

June 2011 NEWSLETTER

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## Affordable Live/Work Space for Artists Coming to Manhattan! *(No, this is not an internet scam)*

Imagine a place where 90 artists (spouses and kids, too) live and work, pay rents they can afford in a great neighborhood, and have office, rehearsal, and gallery space. Now add 10,000 square feet for local arts groups that further connect this art hub to the community. By 2014, El Barrio's Artspace will be ready for its tenants. But it almost never happened.

Formerly a school, this 1898 Gothic Revival-style building designed by Charles B. J. Snyder, a former superintendent of schools, will be converted into a live/work community for 90 artists and several community arts organizations.

**“A residential artist community brings multiple community agendas together, creating more affordable housing, preserving historical architecture, and fostering arts and culture.”**

— Shawn McLearen, Artspace project manager

Vacant since 1995, P.S.109, the 19th-century Gothic Revival-style school on East 99th Street was slated for demolition by the School Construction Authority (SCA). Fortunately, community leaders had a better idea. Harlem affordable-housing champion and City Housing Preservation and Development planner Ibo Balton introduced **Artspace**, a nonprofit developer and advocate for spaces for artists, to El Barrio’s Operation Fight Back, a community development organization with roots in East Harlem. The Trust made a \$50,000 grant in 2006 to form a community advisory group for the project to involve local artists, residents, and nonprofits from the start.

“A real estate development model like ours was the only thing that could make this work,” says Artspace project manager Shawn McLearen. “There would have been serious community opposition if the school was knocked down, as would be the case if a developer sought to build luxury condos. We were assured that the SCA had no intention of rehabilitating a 19th-century facility for 21st century educational needs. Instead, a residential artist community brings multiple community agendas together, creating more affordable housing, preserving historical architecture, and fostering arts and culture.”

After solidifying community support, and a delay caused by the recession, the hard work of getting funding began. A second **\$50,000** grant to Artspace is helping the project’s architectural firm complete plans so that final approvals for construction can draw down federal, State, and local funds for historic preservation and low-income housing for this \$52 million project.

As with any new affordable housing project in the City, all applicants must have qualifying household incomes, and at least half of the units will go to artists currently living in the area. A selection committee will review and approve artists who apply. “Potential residents will need

to show a body of work they are passionate about and a desire to give back to the community,” says Kelley Lindquist, Artspace president and CEO. “After all, the community gave them this space.”

“Outside of the obvious benefits, such as the affordable housing, artist live/work space, and the employment, economic development, and social benefits, this project makes an important cultural contribution to this vibrant community,” says Gus Rosado, executive director of El Barrio’s Operation Fight Back. “It represents a lasting legacy the Latino public will leave to Spanish Harlem. It says we were here, experience our culture, welcome!”

“In our 27 buildings throughout the U.S., the community of residential artists share with each other and with the larger community,” says Lindquist. “A painter might paint a backdrop for a theater event . . . Hip Hop dancers from a nonprofit in the building might be in a film produced by one of the tenants.”

This is Artspace’s first project in New York City but, we hope, not its last. Lindquist continues: “We see El Barrio Artspace as a demonstration project, and so does the City. It can serve as a template for affordable live and work spaces for artists. The next one would probably be in another borough.”

## Jazz Greats as They Were Meant to Be Heard

The new centerpiece of the **National Jazz Museum in Harlem**’s collection had been moldering in progressively worse locations for decades—including a damp garage. After 24 years of effort by Museum executive director Loren Schoenberg to unearth the Savory Collection, he succeeded. “In 1980, I met Bill Savory—a quirky genius who took great care to record 1,000 discs containing



With decades of experience, Doug Pomeroy is able to digitize one-of-a-kind jazz recordings from the thousands of old acetate and aluminum discs that comprise the Savory Collection, but it isn't easy. Photo by Amy Wolf

more than 100 hours of live jazz performances from the late 30s and early 40s directly off the lines from radio broadcasters to the transcription studio where he worked. He told me that he had a very extensive and rare collection, but he never let me see it.” While he was a “recording angel,” according to Ben Ratliff of the *New York Times*, who did release some of the music on LP compilations, Savory never shared many of the one-of-a-kind tracks that included the first live recording of Billie Holiday’s “Strange Fruit.” In 2010, Schoenberg was finally able to arrange the purchase of the collection from Savory’s son by one of the museum’s board members. He then drove the collection in a rented truck from Malta, Illinois to its new home at the National Jazz Museum in Harlem.

In the 1930s, music was commercially recorded on master discs that held less than three minutes of music,

“Doug is the go-to guy on the planet for audio restoration work from the pre-LP era.”

— Loren Schoenberg, executive director  
National Jazz Museum in Harlem

and therefore lingering improvisations at the heart of jazz were rarely recorded. The songs of Benny Goodman and Count Basie were arranged to accommodate the 3-minute limit, but with the discovery of this trove of meticulously recorded and catalogued live broadcasts, today’s audiences will have the chance to hear the music as it was played in front of live audiences, that is, as much of it that can be retrieved from the corroded, cracked, and disfigured discs on which it is imprinted.

As is befitting a story of lost treasure, much of the music is cryptically recorded, with some of the discs recorded at multiple speeds and all requiring unusually sized record needles to play. “It was thrilling to read about the discovery of the Savory Collection, but we knew that getting a high-quality digitalization of these recordings would be challenging,” says Kerry McCarthy, program officer for arts and historic preservation at The Trust. “We made a **\$40,000** grant to the National Jazz Museum in Harlem to help hire the best in the business for the job.”

Good thing Schoenberg knew the song that would convince the best in the business not to retire. “As soon as I heard a previously unknown recording of Count Basie with Lester Young on the saxophone, I knew I had to take the job,” says Doug Pomeroy. “That was a solo no one else in the world had a copy of.”

“Doug is the go-to guy on the planet for audio restoration work from the pre-LP era,” explains Schoenberg. Among other tricks of the trade, “Doug uses tuning forks and an electronic keyboard to adjust the speed based on his extensive knowledge of the music—as basic as that sounds, most engineers don’t have that ability.”

While copyright issues need to get sorted out before the collection can be widely released, recordings can be heard at a listening station and free *Jazz for Curious Listeners* events at the Jazz Museum.



At the Volky Flower Garden in the Bronx, residents weigh and record their harvest as part of a project that will calculate the value of produce from community gardens and its relative contribution to food production in the City.

“The only people who had heard these performances were those in the ballroom or the theater when the music was being created, or those that heard it coming across the airwaves,” continues Schoenberg. “This is one of the great finds of American musical history, and I think it is just so important that it be shared.”

## Farming the Five Boroughs

Any foodie, or friend/child/parent of a foodie, knows that “locally grown” usually means fresher, more nutritious, and better for the environment because of fewer pesticides used and gallons of gasoline burned to get it to market. But when New Yorkers think “local,” rolling hills upstate or in New Jersey come to mind—not a roof garden in Queens or a vacant lot in East New York. But urban farmers like Mara Gittleman, the brains behind **Farming Concrete**, are changing how people, and the City, think about food grown in the five boroughs.

Community gardens and urban farms are sprouting up all over the country and, as with so many things, New York has more than any other city. But in order for these green spaces to feed more families and get more support and recognition from the City, we need to know just how much produce they harvest.

“No one thinks this is going to replace industrial agriculture, but it’s a step toward redefining people’s relationship to what they eat.”

— Mara Gittleman, founder of Farming Concrete

Enter Farming Concrete, a project that has given 100 produce scales and log books to community gardeners around the City so they can weigh and record fruit, vegetables, and herbs going to farmers’ markets, schools, feeding programs, and community residents. A **\$49,000** grant to Farming Concrete is supporting Crop Count 2011, a citizen science project that aims to involve the 400 food-producing gardens in the City.

“The act of collecting data helps calculate the value of produce and its relative contribution to food production in the City,” says Gittleman. It is also used to monitor a garden’s growth in capacity and help build membership.” Gardeners have also, unexpectedly, used the scales to weigh plant refuse and compost—an important part of City gardening where good soil is not taken for granted.

“The harvest from these gardens, especially in neighborhoods where affordable fresh produce is hard to come by in stores, can add significantly to a family’s ability to eat healthy,” Gittleman continues. “In a lot of neighborhoods, they’re the only green space that people have close by. It’s inviting, it’s open, and for some it’s a place to reconnect to the land. A teacher might have a plot and bring her students by, and then those students might bring their parents. No one thinks this is going to replace industrial agriculture, but it’s a step toward redefining people’s relationship to what they eat.”

**“At every level you need to identify leaders—legislators, parents, teachers, and principals—anyone who will champion the issue.”**

**— Mark Bishop, VP of policy and communications, Healthy Schools Campaign**

## Getting Toxins Out of Schools

As unofficial conference centers of the germ world, schools need to be cleaned constantly. But many cleaning products contain harmful and cancer-causing chemicals, such as formaldehyde, benzene, and chloroform. “Too often we hear of schools being evacuated because bleach and ammonia were accidentally mixed, creating lethal chlorine gas,” says Mark Bishop, vice president of policy and communications at the **Healthy Schools Campaign**. “But more often, it is a child’s day-to-day exposure to potentially dangerous chemicals that goes unnoticed.”

The health risks of exposure to chemicals are higher for children, says Bishop. “Kids breathe and eat more than adults relative to their size, their immune systems are still developing, and, of course, children lick things, chew on pencils, don’t like washing their hands, and stick things in their ears.”

Safer and more environmentally friendly cleaning has come a long way in the past ten years, with thousands of affordable and widely available green products on shelves. New cleaning methods have also been developed that save schools money on chemicals and labor costs. For instance, in its widely distributed *Quick and Easy Guide to Green Cleaning in Schools*, the Healthy Schools Campaign informs facilities managers about using microfiber cloths that can pick up dirt rather than cleaning sprays and using mop buckets that can filter water and extend the use of chemical cleaning solutions.

A 2009 grant to the Healthy Schools Campaign helped it draft model green-cleaning legislation. Using this model,



Some cleaning supplies in schools pose health hazards to children, but greener and healthier alternatives exist. Photo by Jvlivs Photography

the Campaign worked with local advocates to introduce and support green-cleaning policies around the country. To date, 19 states have introduced green-cleaning legislation and a total of 9 states have passed legislation—most recently Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, and Iowa. A grant of **\$75,000** is helping the Campaign to continue its work at the policy and grassroots levels. “At every level you need to identify leaders—legislators, parents, teachers, and principals—anyone who will champion the issue,” says Bishop. “We also have an awards program that recognizes schools that have taken major steps toward creating a healthier environment. Their example does wonders in showing other schools how it’s done.”

Campaign president and CEO Rochelle Davis has been asked by the Environmental Protection Agency to help advise it on how to encourage adoption of strong green-cleaning policies; the Campaign will also help develop report cards on school health, workshops for school professionals, and inspection programs to make sure schools are taking steps in the right direction.

According to Bishop, “The challenge is getting schools to embrace change. While we work hard to promote state policy, it is strong leadership at the school level where the real difference is made. There is no such thing as the perfect policy; in reality, implementation is the key.”

# Other Grants

## HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE FOOD IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHES

In the first year of Healthy Food Healthy Communities, a program that empowers elders to become leaders in bringing healthy food to their neighborhoods, 100 seniors and 25 young people brought 25 tons of affordable produce to Washington Heights, East New York, and Fort Greene; seniors also led more than 30 healthy cooking classes.

We continue to support these projects and are expanding the project to three new sites in the Bronx, Queens, and on Staten Island:

- **BronxWorks, \$70,000**
- **Isabella Geriatric Center, \$70,000**
- **Just Food, \$70,000**
- **Myrtle Avenue Commercial Revitalization and Development Project, \$70,000**
- **Queens Community House, \$70,000**
- **United Neighborhood Houses of New York, \$123,000**

The Trust will also continue supporting the **Food Bank for New York City** with a grant of **\$700,000** to help poor people get food stamps and other benefits.

## BOLSTERING NONPROFITS

**Alliance for the Arts, \$40,000** for a study on the economic impact of the arts in the City.

**Community Resource Exchange, \$200,000** to provide management consulting to clusters of nonprofits in poor neighborhoods.

**Lawyers Alliance for New York, \$500,000** for a joint effort with Cause Effective and the Nonprofit Finance Fund to provide a range of management support for nonprofits dealing with cuts in public funding.

**Local Initiatives Support Corporation, \$70,000** to help community development corporations (CDCs) manage their real estate portfolios.

**Neighborhood Opportunities Fund, \$50,000** for financial assistance to CDCs.



As part of the Healthy Food Healthy Communities project, seniors at Isabella Geriatric Center are leading a program in which they repackage and sell fresh produce from Hunts Point Market at a discount to residents of Washington Heights.

## PUTTING TOXIC CHEMICALS AT A SAFE DISTANCE

**Center for International Environmental Law, \$75,000** to promote chemical safety through international and domestic regulations.

**Clean Water Fund, \$75,000** to organize and advocate for healthier drinking water throughout the United States.

**Coming Clean Collaborative, \$75,000** to test products for chemical toxicity and publicize the inability of the Toxic Substances Control Act to protect public health.

**Healthy Building Network, \$75,000** to promote safer building materials.

## MORE GRANTS FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

**Connecticut Fund for the Environment, \$60,000** to build public support for a plan to restore the health of Long Island Sound.

**Friends of the Earth, \$75,000** to advocate for reduction in federal subsidies for coal, oil, and natural gas producers.

**Lower East Side Ecology Center, \$50,000** to open a computer re-use and recycling center in Brooklyn.

**Wildlife Conservation Society, \$75,000** to create migration corridors and other methods of helping wild animals adapt to climate change.

**Queens Botanical Garden, \$40,000** for a marketing campaign to attract visitors.



A group of women practice and perform Tai Chi at the Queens Botanical Garden.

#### **HEALTH AND PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

**Council of Senior Centers and Services of New York City, \$75,000** for expansion of a money-management program for frail elders.

**Medicaid Matters New York, \$50,000** to bring the consumer voice to Medicaid reform debates.

**New York State Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, \$55,000** to improve the operations of clinics licensed to provide both mental health and substance abuse treatment.

**University of the State of New York Regents Research Fund, \$200,000** to develop student assessments and teacher evaluations that account for the progress of students with disabilities and English language learners.

#### **HELPING FAMILIES STAY TOGETHER AND IN THEIR HOMES**

**Bridge Fund, \$910,000** to prevent people from becoming homeless by giving them emergency cash grants and money-management help.

**Agenda for Children Tomorrow, \$50,000** to identify City policies and practices that discourage fathers' involvement with their kids.

#### **HELPING IMMIGRANTS**

**Fund for New Citizens, \$150,000** for a joint funders' group that assists immigrants and refugees in the City.

**Sanctuary for Families, \$100,000** to provide legal help to immigrant women and girls who are victims of domestic violence.

#### **KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL, OFF DRUGS, AND OUT OF JAIL**

**Harlem Children's Zone, \$76,000** to expand after-school academic programs for young people living in the St. Nicholas and Abraham Lincoln Houses.

**New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board, \$40,000** to reduce conflict between the police and youth living in public housing in Queens.

**Outreach Project, \$100,000** to help formerly drug-addicted youth stay clean by improving outpatient programs in Brooklyn and Queens.

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# GRANTS

**June 2011** NEWSLETTER

**INSIDE:**

Affordable  
Live/Work  
Space for  
Artists in  
Manhattan!  
Farming the  
Five Boroughs  
and more...



Girls at South Asian Youth Action perform bhangra, a Punjabi folkdance, at the group's spring showcase in Elmhurst, Queens. A grant to the Fund for New Citizens is supporting this immigrant-led organization and others like it.  
Photo by Preston Merchant

Visit us at [www.nycommunitytrust.org](http://www.nycommunitytrust.org)

The grants described in this issue were approved by The New York Community Trust's governing body at its April 2011 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).

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Most of the grants in our newsletter are made possible through the generosity of past donors who established permanent, charitable funds with us during their lifetimes or through their wills. To learn more about setting up a fund, please contact our general counsel, Jane Wilton, at 212.686.2563.