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Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Shama and Citizens Committee CEO Kostmayer Announce Recipients of First-Ever UnityNYC Grants

16 Community Groups Selected for Neighborhood Improvement Grants Totaling \$48,000

New York, NY (April 19, 2013) – Citizens Committee for New York City (CCNYC) and the Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Affairs announced today that 16 volunteer groups have been selected as recipients of the **UnityNYC** awards. The first program of its kind, **UnityNYC** is bringing together immigrant and non-immigrant groups as well as diverse faith-based groups to collaborate on neighborhood improvement projects and cultural exchange. At its core, these awards encourage and support unity through active engagement between new immigrant groups and their longer-term neighbors as well as residents of different faiths. The groups selected have demonstrated a unique potential to bring together these groups of New Yorkers in an effort to improve their community and actively create unity. In total, **UnityNYC** will be awarding \$48,000 in neighborhood improvement grants.

“As early as 1643, 18 languages were spoken here. Today it’s 121,” said Peter Kostmayer, CEO of Citizens Committee for New York City. “While there may be parts of the nation that don’t welcome immigrants, we in the city do, because we know, respect, and value all they bring and because we have almost all have come from some place else.”

“Immigrants have always been at the heart of what makes New York City exceptional,” said Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs Commissioner Fatima Shama. “The 16 groups receiving the UnityNYC Awards will demonstrate once again that communities working together to better our neighborhoods will always result in a richer, more vibrant city that is committed to celebrating the breadth and beauty of its diversity.”

Out of the 16 grantees, four are working on inter-faith projects that build unity and twelve are bringing together immigrants and non-immigrants. All grantees are addressing issues they have self-identified as important to their respective communities and that range across six main quality of life categories: Arts & Culture, Beautification, Civic Engagement, English Learning, Public Safety, Sports. The UnityNYC projects will stretch across all five boroughs of New York City: 6 in Queens, 3 in Brooklyn, 3 in The Bronx, 3 in Staten Island, 1 in Manhattan.

What Grantees Receive with a UnityNYC Award

Each will receive a \$3,000 grant and direct access to CCNYC's signature project planning assistance, skills-building workshops, and equipment resource center to make their community projects a success. They will also receive training from experts on receiving community engagement and civic engagement through facilitated dialogue.

Coalition-Building of a Different Sort

As a result of UnityNYC Awards, a few unlikely but rewarding partnerships have arisen. In The Bronx, Riverdale Jewish Community Relations Council is partnering with the Islamic Cultural Centers of North America and the Al-Iman Mosque to complete a community renovation of the mosque that houses both groups. Over in Queens, the Kew Gardens Improvement Association is organizing a series of community-building projects to grow bonds among long-term neighbors and newer Latin American and South Asian immigrants. And down in Staten Island, Beyond Sports Charity is facilitating a soccer tournament connecting young immigrants from the African and Latin American diasporas with longer term Staten Islanders and their children.

About the UnityNYC Initiative

UnityNYC Awards is a signature program of One NYC One Nation, a collaboration between Citizens Committee of New York City and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, with philanthropic support from the New York Community Trust, the One Nation Foundation, the New York Council for the Humanities, and the J.M. Kaplan Fund. With a specific focus to strengthen understanding among and across diverse communities, this public-private partnership brings together the City's philanthropic, public, and community leadership to collaborate and leverage resources.

Official 2013 UnityNYC Grantee List with Project Descriptions

Afghans United (Fresh Meadows, Queens)

Afghans United is hosting an Eid celebration that brings together different faith communities to celebrate the Muslim holiday, while increasing understanding and respect for other religions and cultures. Neighbors are sharing food and music together while learning more about the Eid celebration and connecting with non-Muslims in their community.

Beyond Sports Charity (Clifton/Stapleton, Staten Island)

Beyond Sports Charity is encouraging community youth to engage in physical activity by hosting a soccer tournament. The program is also building a strong bond between diverse communities, including African immigrants, Latin American immigrants and longer-term residents by using sports to connect youth from different backgrounds while teaching them team-building skills.

Beyond Sports Charity (Clifton/Stapleton, Staten Island)

Beyond Sports Charity is hosting a series of dinners in Staten Island to promote community and build tolerance in a neighborhood that has seen an increase in bias crimes and violence between different ethnic groups. Each dinner is featuring foods from different countries and a short presentation about different cultures to increase understanding between different groups, especially older residents and newer immigrants from Latin American and African countries.

Bronx is Blooming (Concourse, The Bronx)

Bronx is Blooming brings together African American residents, Latino immigrants, and college students among others to beautify local parks along the Grand Concourse. The group trains local

college students to be project leaders, who then conduct community outreach to generate volunteers for the beautification events. In addition to uniting diverse neighbors, the project gives local youth an opportunity to develop leadership skills.

Flushing Interfaith Council (Flushing, Queens)

Flushing Interfaith Council is bringing together people of different faith traditions in a walk for peace and solidarity. The walk unites different religious groups and organizations in interfaith activities in order to bring about greater understanding of other cultures and faith traditions. This walk is sponsored by a group comprised of Muslim, Sikh, Quaker, Jewish, and other faith-based groups and is addressing an increase in bias crimes and acts of violence in the community.

Flushing International High School (Flushing, Queens)

Flushing International High School is launching "Roots," a cross-cultural mural project with students from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. The mural is bringing together students of different backgrounds in order to tackle issues of student segregation and inter-ethnic violence and conflicts in this diverse school with students from over 30 different countries. Students from another school housed in the same building will also be included, building camaraderie among recent immigrants and long-term residents of New York City.

Food R Us (Kew Gardens, Queens)

Food R Us is building bridges with interfaith community members through their open and inclusive food pantry. The pantry is run by a Jewish organization and operates in a culturally and religiously diverse neighborhood that includes Latin American, African American, and South Asian residents. The pantry operates on a non-discriminatory policy, serving all people in the community regardless of race or religion.

Kew Gardens Improvement Association (Kew Gardens, Queens)

Kew Gardens Improvement Association is organizing a series of community-building projects to grow bonds among long-term neighbors and newer Latin American and South Asian immigrants. Neighbors are participating in a bowl-painting art activity, a recycling initiative, a prayer flag project, and a community art day. During each event, local residents and organizations are showcasing their own food, arts, and culture in order to unite different groups in the community.

La Casita Comunal de Sunset Park (Sunset Park, Brooklyn)

La Casita Comunal is building bridges with the neighborhood's growing Latin American and Asian immigrant populations by launching an English language series, combining weekly writing classes with monthly cultural events. Students are exploring various literary genres and writing about their experiences transitioning from their native countries and into the United States. They are sharing these works with *El Barrio News* in the form of a bilingual column that connects with immigrants and non-immigrants in the neighborhood.

LUNGS - Loaisida United Neighborhood Gardens (Lower East Side, Manhattan)

LUNGS is holding a Harvest Arts Festival during which dozens of community gardens in the neighborhood open their doors and offer arts programming to visitors, including live music and arts projects. The garden members represent the dynamic and diverse community of the Lower East Side including newly arrived immigrant and longer-term Latin American, European, and Asian communities. The festival is free and open to all.

National Council of Negro Women, Co-Op City Section (Co-op City, The Bronx)

National Council of Negro Women, Co-Op City Section is organizing a film series featuring independent films by women filmmakers of the African, Latina, Asian, and Native American Diaspora. The film series creates a multi-cultural program sponsored by a group of African-American women that encourages communities of all nationalities to come together to watch and discuss films about different immigrant experiences.

Riverdale Jewish Community Relations Council (Riverdale, The Bronx)

Riverdale Jewish Community Relations Council is partnering with the Islamic Cultural Centers of North America and the Al-Iman Mosque to complete a community renovation of the mosque that houses both groups. The group is purchasing materials to renovate the façade of the mosque, which will unite teens and adults from both the Synagogue and the Mosque in a workday to complete the project.

Staten Island Creative Community (St. George, Staten Island)

Staten Island Creative Community is planning an annual “Art by the Ferry” festival, which involves 120 artists, 30 musicians, and 15 craftspeople in a celebration of Staten Island's diverse North Shore neighborhood with a growing African and Mexican immigrant population. The festival is attracting both local residents as well as visitors to an arts celebration in an economically struggling area of Staten Island.

SUKHI NY (Jackson Heights, Queens)

SUKHI NY is planning three events in Diversity Plaza that highlight the diverse nature of the neighborhood and encourage local groups to utilize the community's unique public space. By engaging community groups in a Pride Festival, a July 4th Celebration, and an Eid Celebration the group is creating a stronger sense of unity between different cultures including longer-term residents and newly arrived South Asian and South American immigrants.

Sunset Park Unity Day Coalition (Sunset Park, Brooklyn)

Sunset Park Unity Day Coalition is planning a bi-monthly workshop series to promote cultural exchange and dialogue among immigrants and longer-term residents. Workshops are focusing on tenant, immigrant, and human rights, and will feature simultaneous translation into multiple languages as needed by attendees, including Spanish, Mandarin, and Arabic. The series is culminating in a summer celebration in a local park featuring food, dance, and cultural activities.

West Kensington Action Group (Kensington, Brooklyn)

West Kensington Action Group is planning a “Trash Mob” event that mobilizes neighbors to come together to clean up their community, celebrate, and dance. The trash mob is cleaning up a busy section of Church Avenue while bringing together neighbors in a diverse but somewhat segregated neighborhood that includes immigrants from Latin American, Caribbean, and South Asian countries.

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