

THE NEW YORK  
COMMUNITY TRUST



# GRANTS

June 2009 NEWSLETTER

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A grant from The Trust will help the Mental Health Association train other grantees to help New Yorkers through the economic crisis.

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## Financially Strained, Emotionally Stressed, and in Need of Help

When people are faced with foreclosure, losing a job, or applying for food stamps—especially for the first time—life can feel unfair and overwhelming, causing stress, shame, irritability, and depression. “People are literally losing sleep as a result of the economic crisis,” says Giselle Stolper, executive director of the **Mental Health Association of New York City**. “The staff of the City’s social service agencies are seeing more people walk through their doors under severe emotional stress; some are even at increased risk of suicide.”



Through the BOOST after-school program, teens help school children with their homework at several of the Queens Library branches. A Trust grant will expand this popular program as demand for free programs increases.

With a **\$175,000** grant, The Mental Health Association is training the staffs of eight social service organizations to help their clients combat despair and find mental health professionals. These groups—the Bridge Fund of New York, Cancer Care, City Harvest, Citymeals-on-Wheels, Food Bank for New York City, Legal Services NYC, New York City Financial Network Action Consortium, and United Neighborhood Houses of New York—received Trust grants in February to help them face the surge of people needing their services. “Many people would never seek out emotional help on their own, so it’s important that they are able to get basic help and referrals for counseling when they go to a food kitchen or to get help fighting eviction,” says Joyce Bove, vice president for programs and special projects at The Trust.

In one instance, a husband and wife with two kids both lost their jobs, and by the time they found new employment they had fallen behind on their rent. When they approached the Bridge Fund for help, they had already

been evicted and were living in their car. “When they came to us, it was almost as if we needed to provide marriage counseling; they were angry at each other and angry at the system,” says Mary Toledo, director of the Bridge Fund. “We are seeing a lot of people who have never experienced this type of adversity, so we do a lot of hand-holding. The training from the Mental Health Association will be good for the client and good for the staff. It will help staff be more productive and more effective as they deal with an increased workload.” Many clients will be referred to LifeNet, the Mental Health Association’s 24-hour hotline, where they can talk with mental health experts right away.

The Mental Health Association has become a leader in dealing with large-scale emotional health crises. Ms. Stolper adds, “We have taken the lessons learned from our work after 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina and crafted a response to the current economic crisis that gives frontline service providers the tools they need to understand, assess, and respond more effectively and sensitively to clients’ emotional distress.”

**“More people are coming to the libraries because neighborhood programs are closing their doors due to lack of funding, and parents who once could afford private after-school programs are now choosing the free library programs.” —Diana Chapin, executive director of the Queens Library Foundation.**

## When School Lets Out

After the last school bell rings in the afternoon—or for the summer—the City’s two million kids need something to do, and year-long youth programs fill some of the demand. With parents busy working, caring for younger siblings, or out of the picture, these programs give kids a safe place to hang out, do homework, play sports, learn about careers and college, and stay out of trouble.

Immigrant-led nonprofits play an important role in running youth programs in their communities. “Succeeding in school can be hard for any child, but for immigrant kids, trouble with English, a lack of prior education, or different social norms can make it very difficult,” says Roderick Jenkins, program officer for youth at The Trust. “Social isolation and poor performance in school can make joining clubs and mainstream after-school programs very uncomfortable. Even when kids are willing, parents may be less so, especially when it means sending daughters into co-ed environments.”

Unfortunately, there are still not enough free programs to go around, and many are now in jeopardy of closing, especially those in communities where many kids live in poverty, enter foster care, do poorly in school, and are around drugs and violence. On streets where kids become either predator or prey, after-school programs in libraries, settlement houses, and community centers provide an oasis for kids that the City can’t afford to let dry up.

To sustain or expand year-round youth programs in all five boroughs, The Trust is making 16 grants totaling **\$690,000** to immigrant-led and mainstream nonprofits that will serve 13,000 young people. Programs not featured in this article are listed on page 6.

### *Giving BOOST a Boost*

Already the nation’s largest, the Queens Library system is facing an increased demand for its after-school programs. “More people are coming to the libraries

because neighborhood programs are closing their doors due to lack of funding, and parents who once could afford private after-school programs are now choosing the free library programs,” says Diana Chapin, executive director of the Queens Library Foundation. And while the library doors are still open, State, City, and private funding cuts may cause them to close on Saturdays and Sundays and cut back on other free programs.

With a **\$130,000** grant, the **Queens Library Foundation** is expanding BOOST (Best Out-of-School Time), an effective and inexpensive program that trains high school and college students to help younger kids with their homework and assist library staff with sessions of reading, poetry, music, games, and other projects that help kids develop a better understanding of tough subjects.

The grant will enable the Queens Library to hire 15 BOOST assistants and serve 226 more kids for a total of nearly 2,500 children in 11 local branches, largely located in poorer parts of southeast Queens. In addition, it will fund a math and science program that brings in presenters from zoos and museums with slideshows, curiosities, and live animals in tow. “Kids often try to avoid subjects they’re not good at, but at BOOST we help kids improve in these areas by making them fun,” says Chapin. “We hold scavenger hunts, use play money and bingo cards—we even explored data and probability by charting the popularity of snacks.”

### *Giving Adolescents What They Need and What They Want*

A shortage of youth programs on the North Shore of Staten Island has left thousands of kids to their own devices, contributing to some of the highest rates of teen pregnancy, drug use, and juvenile felony arrests on the Island. Although there still aren’t enough programs for the 25,000 youth in North Shore neighborhoods, **United Activities Unlimited** (UAU) is able to involve more than half in 31 youth projects.



These girls are part of a youth leadership group at Sauti Yetu, a West African community group in Brooklyn.

As part of their year-round youth programming, United Activities Unlimited runs a camp for kids ages 5 through 12, and the Summer Youth Employment Project for young adults ages 14 through 24. Up until now, 13-year-olds were left in the lurch, too old for camp and too young for the employment project. “Because these kids don’t want to be at little kid summer camp with their younger siblings, we have designed a special program tailored to help 45 13-year-olds start exploring possibilities for their future,” says Louis DeLuca, head of the agency.

A **\$40,000** grant supports this new program, which will respond to what the kids find useful and fun. “By taking them on field trips to Wall Street and other business hubs, we can cover everything from map reading and local history, to exploring career paths and dressing to impress,” adds UAU associate director Liz Licata. “Adolescents like being treated like young adults with interests and opinions of their own. We encourage kids to explore different career paths, and then start teaching them the skills they will need to get there.”

### *Helping West African Youth Succeed in America*

Grants to immigrant-led organizations are helping youth from dozens of countries such as Bangladesh, China,

**“Adolescents like being treated like young adults with interests and opinions of their own. We encourage kids to explore different career paths, and then start teaching them the skills they will need to get there.”**

—Liz Licata, associate director of UAU

Korea, Yemen, Syria, and Haiti. A **\$20,000** grant to **Sauti Yetu Center for African Women** is funding a program to help girls from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and other West African countries adapt to life in New York. Although these girls are placed in classrooms based on their age, some have had severely interrupted formal education and limited English, and often fall behind in school. Sauti Yetu pairs each young woman with a volunteer coach who helps with school work and English. A young women’s leadership group gives teens a space to come together and puts parents wary of co-ed socializing at ease.

The program’s manager, Ramatu Banguram, explains why this is important. “Boys have more freedom of movement when they come to the States, and women don’t—they need a space of their own. We help them adapt to American culture, where you need to speak up to get what you need. We help them brainstorm on how to balance their parent’s expectations with American social expectations.”

Janet Dweh, an immigrant from West Africa, said that after being in the leadership program she feels that, “anything I put my mind and my heart into, it will come . . . you are going to hear in about ten years that Janet Dweh, that came from Africa, was on TV.” Eighteen-year-old Adama Barry says, “I want to graduate and get a good education and work for the President, or even at the U.N., and work in human rights.”

### *Seeing Your Name in Print, in English and Spanish*

Finding your voice isn’t easy, but it’s even harder when you are in a new country where your native tongue is no longer native. For immigrant youth still learning English,



Passengers cut their travel times by pre-paying at kiosks and loading through the front and rear doors of the Bx12, the City's first Select Bus Service. Pratt Center for Community Development is building public pressure for City and State funding for more of these routes in the outer boroughs. Photo courtesy of the Department of Transportation.

speaking and writing in a public forum can be difficult and embarrassing, but they are important steps toward taking part in civic conversation and decision making.

A grant of **\$20,000** is supporting **Make the Road New York's** efforts to help 40 youth from Mexico and Central America produce a newspaper printed in Spanish and English. "Writing for our youth newspaper, *The Word on the Street*, is cool," said Oscar Cruz, a 17-year-old immigrant from Mexico. "It is great to be able to express your point of view on whatever topic you choose. It makes you enjoy the process of research and writing." Producing the newspaper is part of weekly literacy workshops for youth in Bushwick, Brooklyn and Elmhurst, Queens.

## Getting the City on Board the Bus

With the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) facing a deficit of more than \$1.2 billion in their operating budget and an under-funded 5-year infrastructure improvement program, straphangers can count on paying more for bus and train service. And with more people using public transportation, especially in the outer boroughs, the MTA is faced with providing more service with a tighter budget.

"This is a great time to focus on ramping up the use of the very unsexy, but very effective and cost-efficient Bus Rapid Transit," says Joan Byron of the **Pratt Center for Community Development**. "It's much cheaper to use roads that are already there, rather than building tunnels, laying track, and building stations. In fact, it costs about \$1 million per mile compared to \$1 billion per mile for a new subway line." Already implemented successfully in Bogota, Colombia and Curitiba, Brazil, Bus Rapid Transit involves creating bus-only lanes, kiosks at stops so people can pre-pay, elevated stations that get people in and out of buses quickly, and traffic lights that give buses the right of way. These measures can cut a 50-minute bus trip in half. The MTA and the City Department of Transportation have implemented one of five proposed Select Bus Service routes (a pared-down version of Bus Rapid Transit) on Fordham Road in the Bronx. But 20 full-featured Bus Rapid Transit routes with protected lanes and floor-level boarding are needed, and public pressure from transit-starved communities will help. Byron continued, "These bus routes are a perfect complement to our Manhattan-centric subway system because it's economical enough to deploy widely throughout the city, and connect people with job centers outside of the Manhattan core."

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**—Joan Byron, Pratt Center for Community Development**

A grant of **\$40,000** to the Pratt Center for Community Development is helping the organization build public and political support to expand this bus service. It will educate civic groups, employers, and churches and encourage them to join the advocacy efforts. The Center will also hold neighborhood meetings, citywide forums, and press conferences to persuade City Council members to champion bus routes in their districts. Pratt will be working alongside the **New York Public Interest Research Group’s** Straphangers Campaign, which has fought on behalf of transit riders for the past 30 years.

With our support, the Straphangers Campaign helped win more than \$16 billion for transit system improvements in 2004 and 2005, and with a new **\$50,000** grant, the Campaign will continue to advocate and organize for an increased investment in mass transit, with businesses, commuters, and others who benefit doing their part to pay for it. With big projects like the Second Avenue subway line and the #7 extension in the works, it’s more important than ever to make sure the State and City are making mass transit a funding priority now and over the long term. The Straphangers Campaign also will continue its efforts to make the MTA more accountable and transparent. “More needs to be done to address the widespread cynicism about the finances of the transit system,” says New York Public Interest Research Group’s Gene Russianoff. “That’s why we are advocating for the creation of an Independent Office of Public Authority Oversight to better review the MTA. We are also pressing for a lot more financial and management information to be available on the MTA’s website.”

# Other Grants

## YOUTH

**Jewish Home & Hospital for Aged, \$52,000** to prepare Bronx high school students for careers in health care for the elderly.

*In addition to the youth programs profiled in the article on pages 3-5, The Trust has made grants to the following 12 organizations:*

**Arab-American Family Support Center, \$40,000** for programs for Yemeni, Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, and Egyptian youth in Cobble Hill and Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

**Asian American Coalition for Children and Families, \$20,000** for leadership training and other programs for Bangladeshi, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Korean, Pakistani, and Vietnamese teens in Queens and the northeast Bronx.

**Beit Shalom, \$20,000** for academic, health and dance programs, and financial literacy workshops for Bukharian Jews and Central Asian girls in Forest Hills, Rego Park, Kew Gardens, and Jamaica Estates, Queens.

**Council of Peoples Organization, \$20,000** for a leadership training and community service program for Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslim youth in Flatbush, Kensington, and Midwood, Brooklyn.

**Dwa Fanm, \$40,000** for self-defense classes, financial literacy and leadership training, and college and career counseling for Caribbean and African girls in Flatbush, Crown Heights, and Kensington, Brooklyn, and Jamaica, Queens.

**Esperanza Del Barrio, \$20,000** for a leadership program for Mexican, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, and Colombian youth in East Harlem.

**Madison Square Boys and Girls Club, \$40,000** for a tutoring and summer program in Far Rockaway, Queens.

**Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, \$40,000** for a tutoring and summer program in the Fordham section of the Bronx.

**Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development, \$20,000** for leadership training, community service activities, and paid summer internships for West African and Dominican girls in Morrisania, Tremont, and the South Bronx.

**Police Athletic League, \$130,000** for paid internships and academic, sports, leadership, and work-readiness programs for youth in parts of Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan.

**Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council, \$50,000** to provide youth in Bushwick, Brooklyn with after-school tutoring, sports, clubs, and a summer program.

**Southern Queens Park Association, \$40,000** for a year-round academic program in south Jamaica, Queens.

#### **CIVIC AFFAIRS**

**Women's Leadership Fund, \$50,000** to train and assist women to run for public office in the City and State.

#### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**ACCION New York, \$50,000** to provide female entrepreneurs with loans, financial counseling, and workshops on running small businesses.

**Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, \$50,000** to advocate for policies that promote affordable housing and combat predatory equity, evictions, and foreclosures.

#### **ENVIRONMENT**

**Empire State Future, \$75,000** for lobbying and other efforts to ensure that State infrastructure-spending supports land, energy, and water conservation and promotes smart, equitable growth through investment in older cities and brownfield redevelopment.

**Environment America Research and Policy Center, \$100,000** to build public support for the Environmental Protection Agency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by regulating them as pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

**Healthy Schools Campaign, \$75,000** to decrease children's exposure to toxic chemicals by getting more states to mandate green cleaning practices in schools.

**Natural Resources Defense Council, \$80,000** to help federal legislators write cost-saving and environmentally sustainable climate change and energy policies.

**New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, \$60,000** for lobbying, community organizing, and public education efforts to ensure that the School Construction Authority conducts environmental reviews and cleans up all new schools built on brownfields.

**New York State Gas Drilling Protection Project, \$100,000** to ban gas drilling in ecologically sensitive areas in the drinking watershed, strengthen State drilling laws, and promote less toxic drilling methods and materials.

**Union of Concerned Scientists, \$150,000** to create more incentives in national agricultural programs for farmers to adopt sustainable practices that minimize greenhouse gas emissions and nitrogen pollution.

#### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Nonprofit Finance Fund, \$80,000** to provide financial counseling and training to City nonprofits to help them survive the economic crisis.

#### **EDUCATION, ARTS & CULTURE**

**Home for Contemporary Theatre and Art, \$90,000** (three years) for an experimental and performing arts center.

**St. Ann Center for Restoration and the Arts, \$90,000** (three years) for a Brooklyn presenting organization.

**INTAR Theatre, \$30,000** for a Latino theater company.

**Ontological-Hysteric Theater, \$60,000** (three years) for an experimental theater company.

#### **EDUCATION**

**Brooklyn Childcare Collective, \$30,000** to help pregnant and parenting girls stay in school.

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**NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, \$150,000** to organize City parents and community groups to push for the equitable use of federal stimulus funds, monitor middle school reform efforts, and advocate for more academic help for poor and minority students.

#### **HUMAN JUSTICE**

**New York Immigration Coalition, \$250,000** to protect the education, health, and civil rights of immigrant New Yorkers.

**Sanctuary for Families, \$230,000** to provide legal help to poor and immigrant victims of domestic and date violence.

#### **ELDERLY**

**Brooklyn Academy of Music, \$35,000** for a free movie program for 2,500 poor, disabled elders.

#### **HEALTH SERVICES**

**American-Italian Cancer Foundation, \$75,000** to expand a breast cancer education and screening program for low-income women and those who have lost their health insurance.

**New York Legal Assistance Group, \$125,000** to provide free legal help to people with serious health problems.

**SHARE: Self-Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer, \$70,000** to train staff at health agencies to teach women the warning signs of ovarian cancer and refer them to specialists and support groups.

## **June 2009 GRANTS Newsletter**

**The grants described in this issue were approved by The New York Community Trust's governing body at its April 2009 meeting.**

**For address, phone number, and contact person for each grantee listed, or for more information, please call The Trust's receptionist at 212-686-0010, Extension 0.**

***This issue and past Grants Newsletters can be found on our Web site:  
[www.nycommunitytrust.org](http://www.nycommunitytrust.org)***

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