

THE NEW YORK  
COMMUNITY TRUST



Making your giving matter more...since 1924

# getting RESULTS

**October 2008** NEWSLETTER

Starting with this issue, each October The Trust will report on the results of past grants. Most of them are made possible by individuals who set up charitable funds with us during their lifetimes or through their wills. If you would like to learn more about how to do this, please contact our general counsel, Jane Wilton, at 212.686.2563.

We've also included reports on several recent grants made by our two divisions, the Long Island Community Foundation and the Westchester Community Foundation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2 Healthy Housing Victories Spur Inspections of Hazardous Homes**
- 6 A Time to Reflect: Changing the Grant Cycle**

## OUR SUBURBAN DIVISIONS

- ▶ **Literacy is Fundamental**
- ▶ **Strengthening Nonprofits**



## Protecting the Purity of the City's Drinking Water

**M**ost New Yorkers drink out of cool, clear mountain streams every day without leaving their homes. Rain and melted snow from the forested mountains filter through the Catskill/Delaware and Croton watersheds and collect into 19 vast reservoirs. Each day, more than 1.1 billion gallons of water are pumped into the City, earning its reputation as the Dom Perignon of drinking water. But the system is delicate and at constant risk of contamination.

The New York Community Trust has been a lead funder of efforts to safeguard this resource. "Since we began our New York City environmental grants program in the mid-1980s, protecting the quality of the City's drinking water

The Ashokan Reservoir, in the eastern edge of Catskill Park, is the oldest and deepest of the City's reservoirs at over 180 feet deep with a capacity of 122.9 billion gallons.

Photo: NRDC

## **“Ill-planned development threatens the ecosystems that provide natural filtration for the water of nine million downstate residents.” — Eric A. Goldstein of the Natural Resource Defense Council**

supply has been a priority,” said Pat Jenny, program director for The Trust’s environmental grantmaking. “With our support, Natural Resources Defense Council, Riverkeeper, and other groups, successfully campaigned for New York City to set aside \$300 million to buy ecologically sensitive watershed lands between 2007 and 2017, part of the 1997 landmark agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency to protect the purity of New York City drinking water in its unfiltered state.” Since then, Trust grants have helped groups purchase conservation easements on forest and agricultural lands in the watersheds.

Still, steadfast monitoring is required throughout the watersheds facing growth pressures as the New York metropolitan region spreads northward. “Ill-planned development threatens the ecosystems that provide natural filtration for the water of nine million downstate residents,” said Eric A. Goldstein of the Natural Resource Defense Council. “Such development replaces forests, meadows, and wetlands with roadways, parking lots, and rooftops. That brings additional sewage pollution and leads to storm water runoff.”

In 1999, a developer proposed a massive plan to build three golf courses, hotels, and hundreds of condos on a nearly 2,000-acre plot of forested land adjacent to the Belleayre Ski Center in the heart of the Catskill watershed. This posed a serious threat to water quality and would have set a dangerous precedent for future development.

After several years in and out of court, environmental organizations were victorious and signed an agreement in principle that would protect more than 86 percent of the total acreage from development and provide for a more ecologically sensitive project. Its single golf course would be managed without dangerous pesticides and it would also have to meet stringent standards for waste treatment and erosion control. And before this smaller development

could advance, it would have to make it through a supplemental public environmental review process.

But protecting this expansive landscape requires more than challenging individual projects. Trust grants have supported Riverkeeper’s public education and organizing campaign in towns in Putnam and Westchester counties to adopt more sustainable land-use patterns. One specific result of this campaign was a State ruling that forced the town of Southeast’s planning board to hold a rigorous environmental review before approving a housing development on parcels containing wetlands and other waterways. Its report, *Pave it...or Save It?*, covered the environmental, social, and economic impact of sprawl and was presented to more than half the town boards in the Croton watershed.

The Trust’s commitment to protecting our drinking water, as well as grants for projects to reduce air pollution and other environmental toxins, manage our solid waste, conserve parks and open space, and reclaim our waterfront are made possible by generous donors who set up funds long ago. “These New Yorkers trusted us, and our successors, to respond to contemporary problems,” said The Trust’s president, Lorie Slutsky. “The charitable resources they left to us will help us leave a healthier city to our grandchildren and great grandchildren.”

## **Healthy Housing Victories Spur Inspections of Hazardous Homes**

Irania Sanchez had been living with mold, spotty heat and hot water, and “rats as big as cats” for the last five years. She and other family members who live in her building suffered from severe asthma – a result of these dangerous housing conditions. Her landlord repeatedly refused to make repairs. Make the Road New York worked with the City’s housing department to threaten

legal action and organized a rally that successfully prompted the landlord to begin making repairs.

Make the Road has also battled successfully to make sure tenants around the City are living in buildings that are up to code. With a grant from The Trust in 2006, it helped pass the Safe Housing Act – a piece of legislation that promotes real accountability for negligent landlords who fail to repair violations that the City deems “immediately hazardous.”

The Fifth Avenue Committee and the Association of Neighborhood and Housing Development are two other nonprofits that work on behalf of New Yorkers. With grants from The Trust in 2006 and 2007, the Fifth Avenue Committee documented the direct connection between health problems, such as asthma, and poor living conditions that cause and exacerbate them. This research is a key part of efforts to reclassify health-related housing code violations in the City, helping to get toxic homes cleaned up faster and more thoroughly.

“Under the Safe Housing Act, thousands of dangerous apartments are being inspected and repaired, allowing low-income and immigrant families to live in healthy and safe conditions. Tenants who live in problem buildings will get comprehensive repairs, not just band-aid fixes. We are excited that we are finally seeing change,” said Angel Vera, an organizer with Make the Road New York.

Fabian Rivera, a tenant who has lived for more than ten years in a Bed-Stuy building with 192 housing code violations, testifies to the change that he has seen as a result of this legislation. “In my apartment there are many violations and the landlord has never wanted to do the repairs well. Right now, the worst is the bathroom. I called him and told him that the ceiling fell and that my son is living in dangerous conditions. The bad conditions



Fabian Rivera showing organizers a dangerous ceiling hole in the bathroom of his Bed-Stuy apartment building, one of 192 housing code violations in the building. Photo: Make the Road New York

are effecting us psychologically and physically, especially my child. I always call the landlord, and he says that he’s coming to repair problems, but when he comes, he only wants to collect the rent, but I have stopped paying because it is not just to live in these kind of conditions. Now the HPD inspectors are coming almost every day. I have confidence that the City will do the repairs because that is what the law demands.”

With multiple grants from The Trust, the Association of Neighborhood and Housing Development won a commitment from the Bloomberg administration to implement the Targeted Code Enforcement Program by building broad public support through dozens of community events and briefings for policymakers and civic associations. “This program helps tenants and the City systematically go after landlords until they make repairs,” says deputy director of the Association, Benjamin Dulchin. “It gives the City a sharper set of tools, and more power to use them.”

## A Time to Reflect: Changing the Grant Cycle

This year, The New York Community Trust decided to devote its July board meetings to our grantmaking strategies for improving the lives of New Yorkers, without the press of reviewing individual grants. Although we will continue to make just as many grants, they will be made five times a year, rather than six. To inaugurate this change, we met in late July for two days to discuss economic, demographic, and health trends in the City and think about our response.

The Department of City Planning's Peter Lobo made a presentation on the City's dynamic socio-demographics. He talked about the migration of millions of immigrants and citizens into *and* out of New York City every year. Many have been successful and often move out of the five boroughs, yet the steady increase in overall population growth means that affordable housing, job training, ESL classes, and child care will continue to be in high demand. As neighborhoods, administrations, budgets, and policies change, The Trust builds on its years of experience, continuing to support projects that make a difference.

While our flexibility enables us to keep pace with changing nonprofit needs and shifting policy initiatives, we also maintain our commitment to sticking with complex problems for the long haul. We will continue making grants in the following four program areas: Children, Youth, and Families; Community Development and the Environment; Education, Arts, and the Humanities; and Health and People with Special Needs. For a list of our recent grants, please visit [www.nycommunitytrust.org](http://www.nycommunitytrust.org).

## October 2008 Newsletter

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

If you'd prefer to receive this newsletter by e-mail, please send an e-mail with your name, e-mail address, and "Grants Newsletter" in the subject to [newsletter@nyct-cfi.org](mailto:newsletter@nyct-cfi.org).

---

### OUR SUBURBAN DIVISIONS

**Long Island Community Foundation**  
Nassau Hall  
1864 Muttontown Road  
Syosset, NY 11791  
(516) 348-0575  
[www.licf.org](http://www.licf.org)

**Westchester Community Foundation**  
200 North Central Park Avenue, Suite 310  
Hartsdale, NY 10530  
(914) 948-5166  
[www.wcf-ny.org](http://www.wcf-ny.org)

THE NEW YORK  
COMMUNITY TRUST



909 Third Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
(212) 686-0010  
[www.nycommunitytrust.org](http://www.nycommunitytrust.org)

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Permit No. 5013 New York, NY
--

# Long Island COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**“Julia, our CTAC assistant,  
helped me, as a new  
director, learn how to get  
feedback from our  
members and flesh out  
our work so that it truly  
reflects our mission.”**



Long Island nonprofit leaders participate in a three-year program to improve their organizations in order to better serve their communities. Photo: Community Training and Assistance Center

## Strengthening Nonprofits

**A** central role of community foundations is to identify regional problems and spearhead efforts to find solutions that can be widely adapted. Often, this means creating a laboratory of ideas by working with several nonprofits. “Funding programs that assist several nonprofits at once is also an efficient use of philanthropic money and a trademark of community foundation grantmaking,” said Suzy Sonenberg, executive of the Long Island Community Foundation (LICF).

LICF identified a set of challenges faced by all small and medium-sized nonprofits, especially those in communities of color. They included meeting fundraising goals, hiring consultants to help with budgeting and planning, finding and keeping active board members, and getting results.

## **“North Amityville Community Economic Council was having problems retaining board**

**members and attracting new ones. LEAP helped us to restructure the board and gave us**

**ideas on attracting volunteers likely to become board members.” — Rosemarie Dearing, Executive Director**

In June 2007, the Foundation started Leadership, Effectiveness, Action, and Partnership (LEAP), a three-year effort to help a small number of nonprofits solve these problems. The overall goal is to improve the groups' ability to function efficiently and effectively, strengthen community networks, and bring about positive change throughout the region. LEAP workshops train participants to build board and staff skills; measure and demonstrate their results to politicians, residents, and funders; and identify and use all available resources to meet community needs.

LICF made a grant to the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) to help each of the 12 participating groups. With experience training nonprofits across the country, it helped these Long Island organizations develop board and staff relationships, set priorities, create strategic plans, formulate budgets, market, and raise money.

“North Amityville Community Economic Council was having problems retaining board members and attracting new ones,” said Executive Director Rosemarie Dearing. “LEAP helped us to restructure the board and gave us ideas on attracting volunteers likely to become board members. LEAP has also helped us with strategic planning for our organization and developing a succession plan.”

In addition to helping the organizations individually, CTAC offered workshops that helped participating groups work together to achieve broader impact in the region. The organizations learned about strategies used by other community development networks and discussed applying them on Long Island. They were also coached on forming agendas, building political power, and evaluating and articulating success.

“It started a dialogue when the agencies realized that we faced many of the same problems, and we were able to work through many of these problems ourselves,” said Dearing.

At the close of the first year, the staff and board of nine of the groups were committed to addressing their organizational challenges. Participants were able to better articulate their groups' priorities, and there was a greater clarity around their agendas and technical assistance needs. “Julia, our CTAC assistant, helped me, as a new director, learn how to get feedback from our members and flesh out our work so that it truly reflects our mission,” said Vanessa Crilly, of Long Island Jobs with Justice. “Now in the second year of the program, we are ready to tackle a whole new set of goals and continue to strengthen our organization.”

In the second year, CTAC will make sure participants articulate a consistent and specific vision of how their mission and programs improve the community, and conduct a thorough assessment of how the organizations' current work responds to people's needs.

Moving into the third year of the program, CTAC will continue to work with agency leaders in the most important step of all – putting all of this hard work into practice to make life better for Long Islanders.

*Funding partners for this project include JPMorgan Chase Foundation, Horace Hagedorn Foundation, Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, Pritchard Fund, Rauch Foundation, and several individual donors.*

# Westchester

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

### Literacy is Fundamental

Literacy is more than reading and writing. It's the ability to understand and communicate with the rest of the world. It's the cornerstone of one's ability to participate in social, economic, academic, and political activities. Making sure that all Americans are literate is fundamental to building an informed and involved citizenry.

### Books: The building blocks of literacy

Developing a love of reading is a crucial first step toward a life of literacy, but teaching kids to read is challenging if there isn't a culture of reading at home.

That's why the Westchester Community Foundation (WCF) teamed up with the Hello Friend/Ennis Cosby Foundation in 2005 to deliver more than 8,000 donated books to first through third graders in three Westchester schools. The Hello Friend Foundation was established to memorialize Bill Cosby's son Ennis, who, at the time of his death, was studying to become a teacher. The program helps close the gap between kids who grow up surrounded by books and those who don't. Volunteer staff, mostly retired teachers, sort and pack the books donated by Scholastic Books into several boxes, each with 75 to 115 books, enough to establish a classroom lending library and foster an early love of reading.

### Double duty ESL: Learning civics while learning English

Many immigrants come to the United States unable to read and write in their first language, let alone in English. To address this challenge, in 2007 the Westchester Community Foundation funded Literacy Volunteers of Westchester, the Community Center of Northern Westchester, and Port Chester Neighborhood Preservation Company to train teachers in a new curriculum that teaches English using concepts in U.S. civics – helping



A reading teacher shows students books for their new classroom lending library at Washington Irving Elementary School in Tarrytown.  
Photo: Susan Edwards

immigrants learn the language while equipping them to participate in civic life.

Teachers developed the curriculum by weaving their students' observations and questions about the country together with English learning techniques. At one agency, new students were asked, "What do you know now that you wish you had known when you first came to the United States?" Many of the answers were predictable – how cold it is here, how involved American parents are in their children's education – but others answers were more surprising. Students spoke of being taken aback at the promptness and reliability of police and fire services.

Each topic, such as housing, education, and government, is reviewed and discussed in the native language for a short period at the beginning and end of each lesson. The lessons are written entirely in English and presented by bi-lingual ESL teaching staff. The program is designed for a group of students who share a common language. It also provides leadership opportunities for advanced students who want to become teaching aides. Early reports show a dramatic increase in students' English-speaking ability and their understanding of how the U.S. works.

## The screening room as classroom

In our increasingly wired world, one in which images and video clips can be captured and e-mailed in an instant, being fully literate means being visually literate – interpreting, producing, and communicating with still and moving images. Most poor and minority youth are exposed to thousands of hours of digital media every year, and although they aren't shy about sharing their opinions on the latest blockbusters, they need the tools to take this budding media connoisseurship to the next level.

The Jacob Burns Film Center is dedicated to making film a vibrant part of the community. Since the opening of the Center in 2001, over a million people have seen more than 2,000 independent, documentary, and international films there, making it the largest cultural arts institution of its kind in the United States. This

summer, the Center will open its new Media and Education Center to teach visual literacy to students in grades 3 through 12.

See Hear Feel Film is a writing program for third graders exploring story-telling tools used by filmmakers. It encourages verbal expression, improves reading comprehension, and inspires children to write with clarity and confidence. The program, launched in 2002 with funding from the Westchester Community Foundation, has received national recognition. In the past six years, more than 1,000 students have participated. The curriculum for this program is available in English and Spanish and has become part of the core curriculum in classrooms throughout Westchester.

The Film Center also offers Cinemania, a program for seventh and eighth graders that was developed and launched with support from WCF in 2002. After viewing a film, students discuss its vision, craft, and language, developing their visual literacy skills and expanding their world view. The unifying thread in this program is coming-of-age stories from a global perspective, through films from such countries as Iran, Japan, New Zealand, and the Czech Republic.

High school students examine relevant and timely issues through the Film Center's Classroom to Screening Room. The program gives students the opportunity to enhance their study of literature, social studies, science, foreign languages, and the visual and performing arts. It extends the learning process beyond the classroom, with screenings and dialogues with faculty, filmmakers, writers, and activists. Teachers report that these programs are among the most powerful educational experiences of the school year for their students.

Basic literacy was once neatly described as ability to read the newspaper. Now, while reading is still fundamental, communication requires the ability to understand and express ideas across cultural, political, and technological divides. The Westchester Community Foundation is dedicated to making sure literacy is being cultivated across language barriers, and through all mediums and ages.