

THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST



GRANTS

July 2007 NEWSLETTER

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Reengineering an Icon NYC taxis roll into the 21st Century

Stroll through a New York City souvenir shop and, amidst piles of “I♥NY” t-shirts and tiny Lady Libertys, you’ll find rows of miniature taxi cabs. The yellow cab has been a staple for residents and tourists for 100 years, and has become an icon as well as a means of getting around the City. But most of us are unaware that taxis expose us to more pollutants than any other mode of transportation. The active fleet of 13,000 yellow cabs travels an average of 1 billion miles per year and emits a toxic stew that contributes to lung and cardiovascular disease, asthma, and birth defects. The pollution levels inside taxis are higher than in other cars because the standard model, the Ford Crown Victoria, can run for hundreds of thousands of miles, defeating environmental remediation equipment.

A gas/electric hybrid taxi, one of the 250 alternative-fuel cabs added to the New York City fleet, speeds through Times Square.



A future Habitat homeowner helps build her new home.

Design Trust for Public Space will use a **\$35,000** grant to work with the Taxi and Limousine Commission to make yellow cabs more fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly. In addition to focusing on Local Law 352, which requires the Commission to add 250 alternative-fuel cabs to its fleet and market them to taxi owners, the plan will include short- and long-term strategies for retrofitting the fleet. It will also make recommendations for deploying cabs in more energy-efficient ways, such as installing stands with call buttons so that taxis don't cruise for passengers.

Greener Living: Making cars and buildings safer and healthier

While many people think of cars as the scourge of the environment, the buildings in which we eat, sleep and work consume 40 percent of the nation's energy each year, producing 48 percent of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. To stem the tide of global warming, buildings must be re-engineered to run more efficiently or use alternative energy sources. But even environmentally conscious builders acknowledge that they cannot spur a mainstream green building industry without public incentives or regulation. Over the next two years, the

Environmental and Energy Study Institute will use a **\$100,000** grant to expand public support for a more energy-efficient building sector. The Institute will educate members of Congress, federal agency officials, and the people who influence them about the role of the building sector in climate change. It will hold an annual exposition to display commercially viable energy-efficient or alternative energy technology, and every other year, it will host a bio-based products expo. It will also encourage the extension of energy efficiency and renewable energy tax credits, which will expire in less than two years.

Do you love that "new car" smell? The scent that delights us can actually indicate an abundance of toxic chemicals. The **Ecology Center** evaluates the levels and types of harmful substances in cars and pressures automakers to substitute safe alternatives to the toxic plastics, mercury, and lead they now use. The Center will use an **\$85,000** grant to analyze harmful elements in various car models and display the results on a new Web site, HealthyCar.org, and provide information on the levels of these toxins to the Clean Production Action's Safer Products Web site. The Ecology Center will also continue to work to eliminate lead and mercury from automobile parts. It will press retailers, such as Wal-Mart, Costco, and NAPA Auto Parts, to promote lead-free wheel-balancing weights, and monitor the mercury switch recovery program, which requires automakers to safely dispose of mercury in cars before they are junked.

Preparing People and Machines for Election Day

The country is already gearing up for the 2008 presidential election. After debacles involving voting machines in the last two national elections, officials are assessing their voting infrastructure to identify problems before Election Day. **Citizens Union Foundation of the City of New York** works to improve our voting system by scrutinizing State

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and City Boards of Election procedures, reviewing new voting technologies, and educating the public about election reform proposals. It also recruits and trains poll workers. One of Citizens Union's top priorities is monitoring implementation of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), adopted in 2002. HAVA-mandated installation of new voting machines will likely happen in 2008. This year, the Foundation will use a **\$60,000** grant to monitor the review and selection process for these machines. Running a smooth election with new voting machines will also require a sufficient number of well-trained poll workers and language interpreters, and the Union will continue to recruit, train, and manage poll workers.

With two hotly contested presidential elections in the past decade, it is clearer than ever that every vote counts. With our 2005 grant, **Community Voices Heard** contacted 6,500 voters in 35 election districts in Harlem and the South Bronx. Staff and volunteers informed residents about the 2005 City and 2006 State elections and solicited voter pledge cards. Turnout among those contacted by Community Voices was 53 percent, compared with an overall district average of 27 percent. Because research indicates that civic participation projects get better results when contact is ongoing rather than sporadic, the agency will use a **\$50,000** grant to keep in touch with low-income voters during a non-election year. It will train up to 120 people to register voters and contact voters who signed voter pledge cards via phone, door-to-door visits, and mailings.

Coming to America: *Thousands of immigrants make New York their home*

Despite the images we have of thousands of immigrants pouring onto Ellis Island, the truth is that more than 70 percent of New York's immigrants arrived after 1980. The groups that serve immigrants are expanding rapidly, and as they move from volunteer-driven start-up groups to substantial organizations with boards and staff, they need

help developing sound fiscal management practices so they don't become victims of their own success. This year, **Fiscal Management Associates** will use a **\$55,000** grant to train 15 to 20 up-and-coming immigrant groups in a four-part workshop series. Each session covers an important concept in nonprofit financial management. The agency will select five nonprofits to receive additional assistance and coaching, including specific recommendations for improving financial procedures and putting material from the workshop into practice.

Knowing where to turn for legal help can be challenging for anyone, but for the one in four New Yorkers who isn't fluent in English, it's almost impossible. The City's network of legal services and *pro bono* organizations helps poor New Yorkers with problems involving housing, family, public benefits, employment, immigration, and other civil issues, but can't help if you don't speak English or Spanish. With immigrants coming from around the globe, translation is more difficult. As a result, many non-natives have trouble finding legal help, explaining their cases to lawyers, understanding the legal process, or using self-help materials. Two grants totaling \$135,000 will improve the situation.

- **LawHelp/NY** will use a **\$50,000** grant to improve the immigration section of its Web site and develop promotional materials in several languages that describe resources available on-line.
- **Legal Services for New York City** will use an **\$85,000** grant to hire a coordinator for its translation program in the agency's 16 field offices. The program will provide face-to-face translations in 36 languages, telephonic translation when in-house services are not available, and documents and self-help materials in several languages.

New York City has the most diverse immigrant population in the nation. Immigrants and their children constitute 60 percent of the City's residents and have replen-

In many poor neighborhoods, check-cashing outlets, commercial tax preparers, and payday lenders outnumber banks by two to one. Community credit unions are an alternative, providing affordable loans, secure savings, and other services for low-income consumers.

ished the local population, revitalized neighborhoods, and spurred the economy. But these newcomers face enormous challenges. In addition to language and cultural barriers, many work in low-wage jobs without benefits or protections and live in substandard, overcrowded housing. Punitive immigration policies implemented in response to terrorism, compounded by rising anti-immigrant rhetoric around the country, have created an intimidating atmosphere for legal and undocumented immigrants alike.

In 1987, The Trust created the **Fund for New Citizens**, a joint effort with other grantmakers, to stimulate and coordinate foundation giving to help immigrants in New York. Since it began, the Fund has given more than \$12 million for projects including citizenship assistance, legal representation, community organizing, and advocacy. The Fund will use its **\$100,000** grant this year to continue to make legal services available at the Immigration Court and detention centers, as well as at community organizations. It will make new grants to strengthen grassroots groups, and support advocacy for federal policies such as proposed legislation on legalization, guest workers, and authorization for undocumented students to attend college.

Credit Unions Make Money More Affordable

Would you take a loan with a 400% APR? Payday lending companies and other predatory lenders typically charge fees equal to that, and in many poor neighborhoods, check-cashing outlets, commercial tax preparers, and payday lenders outnumber banks by two to one. Residents who use these “services” often get trapped in cycles of debt that are difficult to break. Community credit unions are an alternative, providing affordable loans, secure savings, and other services for low-income consumers. Despite the revenue that credit unions generate

from fees and interest payments, more money is needed so that they can continue to offer alternatives to exploitive lenders. The **National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions** is the trade association for more than 200 credit unions throughout the country. The Federation helped create the Community Development Financial Institution Fund, part of the U.S. Department of the Treasury, to support these organizations, and has focused much of its advocacy on getting State and City governments to help credit unions and other community development financial institutions (CDFIs). Last year, the Federation helped committees in the State Senate and Assembly write legislation creating a New York CDFI Fund to give grants and loans to qualified CDFIs throughout the State. In the next eighteen months, the Federation will use a **\$60,000** grant to get reconciliation of the two bills, passage by both chambers, and a \$15 to \$25 million appropriation to capitalize the Fund.

From Cradle to Grave: *Care and comfort at every stage of life*

The plight of medically fragile children—those with such serious conditions as cancer, cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, eating disorders, seizures, heart disease, and respiratory illness—is heartbreaking. In the past, children who survived these conditions were often confined to hospitals. Now, with special equipment, such as respirators or gastric tubes, many children can be successfully cared for at home. Unfortunately, many families struggle to coordinate and pay for care. Last year, with Trust support, the **Coalition for Medically Fragile Children** educated officials and the State legislature passed a bill authorizing a 30 percent increase in the rates for home nurses and adding reimbursement for case management. This year, the Coalition will use a **\$70,000** grant to monitor roll-out of the expanded Medicaid eligibility legislation and review new Medicaid regulations to ensure that they meet the legislative intent. As new families sign up, it will track the

number of children enrolled in the program, the types of services used, and whether these services help children remain at home. The analysis will be used to advocate for reauthorization of the legislation, which is scheduled to expire in June 2008.

Huge strides have been made in cancer treatment over the past 20 years. More patients are beating the disease, living longer, and maintaining a better quality of life. But patients can't win if they can't afford treatment. With Trust support for more than 20 years, **Cancer Care** has provided financial assistance to needy cancer patients. Most patients are uninsured, or have insurance that doesn't cover all of their needs. Through Cancer Care, patients receive money for chemotherapy and radiation treatment, pain medication, and assistance with transportation, child care, and home care. This year, Cancer Care will use a **\$625,000** grant to provide assistance to at least 1,600 people, and will maintain outreach activities in poor communities and to elders affected by Medicare changes. It will also increase outreach to Chinese-speaking immigrants.

The end of life can be a difficult, emotionally charged time. For people with few friends and family members, it is lonely as well. Based on the concept of a "doula," a birth attendant who provides encouragement during childbirth, the **Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services' Ruskay Center** program volunteers are trained to help the dying. Over the next two years, the Ruskay Center will use a **\$45,000** grant to expand this program by enlisting Spanish-speaking doulas and add information about varying Spanish views of dying. Once the curriculum has been created, it will develop recruitment materials in Spanish. The Center will also reach out to Hispanic business and professional groups, social service



Students at Friends of Island Academy participate in a creative writing workshop.

agencies, and informal neighborhood networks to recruit Spanish-speaking volunteers; it expects to train 24 volunteers in the next year. The Ruskay Center will continue to train English-speaking doulas, adding 80 of them over the next two years, for a total of 104 doulas.

Getting Out, Staying Out: *Juvenile offenders get their lives on track*

Eight out of ten incarcerated teenagers are rearrested within one year of release. Many lack supportive family or friends, have mental health problems, have lived in group homes, and are ill-equipped to navigate life outside of prison.

Friends of Island Academy helps teens who have been detained on Rikers Island make successful transitions from jail back to their communities. Staff runs weekly workshops on the Island to tell young men and women about the agency's post-release program. Youth who contact Friends once they are released are linked with mentors, receive job training and job placement assistance, and attend General Equivalency Diploma classes. This year, Friends will use a **\$65,000** grant to increase the number of youth in its case management program to 380. One hundred GED students will begin an education and leadership program and get tutoring; take classes in Web design, dance, drama, and creative writing; and participate in group activities to build self-confidence and develop critical thinking skills.

More than 1,300 delinquent New York youth are in State-run residential facilities, and one-third of those kids are from the Bronx. Even though residential placement is expensive and produces youth more prone to criminal behavior, family court judges often lack other options. The **Center for Court Innovation** is a partnership between the Fund for the City of New York and the New York State Unified Court System. In 2003, it started the Juvenile Accountability Court as part of Bronx Family Court to offer an alternative to residential placement. Judges assign eligible cases to the City's Department of Probation, and, if suitable for the project, Probation creates individualized plans that issue graduated rewards for compliance and sanctions for noncompliance. This year, the Center will use a **\$75,000** grant to improve the community service program. Rather than simply picking up garbage in parks—which has been the standard form of community service—youth will be required to complete more in-depth 13-week projects as well as attend group sessions. The Center will also begin a drug awareness group for youth who abuse marijuana.

Own, Sweet Own: *How do you navigate one of the country's hottest real estate markets?*

Homeownership has long been a part of the American dream. Even New York, long a city of renters, is seeing rising home sales. But the prospect of buying a home is all but unreachable for most low- and moderate-income families. Even with a steady income and job security, down payments, closing costs and other expenses require a large outlay of cash that many working families find difficult to get. Two grants totaling \$115,000 go to organizations that help low- and moderate-income families own their own homes.

- **Habitat for Humanity New York City** will use a **\$65,000** grant to help 41 first-time homebuyers purchase units in a condominium complex in Brooklyn using 'sweat equity' in lieu of a down payment.
- **New York ACORN Housing Company** will use a **\$50,000** grant to conduct 150 group homeownership sessions and counsel 500 union members on credit repair, mortgage applications, and foreclosure prevention.

Other Grants

Environment

Enterprising Environmental Solutions, \$75,000, to advise 13 western states dealing with global warming.

Clean Air Task Force, \$150,000, to help a dozen states organize campaigns and political strategy to reduce diesel pollution.

Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, \$100,000, to improve the environmental quality of the Mississippi River in order to promote tourism, recreation, and sustainable development.

Environmental Health Coalition, \$75,000, to document and publicize a landmark agreement between the U.S. and Mexico to clean up contamination on the border.

Rocky Mountain Energy Campaign, \$100,000, to help community and regional organizations advocate to stop destructive oil and gas development.

Wildlife Conservation Society, \$150,000, to protect the habitat and migration corridor of wolverine and antelope in the Centennial Mountains between Greater Yellowstone and Idaho.

The Bronx River Alliance, \$50,000, to continue restoring the Bronx River Greenway.

Friends of Gateway, \$40,000, to market the Gateway National Recreation Area.

Friends of Hudson River Park, \$45,000, to educate elected officials about the potential damage and pollution that will result if two waste transfer stations are located next to existing playgrounds.

Riverside Park Fund, \$35,000, to build support for revitalizing the northern Manhattan section of the park. It will hire a bilingual, Spanish-speaking project coordinator to organize volunteers and work with a landscape architect, community groups, and residents to develop a plan that represents the interests of the neighborhood.

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, \$75,000, to continue to monitor brownfield remediation at Bronx Academy.

Center for Health, Environment, and Justice, \$150,000 (two years), to support organizations advocating for precautionary policies for toxic chemicals.

Health

EMS/Science Communication Network, \$75,000, to train scientists to speak with the media about how fetal exposure to chemicals may lead to the development of cancer later in life, and how diseases of poor women of color may be linked to chemicals released by industries sited near their communities.

Environmental Working Group, \$100,000, to document the presence of toxic chemicals in African-American and



Ringside performers defy gravity in performances that use equipment such as trampolines, rigging, rolling platforms, and giant wheels.

Latino newborns and women, and press for future research efforts by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Institute for Children's Environmental Health, \$50,000, to educate the public about the connection between chemicals and childhood disabilities.

TEDX, \$75,000, to study fetal exposure to chemicals and the harm caused by chemicals used in natural gas extraction.

Heights Hill Mental Health Services, \$44,000, to train agencies that serve mentally ill gay men and lesbians to improve services.

Long Term Care Community Coalition, \$65,000, to advocate for improvements to nursing home care in New York State.

Coalition of Institutionalized Aged and Disabled, \$55,000, to educate mentally ill adult home residents about their rights.

United Hospital Fund, \$300,000, to create a plan to expand health insurance coverage, reduce Medicaid costs, and improve end-of-life care.

Elderly

Burden Center for the Aging, \$37,000, to provide social services and educational programs for African-American elders in Harlem.

VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, \$225,000, to train staff at 26 senior-serving agencies to recognize signs of visual impairment and refer clients for services.

Children and Families

Lawyers for Children, \$40,000, to represent 50 gay and lesbian youth in foster care and consult on an additional 200 cases.

Partnership for Family Supports and Justice, \$80,000, to move a child welfare program that reduced foster care placements in a Bronx neighborhood by 50 percent to a local agency.

Seedco, \$100,000, for a program to help low-income, non-custodial fathers get jobs, learn parenting skills, and become financially responsible.

The Institute for Labor and the Community, \$50,000, for the Girl's Project, a program to help girls address issues such as teasing, media stereotypes, and body image, in five schools.

Arts

New York Foundation for the Arts, \$80,000, to improve its technology system and enable it to sponsor 200 more artists, for a total of 500.

Asian American Writers' Workshop, \$60,000 (three years), to present public literary programs featuring Asian-American writers.

Pascal Rioult Dance Theatre, \$90,000 (three years), for general program support and for DanceREACH, the theater's educational programs for New York students.

Ringside, \$90,000 (three years), to present new dance performances featuring athletic choreography that uses trampolines, rigging, and rolling platforms.

Soho Repertory Theatre, \$60,000 (three years), to perform productions and readings by experimental American writers.

Thalia Spanish Theatre, \$75,000 (three years), to purchase a projection system to offer open captioning for the hearing-impaired, and English super titles of song lyrics for music and dance shows.

Pentacle, \$60,000 (two years), to educate and advance dance companies led by mid-career choreographers.

Theater by the Blind, \$60,000 (two years), to market the theater and increase ticket sales to support a longer run.

Education

National Academy Foundation, \$50,000, to create "academies," small groups with career-oriented instruction and college preparation workshops, in five large New York City high schools.

Coalition for Educational Justice, \$150,000, to serve as a central organization for parent groups in low-income communities affected by the restructuring of New York City schools.

Constitutional Education Foundation, \$50,000, to revise Constitution Works!, a program teaching students about the Constitution, to include knowledge required for the New York State Regents exam.

St. Francis College, \$50,000, to enroll 20 minority undergraduates in a journalism and media program.

Civic Affairs

Municipal Art Society of New York, \$40,000, for a program that recruits and trains high school students in mapping technology, and assigns them to community boards.

Historic Districts Council, \$50,000 (two years), to train and advocate for neighborhood preservation groups concerned about changes in their communities.

Human Services Council of New York, \$50,000, to improve contract and payment systems used by the New York City government to pay social service organizations.

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The grants described in this issue were approved by The New York Community Trust's governing body at its April 2007 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, or visit our Web site and click on Grantmaking and then Recent Grants.

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