

CHAIR'S MESSAGE

In Collaboration with our Partners



AT NYCHA, WE ARE RETHINKING THE DEFINITION OF “COMMUNITY,” AND WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US IN THE CONVERSATION. What community does each of us belong to? Is a community limited by place and by time? Is it about shared experience, or is it, perhaps, about sharing our experiences with each other? We want our community to be the place where new, constructive ideas are created and fostered, and we want to expand what and who a community is and extend NYCHA's reach to those who our community can touch in positive ways.

In the past, our annual celebrations of Black History, Hispanic Heritage, and Women's History, while important, have been held only among NYCHA employees. Now, beginning with Black History Month 2010, we have opened the doors—to resident families and leaders, our friends in the philanthropic and non-profit communities, and our strategic partners in public service and in the private sector.

Just this past month, we welcomed members of Mayor Michael Bloomberg's staff; district chairs of the Citywide Council of Presidents and Resident Association Presidents; Board members of Lincoln Houses; members of NYC City Planning; representatives of Mary J. Blige's Foundation for the Advancement of Women Now (FFAWN); as well as representatives from diverse organizations such as the non-profit Robin Hood Organization, the Board of Lincoln Center; and leaders from Habitat for Humanity—NYC; and students, parents and staff members of the Harlem Children's Zone. Each of these is a partner with NYCHA on new, ambitious initiatives we are working on for the benefit of you—our residents. Let me tell you about some of those plans.

The Mary J. Blige and Steven Stout Foundation for the Advancement of Women (FFAWN) is an organization to inspire women from all walks of life to gain the confidence and skills they need to reach their individual potential. NYCHA will partner with FFAWN to develop workshops and programs for the young women in public housing developments in a first ever Girls Initiative. Our hope is to help disconnected youth begin thinking about their future; help them secure a quality education that will empower them in their futures; guide them toward envisioning a better life for themselves; and show them how to look out for each other—girls helping other girls—both socially and emotionally. Look for these efforts to take shape this summer.

NYCHA's Haitian American Association is playing a pivotal role in leading our relief and long-term rebuilding efforts in Haiti in a project we're calling, “Housing for Housing.” The employees' group is taking the lead in fundraising efforts in support of Habitat for Humanity-NYC and Habitat International in efforts to repair and rebuild long-term housing in Haiti in the wake of the devastating January 12th earthquake. NYCHA and Habitat-NYC are building on their ongoing partnership, focused on housing revitalization and renovation. Both organizations will work together to assist in what is certain to be a multi-year effort to help provide homes in partnership with Haitians devastated by the earthquake. And early last month we joined with FFAWN, the Urban Zen Foundation and others to help raise \$1 million for relief and rebuilding efforts in Haiti, with the money partially distributed to Habitat for Humanity.

Since 2007, NYCHA and Habitat-NYC have had a partnership through which Habitat volunteers have assisted in revitalizing and renovating public housing facilities. The Haitian-American Association at NYCHA, along with other employee associations at the Authority, will lead the ongoing effort to raise funds needed to support Habitat in rebuilding permanent, safe housing in Haiti. A key component of the partnership includes the active participation of NYCHA resident and employee volunteers in Habitat-NYC endeavors, who will then leverage their local experience to assist with rebuilding efforts in Haiti.

NYCHA is also working collaboratively with the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) and President and CEO Geoffrey Canada to construct a new Harlem Children's Zone charter school and housing serving 1,300 students in grades K-12 on the grounds of the St. Nicholas Houses. These efforts will also involve HCZ's non-profit developer Civic Builders; the NYC Department of City Planning; the NYC School Construction Authority; and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). The St. Nicholas Houses will be the launching pad for a revolutionary approach to revitalizing our communities through close connections among housing, educational opportunities, and wrap-around services. President Barack Obama has proposed what he's calling the “Choice Neighborhoods Initiative” and the model for that project is New York City's own Harlem Children's Zone.

Mary J. Blige, Geoffrey Canada, the Habitat for Humanity organization and many of our valued employees and residents—all are key contributors to NYCHA's new effort to bring its mission forward. These efforts are only the beginning of NYCHA's new focus, making our mission to provide public housing with a sense of community—both within the developments, and in their surrounding neighborhoods—real for the families of New York.

John B. Rhea

Resident Green Committees Give Back to their Communities

By **Cristiana Fragola**
Deputy Director, Strategic Initiatives

ESSENCE JACKSON IS THE CAPTAIN OF THE BREEVORT HOUSES RESIDENT GREEN COMMITTEE (RGC) IN BROOKLYN—ONE OF 24 SUCH COMMITTEES IN NYCHA. According to Ms. Jackson, her favorite thing about the RGC is that it gives members “a chance to rebuild the community in a youthful and positive way.” Over the last year, NYCHA residents have been coming together to form Resident Green Committees in their communities. Commissioner Margarita López, NYCHA's Board Member and Environmental Coordinator, visits developments throughout New York City and gives a presentation on the challenges that we are all facing in connection with the changes occurring in our global climate.

After the Commissioner's presentation, the residents, assisted by a team of eight bright and motivated AmeriCorps Volunteers In Service To America (VISTAS), join a green committee and participate in a NYCHA-wide effort to reduce the Authority's impact on the environment.

Currently, the VISTAs are providing technical assistance to the 24 Resident Green Committees throughout all five boroughs of New York City with a total of approximately 120 RGC members. The VISTA volunteers will only be assisting RGCs for one year, at most, as the goal is to make each RGC self-sustainable. The power is in their hands!

The residents are motivated largely by the desire to promote positive changes in the environments of the developments in which they live. This month, Ms. Jackson of Breevort Houses and her green

committee organized a bake sale to raise funds for their RGC. However, the RGC members recognized that they have the power to not only contribute to their own local community, but to the larger global community. Sixty percent of the proceeds from their bake sale were donated to aid relief efforts in Haiti. Breevort Houses has demonstrated how a group of active and engaged people can choose to join their powerful hands and serve a cause greater than their own...cooking some delicious food, too.

At Manhattanville Houses in West Harlem, the Resident Green Committee members also share in the goal of being a positive influence in their community. The group's mission statement says that by being a part of the RGC, members “will improve the quality of life for [Manhattanville] residents, do its part in preserving public housing, and represent the New York City Housing Authority at its finest.” The Manhattanville RGC has already begun fulfilling its mission by planning recycling workshops in each of the buildings at its development to educate all residents about New York City's recycling rules and regulations.

Through the commitment of members like those at Breevort and Manhattanville, these RGCs will no doubt succeed in their goals of influencing their communities in a positive way and help preserve our planet as well as public housing for many more years to come.



(l-r) Joseph Moriera, Emilie Rosenblatt, Channie Allen and Cheryl Minor.