooklyn Congregations United, Chinese American Planning Council, Cidadao Global, Citizens Committee for New York City, Coalition for the Improvement of Bedford Stuyvesant, Coalition for Institutionalized Aged and Disabled, Council of Peoples Organization, Drum-Desis Rising Up and Moving, Groundwork, Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood Settlement House, Make the Road New York, Minkwon Center, Mirabal Sisters Cultural and Community Center, Mixteca Organization, New Immigrant Community Empowerment, The New School Center for New York City Affairs, Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, NY Voting Rights Consortium, Picture the Homeless, Queens Congregations United for Action, Red Hook Initiative, Southern Queens Park Civic Association, United Chinese Association, Vamos Unidos, Voces Latinas, and Youth Communication New York Center.

Other Grants

GIRLS & YOUNG WOMEN

Legal Momentum, \$100,000 to increase the number of young women in nontraditional high school vocational programs such as engineering, architecture, and construction.

Row New York, \$50,000 to expand a rowing program for middle and high school girls at a boathouse on the Harlem River.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, \$40,000 to improve the quality of infant/toddler day care programs by helping providers learn about and comply with the City's new educational standards for early child-care workers.

Harlem Children's Zone, \$60,000 to expand after-school academic and career guidance programs, staffed by part-time teachers and older teens, for youth living in two central Harlem public housing developments.

Spence-Chapin Services to Families & Children, \$27,000 to recruit and train interim parents for newborns whose birth parents are considering putting them up for adoption.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Outreach Project, \$85,000 to help families prepare for their drug-rehabilitated youth to return home.

Sunset Park Alliance for Youth, \$65,000 to help a group of agencies strengthen drug abuse prevention and treatment services for unemployed and out-of-school youth by helping staff detect and treat substance abuse.

ENVIRONMENT

Center for Health, Environment and Justice, \$80,000 for a national campaign urging precautionary policies for toxic chemicals, banning and replacing unsafe chemicals, and advocating for more public funding of the Superfund cleanup program.

Investor Environmental Health Network, \$50,000 to educate institutional investors about the profitability of using safe chemicals and the liability and other risks that toxic chemicals pose to corporations.

State Alliance for Federal Reform of Chemicals Policy (SAFER), \$86,000 to advocate for safe chemical policies at the state and federal levels.

American Bird Conservancy, \$50,000 to ban the use of 10 pesticides in the U.S. that cause harm to farm workers, children, pets, birds, and other animals.

Bronx River Alliance, \$50,000 to build support for and promote use of the Bronx River Greenway.

Center for Resource Solutions, \$75,000 to expand the use of renewable energy by businesses, nonprofits, and individuals.

Common Ground Community Housing Development Fund Corporation, \$40,000 to incorporate green energy and water-saving technologies in housing for the homeless, working poor, seniors, the mentally ill, and people with HIV/AIDS.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Amigos Del Museo Del Barrio, \$25,000 to expand the Museum's audiences from East Harlem and Washington Heights through a marketing campaign for its free public concerts, screenings, and performances.

Jazz Foundation of America, \$24,000 to provide emergency cash assistance to aging City jazz musicians.

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, \$125,000 to help the Pare Lorentz Film Center disseminate and promote the historical films of Pare Lorentz for use in classrooms and for public viewing on the Web.

ARTS EDUCATION

Midori & Friends, \$50,000 to teach 860 children at four middle schools in the Bronx, Harlem, and Washington Heights how to read, play, and perform music.

Silk Road Project, \$80,000 to integrate a sixth-grade curriculum into five City schools that uses the rich history of Eurasia's ancient Silk Road to connect the arts to social studies and history.

Visual Understanding in Education, \$60,000 to create teacher training centers at borough art museums to improve students' visual and critical thinking.

EDUCATION

Global Kids, \$40,000 for service-learning projects that foster leadership, citizenship, and academic skills in high schools with low test scores and graduation rates.

HUMAN JUSTICE

Association of the Bar of the City of New York, \$35,000 to continue and expand *pro bono* legal help to veterans filing disability claims.

HEALTH AND PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Francis Florio Fund was established in 1974 to support research in the field of blood diseases. The following grants are all two-year grants of \$100,000 for research in the fields of blood cell study and blood cancers.

- Trustees of Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons
- New York Blood Center
- Rockefeller University
- Joan and Sanford I. Weill Medical College of Cornell University

- Trustees of Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons

- Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University

- Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center

God's Love We Deliver, \$100,000 to feed cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy or radiation.

League Treatment Center, \$32,000 to help children with speech and behavioral problems.

Montefiore Medical Center, \$120,000 to study the effectiveness of community health workers in treating Bronx children living in poverty and suffering from asthma.

National Multiple Sclerosis Society, New York City Chapter, \$58,000 to help needy New Yorkers with multiple sclerosis pay for living and treatment-related expenses and apply for benefits.

New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, \$126,000 to expand a treatment program for diabetics who risk losing their sight.

New York Stem Cell Foundation, \$200,000 to create new types of stem cells that could potentially treat Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

New York University, Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service, \$75,000 to study how a cost-reducing managed care program is working for physically and mentally ill Medicaid patients.

New York University School of Medicine Center for Immigrant Health, \$240,000 to help immigrants with cancer get treatment.

Premier Healthcare, \$73,000 to provide treatment to overweight adults and youth with developmental disabilities.

Resources for Children with Special Needs, \$167,000 to strengthen five after-school programs for children with disabilities.

St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital Center, Center for Comprehensive Care, \$100,000 to redesign and expand a comprehensive health care program for people with AIDS.

Village Care of New York, \$35,000 to assess the feasibility of merging two agencies serving seniors.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, \$50,000 to protect the interest of low-income people in federal and state budget negotiations.

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GRANTS

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INSIDE:
Helping
principals lead;
getting an
accurate census
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The grants described in this issue were approved by The New York Community Trust's governing body at its December 2009 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.

If you'd prefer to receive our newsletter by email, write to newsletter@nyct-cfi.org.

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