Providing Homes for LGBTQ Older Adults

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Grants
SUMMER 2022 NEWSLETTER
It’s risky to paint 8.8 million New Yorkers with broad strokes. But as we face year three of grantmaking during a pandemic, I think it’s safe to say we’ve all been profoundly affected by COVID-19.

As the city’s community foundation, our job is to make grants that recognize the breadth of the pandemic’s short-term impact while setting the course for a long-term recovery.

With the generosity of today’s donors, we’ve been able to say ‘yes’ to additional promising projects with our Emergency Fund. Over the last two years, we’ve combined the $6.8 million contributed to the Fund with $11.2 million from permanent legacy gifts to make 90 grants. The Fund is an example of the power of community philanthropy: combining the passions of today’s donors with the wishes of yesterday’s and then deploying trusted staff to identify current needs and effective nonprofits.

Grants from the Fund initially addressed urgent needs: improving emergency food distribution throughout the city and supporting efforts such as Community Tech NY’s work to increase access to high-speed internet in neighborhoods where it meant the difference between attending school or not.

Some grants addressed recovery with a commitment to a more just future. We helped the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center train immigrant women in the Bronx to start small businesses after losing their jobs. And a grant to the Workers Justice Project successfully advocated for better pay and working conditions for those who delivered food throughout the shutdown and afterward.

The Fund also lets us apply the lessons of COVID-19 to plan for the future. Long Island University is training frontline health workers, primarily pharmacists, to use telehealth to care for more people. A grant to the New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation is helping groups that serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities plan for the next crisis.

Despite the immensity of the challenges created by the pandemic, my work gives me cause for hope: every day I connect the generosity of donors—those that left legacy gifts across the generations and those living today—with some of the most effective nonprofits helping my fellow New Yorkers recover and build a stronger, more equitable city.”

### The Emergency Fund’s Seven Areas of Grantmaking

- **Alleviating hunger**
- **Increasing access to mental health services**
- **Protecting & using open spaces**
- **Strengthening communities**
- **Getting New Yorkers vaccinated**
- **Improving remote education**
- **Expediting economic assistance and public benefits**
Teaching that Connects to Cultural Heritage

The city’s educational system has not effectively met the diverse needs of New York’s school children—relying on materials that feature mostly white characters and role models. The Trust is making grants to shape and teach curricula that reflects the city’s diverse student body.

**Promoting Early Development with Cultural Legends**

Last year, more than half of babies and toddlers in New York City spent at least half their day at a childcare center. These centers can have a profound effect on children’s developing cognitive abilities and social skills, but program quality is uneven in part because of a lack of resources and training for staff. A Trust grant to New York University will develop a teacher training program that will use African-American and Latin-American folktales, simplifying them to promote language development for two- and three-year-olds.

**Creating Inclusive Curricula**

The city’s school system is more diverse than ever: 40 percent of students are Latinx, 26 percent are Black, 16 percent are Asian, and 15 percent are white. Yet school officials regularly make decisions without regard to this reality. We’re funding NYC Coalition for Educational Justice to promote culturally responsive education practices so that administrators and teachers account for cultural differences. The coalition reached an agreement with the city in 2020 to create the “Mosaic” curricula to help the city’s diverse children connect with learning materials and see themselves working in any career. The Department of Education recently said it will only revise curricula for city middle schools by the previously announced 2023 deadline, but the Coalition will continue to advocate to expand that effort to all grades.

**Bolstering Educational Resources for Southampton’s Tribal Children**

The Shinnecock Reservation in Southampton is home to 700 tribal members. A grant from our Long Island Community Foundation to Hamptons Community Outreach will expand an academic enrichment program for high school students who live on the reservation to include middle schoolers. The now full-year program will provide one-on-one tutoring, mental health services, and college counseling.
One recently opened residential building for older adults in Manhattan received an astounding 65,000 applications for its 99 units. The lack of affordable housing can be particularly difficult for older adults who have navigated challenges their entire lives.

From helping aging entertainment professionals access healthcare to developing culturally appropriate housing for South Asian elders, The Trust is supporting the most vulnerable older New Yorkers. Recently we addressed housing problems among LGBTQ older adults, many of whom have experienced a lifetime of discrimination.

**CREATING WELCOMING SPACES**
The Westchester Community Foundation, in partnership with The Loft, commissioned a needs assessment to determine the size of the county’s LGBTQ population, its needs, and how to better coordinate services. The study found that a lack of LGBTQ-friendly options was a top barrier to accessing social services; the researchers also made recommendations for housing and training homecare workers.

More than half of same-sex older couples experience discrimination when seeking homes. Many are priced out and even pushed into homelessness. Grants to SAGE, which advocates for and serves LGBTQ+ elders, helped open the state’s first LGBTQ-welcoming affordable senior housing in Brooklyn in December 2019 and in the Bronx last March. The Trust enabled SAGE to develop application processes to ensure a majority of residents are LGBTQ and at least 25 percent are people who were formerly homeless, and to create new LGBTQ-affirming services, including support groups.

Bill Meehan, a resident at SAGE’s Brooklyn center, said, “I was really at wit’s end about how I was going to stay in Jackson Heights, but it was just impossible economically. My rent was 90 percent of my Social Security and Social Security was 90 percent of my income.”

“A lot of people here are survivors—whether they’re formerly homeless or gay people,” Meehan said. “Life has not been the easiest, and yet they made it and that’s something to celebrate. It’s a story of people living together from various communities and doing well. It breaks myths about what homelessness is and what seniors are like. We have something here that’s really good.”

With funding from The Trust last year, SAGE expanded virtual and in-person services. It opened LGBTQ-friendly centers that serve the entire older adult community, offering classes, free meals, and access to mental and physical healthcare.

“Seniors can suddenly experience poverty, even people who were never poor in their lives.”

- Bill Meehan
Study Shines Spotlight on Immigrant Artists

Whether you call it a melting pot or a gorgeous mosaic, New York City has always been a place where immigrants pursue their dreams. Nowhere is that truer than among immigrant artists, who use the city as a stage to showcase their creative talent.

In 2019, The Trust helped the Center for an Urban Future document the contribution of foreign-born artists in its December 2020 report, “The Changing Face of Creativity in New York.” The report noted that the city is home to 12 percent of the nation’s immigrant artists and the number of immigrant artists in the city had grown by 69 percent since 1990—more than double the rate of U.S.-born artists. While the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing shutdown caused many hardships for the entire arts sector, small immigrant arts groups were among those hit the hardest, straining their already precarious finances.

The report issued 15 recommendations to improve the viability of immigrant artists and groups; most centered on finding increased funding and making resources—such as performance and rehearsal spaces—more available. The report called for a partnership where tech companies could help these small arts organizations create income-generating virtual programs.

It proposed creating immigrant arts centers in each of the boroughs. In May, Mayor Adams announced that the city will help fund a first-of-its-kind Immigrant Research and Arts Center in Inwood, which will be operated by People’s Theatre Project, an immigrant- and women-of-color-led performing arts organization. The Center will feature music and dance performances, film screenings, family programming, and community events.

The report generated widespread media attention and gave renewed energy to efforts by policymakers. The increased awareness led to several philanthropic and government initiatives to support immigrant artists.

Surveys and analyses like the Center’s can focus the attention of policymakers and have long-term, profound effects long after they are first published. This report crystallized the contributions and needs of immigrant artists, leading to new technology and programming.
“I always felt I was destined to be a designer. I love to give people a sense of feeling good about themselves through fashion. Everybody wants that sense of positivity and recognition and I want to provide that for them.

I first learned to sew on an antique machine at the Henry Street Settlement House. I was a teenager working with Ruth Taube, who was in her eighties back then. I remember making a tote bag, which was all I could do at the time, but she gave me a basic knowledge of sewing. After I got my GED when I was 26 and began to take my life a little bit more seriously, I rediscovered that passion.

I knew I wanted to be in fashion, but it felt more like a dream. I was glued to YouTube and TV shows about fashion. I eventually took classes and learned enough to create garments that won the Emerging Designer Award at Harlem Fashion Week in 2019. Janet Rodriguez, the CEO of SoHarlem, was one of the judges and she invited me to join the organization.

At SoHarlem, I found a real community. I improved my skills, I got to challenge myself and get guidance to meet that challenge. SoHarlem gave me the strength to do it on my own, so I started my own brand, IFLYUNIVERSE.

We all help each other at SoHarlem. If one of the designers is working on a great project, he or she will reach out to the rest of us. And we all share information about opportunities or photographers and models we can work with.

In 2020, I watched and participated in the George Floyd marches, which influenced what I was designing at the time. I put together a collection using neon colors to show the messages of being safe, of being heard, of being seen.

The life I’m living now was not what I expected. I recently struck a deal to collaborate with the big clothing company Shein, where I provide them with my own designs. That helped me decide to become a full-time designer. In April I left my job as a paralegal.

This summer will be a full-circle moment for me, because I will be teaching young people about fashion at the Henry Street Settlement. I want to provide what I didn’t get when I was in need and searching for what I really wanted out of life.”

At SoHarlem, I found a real community. I improved my skills, I got to challenge myself and get guidance to meet that challenge.”
One Fund’s Pursuit of Justice for Women on Rikers

Women make up only 4 percent of those behind bars on Rikers Island, the city’s main jail complex. But they often spend a year or more on the island before being tried in court. Complaints of sexual violence perpetrated by staff on Rikers are more than double the national average for correctional facilities. Despite the fact that 85 percent of the women have young children, the facility is difficult for families to visit and its nursery has been closed for more than two years. Health and mental health care are inadequate, yet two-thirds of women on Rikers have been diagnosed with a mental illness, and most have suffered sexual or other physical violence.

Our recent grant to the Women’s Community Justice Association is pushing to permanently close the women’s jail on Rikers and open a stand-alone women’s facility that makes a genuine attempt at rehabilitation and is centrally located, making it easier for families to visit.

This work is made possible by a legacy gift from Nina Untermyer; the eponymous fund she created supports programs to make life better for women and girls.

Ms. Untermyer had a hunger for justice. She worked to promote gender equity in the public-school system and was an active member of the Women’s City Club of New York (now called Women Creating Change). In addition to the grant above, we have used her generosity to provide mental health counseling to women in domestic violence shelters run by Safe Horizon. Her fund allowed us to help Her Justice advocate for a better system for applying for and receiving child support, and to fund efforts to reduce maternal morbidity among Black women through the Fund for Public Health in New York.


Maryland: For the cost of postage and copying, from the Secretary of State.

Michigan: MICS No. 22265.

Mississippi: The official registration and financial information of The New York Community Trust may be obtained from the Mississippi Secretary of State’s office by calling 1-888-236-6167.


New York: A copy of our most recent financial report is available from the Charities Registry on the New York State Attorney General’s website at www.charitiesnys.com or, upon request, by contacting the NYS Attorney General, Charities Bureau, at 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271 or at 212-416-8401. North Carolina: Financial information about this organization and a copy of its license are available from the State Solicitation Licensing Branch at (888) 830-4989 (within N.C.) or (919) 814-5400 (outside N.C.).

Pennsylvania: The official registration and financial information of The New York Community Trust may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Virginia: From the State Office of Consumer Affairs in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, P.O. Box 1163, Richmond, VA 23218. Washington: From the Charities Program at 1-800-332-4483, or www.sos.wa.gov/charities.

West Virginia: West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305. Wisconsin: A financial statement of the organization disclosing assets, liabilities, fund balances, revenue and expenses for the preceding fiscal year will be provided to any person upon request. CONTRIBUTIONS ARE DEDUCTIBLE FOR FEDERAL INCOME TAX PURPOSES IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAW. REGISTRATION IN A STATE DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST BY THE STATE.
Reining in the Power of Rainwater

When rain falls on our city, it can overwhelm parts of the sewer system, carrying raw sewage from buildings into local waterways hundreds of times per year. This is bad news for fish, wildlife, and the health of local estuaries, and can create public health risks for beachgoers, kayakers, and fishermen.

One way to lessen this problem: creating green areas that slow or absorb runoff before it gets into the sewer system. It is an efficient and beautifying solution that nourishes flowers and trees while it protects our local waters. But the work has to be scaled up to make a real difference. That’s why we’re funding Riverkeeper to advocate for policies and funding that will get more green roofs, permeable pavements, and pocket parks throughout the city.

We’re able to make this grant thanks to a Legacy Society member who created a fund in memory of her grandmother and great-grandmother—the Augusta Lehman Harlem and Lillian Harlem Martin Fund. The fund is dedicated to protecting the air, water, and green spaces that sustain us.