



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

In this report, which highlights the work of Community Pride, you'll see a lot of very impressive numbers.

They quantify some of the work done by this program, which is the community organizing and housing stabilization arm of the Harlem Children's Zone. Here's a preview of some of those figures.

In its 11 years of work, Community Pride has worked with thousands of community residents. The program originally focused intensively on 68 city-owned buildings and so far has assisted tenants in purchasing nine of those buildings, turning 264 families from renters into homeowners. Thirty-three more buildings, with a total of 319 apartments, are in the process of being converted to tenant-owned cooperatives. And 14 buildings are now in a low-income rental program.

The conversion of these buildings from city to tenant ownership has created a remarkable increase in their market value. The first nine buildings to become tenant co-ops saw a rise in estimated total worth from \$810,000 to \$3.8 million, almost a fivefold increase in less than ten years.

Community Pride has organized 55 tenant organizations and 18 block associations and has begun creating multi-block networks to amplify the strength and reach of tenant power and control.

Then there are the more than 200 neighborhood-improvement projects sponsored by Community Pride, from painting public hallways to planting community gardens. The 150 tree guards installed to beautify neighborhood streets. The more than 4,000 community meetings at which all these actions were planned and developed and celebrated.

We think it's important for you to know these numbers, because they say something about how much Community Pride has accomplished, hand in hand with community residents and within the continuum of programs offered by the Harlem Children's Zone. As the community-building agent of HCZ, Community Pride works to establish and accrue social capital in Harlem. Like all cur-

Continued on page 12



Community Pride Community Pride is a Meeting Place

The conference room on the ground floor of the program's headquarters, at 157 West 122nd Street, is always humming with activity.

This Friday afternoon, the Harlem Children's Zone Planning Committee is meeting there to discuss the HCZ Annual Awards Ceremony, scheduled for late February.

The committee serves as the unofficial board of directors of Community Pride, the community-building program of the Harlem Children's Zone. Its six members are residents whose dedication to community service has earned

them a role as community leaders. They meet every week to discuss the continuing work of Community Pride, to help guide its course and lead its broad efforts to revitalize the structure and spirit of Central Harlem.

The agenda for today's meeting is ambitious: review nominations for awards in various categories; determine the exact amount of the budget available for the ceremony; and, working within the existing budget, begin making arrangements to provide food, drink, decorations, and entertainment for the event. But as members of the committee arrive for the meeting, one by one, and seat themselves around the conference table, they seem to be in no hurry to get to those agenda items. Or



*Ever since
Community
Pride came into
Central Harlem,
we've seen a
coming together
of our neighbors
to make things
better. So many
people have
participated in
this work, we
have what you
would call an
embarrassment
of riches.*

perhaps it's more accurate to say they don't get directly to the agenda. Rather, they proceed by an indirect path whose starting point is the sweet potato pie in the center of the table.

"Homemade?" asks Jeanette Boyd, chair of the meeting, as she slices the pie and serves it up to the three other committee members and two Community Pride staff members in attendance.

"Made by one of our neighbors on the block," says Lee Farrow, Community Pride director. "She stopped over this morning to drop it off. And don't think it was easy saving it to share with all of you this afternoon."

So begins a lively, wide-ranging conversation: about the virtues of homemade products, about neighborliness and sharing, about the adverse effects of preservatives in processed foods, about environmental pollution, about the need to come together as a community to enhance the quality of life in the neighborhood.

"And that brings us to the awards ceremony," says Laconia Smedley, Planning Committee member. "Ever since Community Pride came into Central Harlem eleven years ago, we've seen a coming together of our neighbors to make things better. So many people have participated in this work, we have what you would call an embarrassment of riches. Our annual awards ceremony gives us a chance to single out certain individuals and honor them for their special contributions in particular areas, like housing improvement or volunteer service. Maybe over time we'll have an opportunity to honor every single person who's contributed to this great community-building effort. Right now, our job is to make sure that the three or four hundred people who come to this year's ceremony enjoy themselves and have a wonderful evening. So let's take a look at that list of caterers we've put together. We've already got bids from each of them. Who's had some experience of their service and tasted their food?"

As the Planning Committee members methodically evaluate the suitability of various caterers, venues, and entertainers, Community Pride staff members mostly listen. With the expertise and efficiency born of long experience, committee members navigate a sea of issues, great and small, from funding sources to flower arrangements. Before the meeting adjourns, each committee member takes on an assignment to help move the project forward: negotiate final prices with the preferred caterer, check the seating capacity at the chosen site, create a prototype flyer to advertise the awards, audition some local talent to perform at the event.

"What's the name of that group that sang two years ago?" asks committee member Earlynda Beeker. "They were very good. Like a lot of young groups, they had one of those strange names that's hard to remember."



And so, as the meeting winds down, another free-wheeling discussion begins: about the energy and enjoyment young people bring to every gathering; about the ways to nurture young talent; about the need to organize citywide to pressure government officials to create and support more youth initiatives; about the importance of finding a catchy name—like TRUCE, an HCZ youth program—to draw attention to a good project.

"And that," says committee member Valerie Bradley, "brings us to another piece of urgent business: naming Lee Farrow's granddaughter. Lee's daughter is scheduled to give birth any day now, and we need to weigh in on a good name before that child gets here. Any votes for Angelica?"

Many other names are proposed, but before the vote is taken, Farrow steps in to halt the good-natured fun. "This is one time democracy will not prevail," she says, laughing. "In fact, even I don't get to vote on this. My daughter says she is open to suggestions from everyone, but she's made it clear that she feels the naming of a child is a decision for parents alone. So it seems we have only one business item left on our agenda, which is: Who is going to eat that last piece of sweet potato pie?"

If there is such a thing as a typical meeting at Community Pride, this weekly get-together of the Planning Committee is it. It is typical because the meeting is led by residents, who assume responsibility for creating and implementing the agenda. It is typical in





the way the conversation shifts easily from the specific to the general, from the serious to the humorous, from business to personal matters. Typical also is the bond of friendship and respect that marks the interaction of all participants. And most typical is how much gets accomplished, in a seemingly effortless manner.

But of course a great deal of effort and thought have gone into every facet of this meeting, as they have into every meeting and every action taken by Community Pride. The hominess and apparent ease that characterize the work done through the program are the result of a deliberate decision, a part of the strategy and style of Community Pride's director, Lee Farrow.

"I like informal things," says Farrow. "That's how I approach organizing. This work is very personal; we're dealing with things people hold close to their heart—the basic conditions of their homes and their neighborhood, their individual growth and empowerment as well as the growth and empowerment of their families and community. You can't be, you don't want to be, 'only business' when you're dealing with those issues. If you're aiming to organize the whole community, you have to start with the whole person. And that means relating first on a human level, building respect and trust.

"I can find an organizing strategy in almost anything," Farrow continues. "One of the first large-scale activities Community Pride sponsored when we started out was a block party. Block parties are fun, and at the meetings where we planned the party we had a great time. We had such a good time I don't think many people realized how hard we were working. Do you know how much work goes into a block party in New York City? You have to raise money, negotiate with vendors, work closely with the police and sanitation departments. You learn to become resourceful, precise, diplomatic, forceful, effective. You learn how to reach out and engage your neighbors, a critical skill for organizers. Community members learned many skills putting that block party together. For them, the skills were a by-product of the party. For me, the entire process was a strategy to empower community residents.

"Informal discussions, activities, and networking really work. When people get together and feel they can

be themselves, without pressure, without being judged, they are able to talk about their dreams and their heart's desires. That's where it all begins. When we started this work, we encouraged people to dream, and then we helped build the skills and organization that enabled them to realize their dreams. Community residents created the slogan for Community Pride: Today's Dreams, Tomorrow's Realities. That concept models all our work here."

Community Pride is an Agent of Change

Dreams were in short supply when Community Pride first established itself in Harlem in 1992. Instead, the realities of everyday life were a nightmare for most neighborhood residents.

Community Pride grew out of a homelessness-prevention project begun in 1989 by the Harlem Children's Zone, then known as Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families. That project, Neighborhood Gold, provided short-term social services designed to support formerly homeless families that had been relocated to Central Harlem and to strengthen their ties to the community. Many of those families had been placed in city-owned housing. Since the city was then a landlord of last resort, usually assuming ownership only after private owners had walked away from buildings they had long neglected, the living conditions in those houses were often deplorable.

In working closely with families placed in this substandard housing, and talking with them about their needs, HCZ staff began to realize that these families required much more than social services to keep from cycling in and out of homelessness. HCZ also began to understand that the local environment itself was part of the cycle of homelessness.

Central Harlem was at that time one of New York City's poorest communities. According to the 1990 U.S. Census, families in the neighborhood then had a median income of less than \$9,000. Sixty-five percent of the neighborhood's housing was city-owned, and most of the remaining residential buildings were badly deteriorated. Streets were pocked with vacant lots that were

When we started this work, we encouraged people to dream, and then we helped build the skills and organization that enabled them to realize their dreams.





strewn with rubbish and crawling with vermin. Drugs were sold and used openly, and both dealers and users intimidated and preyed upon community residents. Crime and unemployment rates soared. Illegal trades flourished. Far from helping to support and stabilize homeless families, the intolerable living conditions in Central Harlem were generating homelessness.

In 1992, HCZ partnered with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Hunter College School of Social Work to pioneer a different, and much broader, strategy to combat homelessness. The new program, named Community Pride, combined social services, tenant organizing, and neighborhood revitalization efforts in an attempt to turn a decaying and dispirited area into a close-knit community, with solid buildings, self-sustaining families, and strong bonds among neighbors. Those neighborly bonds of support and solidarity are often called social capital. Community Pride aimed not only to create and cultivate social capital, but to spend it on rebuilding Harlem, inside and out. Supported by city, federal, and foundation funding, HPD and HCZ moved to test their experimental approach on a single block, West 119th Street between Lenox and Fifth Avenues.

In many ways, 119th Street exemplified both the problems and the promise of all Central Harlem. Seventeen buildings on that single block were city-owned, and the rest of the housing stock was in serious disrepair. Poverty, drugs, and violence had worn the fabric of the community threadbare, leaving residents feeling isolated and powerless. Still, many of those who lived on 119th Street felt strongly committed to the community and had worked long and hard, though often with limited success, to improve conditions in their buildings and their neighborhood.

“When we began working on the block, one of the first things we noticed was that people didn’t seem to know one another or interact with one another, even people who lived in the same building,” says Farrow. “When people are afraid to come out of their homes, it’s easy for suspicion and prejudice to grow.

“For instance, there was a large group of people on the block who had recently been relocated from homeless shelters, who were probably at an all-time low in their lives. They were good people down on their luck, but they were often stigmatized unfairly. They were, in fact, like the great majority of the people on the block, neighborly, law-abiding, and hard-working. But that honest and decent majority of residents was invisible, even to one another. Who was visible on the block at the time were the drug dealers; they weren’t afraid to walk the streets day or night.



“When we first started out, we had a broad-based strategy designed to meet a wide array of neighborhood needs. But we quickly realized that the most urgent need was to bring people together and to bring them out—in a word, to organize.”

It was not an easy task. Over the years, residents had become distrustful of outsiders coming into the neighborhood with promises to make things better. But the small Community Pride staff did not start out by issuing promises, or, for that matter, by issuing any kind of statements about what they would do. They started out by listening. The staff went door to door, day after day, for months, talking with residents, visiting with neighborhood families, learning who they were and what they cared about.

Bridget Beatty, Community Pride lead organizer, remembers how productive those early conversations were. “If you’re building to last, you have to dig a deep foundation,” says Beatty. “We spent a lot of time with every resident who opened the door to us. The first conversation was often quite casual; we wanted to know who they were, what their living situation was. The next time we called on them, we might ask about some of their concerns, and still later we might begin to ask about their needs or the community’s needs. Sometimes the most ordinary questions produced the most revealing, useful answers. We’d ask, ‘How are you feeling today?’ Someone might answer that she’d caught a cold because there was no heat in her apartment. Well, that’s a good place to begin organizing. We’d talk with her about which

If you’re building to last, you have to dig a deep foundation. We spent a lot of time with every resident who opened the door to us.





city agencies to contact in order to get the heat turned back on. We'd get her together with other tenants in the building to draw up a list of improvements needed in that building. And once tenants got together, they started thinking about the larger picture."

For most residents of 119th Street, the focal point of the larger picture was decent, affordable housing. As they talked to one another, tenants began to see that, in one way or another, everything seemed to depend upon resolving the housing issue. Without secure locks on the front doors, they asked, wouldn't the hallways remain a thoroughfare for drug dealers? Unless the stove was fixed, how was it possible to prepare nutritious, inexpensive meals for your children? How can you go to work when your business clothes are ruined by water from a leaky ceiling? And, looking deeper, they began to ask, how can you have control over what happens in your community when you have no control over conditions in your own home?

Community Pride responded to those questions by encouraging residents to attend local housing workshops and by offering workshops to help inform, organize, and empower tenants. There, residents learned how to conduct meetings, set up tenant associations, establish committees, work with municipal service agencies. One by one, buildings on the block became organized. Tenants worked together, volunteering to paint hallways, clean up the streets, clear debris from vacant lots. Sometimes they followed up a day's work with a small party or barbecue, where they got to know one another better. Soon the barriers started coming down—between homeowners and renters, long-time residents and newcomers—and community members began to think of their block as common ground.

On that common ground, tenants established the Residents Advisory Council in 1994. Originally an umbrella organization for tenant associations in city-owned buildings on the block, the RAC soon opened its

doors to all residents of 119th Street and began working to enhance their skills and to broaden the reach of their community-building network. Community Pride supported these goals in many ways, one of which was to give residents access to a wide range of training programs. One of the first residents to take advantage of those training opportunities was Phyllis Mills.

"I was born on 119th Street," says Mills. "My mother moved there when she was young, and we were probably one of the oldest families on the block. Back in the day, 119th Street was nice and safe and friendly. But during the seventies, things got really bad: drugs, burned-out buildings, crime. A lot of people left the block, and by the late nineteen-eighties, not only did I no longer know my neighbors, I could hardly recognize the street I'd lived on all my life—filthy sidewalks, run-down houses, people afraid to come out of their apartments, even during the daytime.

"Community Pride came knocking on my door in ninety-three. Their organizer spent a lot of time with my family, and soon he was asking me to come to meetings to help start up a tenants' association. 'No, I'm too busy,' I said over and over. But he just kept coming back, and eventually I gave in and went to a meeting. That was the beginning of a big change, not only in my life, but in the way I participated in the life of my community."

Mills quickly became a community activist. To enhance her effectiveness, she enrolled in a series of resident training programs, sponsored by Community Pride, which not only cultivated her own leadership skills but brought her together with leaders in community-building efforts throughout the U.S.

"People do not come into this world knowing how to create an agenda and run a meeting, or motivate their neighbors, or write a proposal to fund community improvements," says Mills. "You have to learn those things. I learned them through Community Pride. I took advantage of every training program Community Pride made available. I learned the basics at their neighborhood workshops. Then for three years, I enrolled in courses at the Management and Community Development Institute at Tufts University, outside Boston. And I attended National Community Building Network conferences in Seattle and Boca Raton.

"I just soaked up the knowledge. And along the way, working with the trainers at NCBN and Tufts, the staff at Community Pride, the other community leaders in my neighborhood and across the country, I began to think of myself as someone who could really change things. It wasn't just that I had new skills. I had a new vision of myself and my community. And step by step, I was learning how to realize that vision."

The first step was the formation of the Residents Advisory Council. Mills was one of the founders of the RAC, and she worked hard to turn the fledgling organi-

I began to think of myself as someone who could really change things. It wasn't just that I had new skills. I had a new vision of myself and my community. And step by step, I was learning how to realize that vision.





zation into a powerful tool for rebuilding her block. Members held raffles and sold baked goods and t-shirts to pay for a host of neighborhood activities throughout the year: block parties in the summer, apple-picking outings in the fall, building spruce-ups in the winter. One spring, they put up signs all along the street: Take Pride in Your Block. And with the warm weather, out came volunteers to sweep the sidewalks and plant flowers in vacant lots.

With the help of Community Pride, residents of 119th Street were becoming much better organized and better informed about issues of common concern. Many community members, along with Phyllis Mills, attended national community-building forums and training institutes. There they were learning to see issues like affordable housing as more than a problem for their block, or even for all Harlem. They were beginning to understand these issues in the context of federal and local government policy.

Community Pride is a Key to Stable Housing

Decades of neglect by private owners, followed by a wave of arson and abandonment in the 1970s, left New York City the default owner of about 100,000 housing units by 1979. The city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development, created in 1978, became the manager of this debilitated housing stock and soon developed innovative programs to dispose of the properties, including selling them to non-profit institutions, private entrepreneurs, and tenant cooperatives. But by the early 1990s, the city still owned more than 30,000 units of *in rem* housing, as this stock was termed. Much of the property was located in Central Harlem and the South Bronx.

In 1994, HPD launched a new disposition program, called Building Blocks. Like similar programs in

the past, Building Blocks aimed to sell *in rem* housing to low-income tenants and responsible local entrepreneurs. But in this new approach, the city sought to dispose of the properties in geographic clusters in the hopes of improving entire sections of a vulnerable neighborhood at once. To help ensure that the process worked, HPD linked up with community-based organizations that knew and understood the issues and concerns of the neighborhoods where the program was to be implemented. Community Pride was one of the first partners chosen by the city, and, largely because of Community Pride's work in the area, 119th Street became a designated Building Blocks site.

Through Building Blocks, tenants in eligible city-owned buildings were offered two options. In the first, the Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Program, tenants would interview local property owners and help choose a new private landlord for their building. In the second, the Tenant Interim Lease program, tenants would enter into a lengthy process in which they learned to manage property, and at the end of which they could, for a nominal price, become cooperative owners of their building. Both options guaranteed that participating buildings would be brought up to standard and that tenants who had to be relocated during renovations would be returned to the same building after the restoration was completed.

Community Pride played a critical role in every step of Building Blocks' implementation: informing and educating tenants about their options, helping to facilitate their decision-making process, organizing NEP tenant groups to work with new landlords, assisting TIL tenants to become capable managers, ensuring that participants in both programs were relocated close by during renovation, promoting and supporting the ongoing efforts of tenants and owners to work cooperatively toward a revitalized community.

People were always getting together—for tenant meetings and small parties and little outings. Every time I asked what was behind all this neighborliness, I got the same answer: Community Pride.





We did this for ourselves; we worked hard to become owners of this building. But we couldn't have done it without the grace of God and the help of our good friends at Community Pride.

Of the ten buildings on 119th Street eligible for the new disposition programs, three chose the Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Program. Phyllis Mills's building, 52 West 119th Street, was among them. Although she advocated for cooperative ownership, most tenants in her building just wanted a good landlord to take over the property and manage it well. They found one, and after the building was sold, Mills moved away, into a new apartment only a few blocks north. She said she felt it was time to make a fresh start. But she brought with her all of the community-building skills she had learned on 119th Street, through Community Pride. And within a few months, she had organized a block association at her new location.

Tenants in a brownstone across the street from 52 West took the second option: like six other buildings on the block, they entered the Tenant Interim Lease program. The chief advocate for this choice was Veron Stovall, a long-time Harlem resident who had moved to 119th Street in 1997.

"One of the first things I noticed when I moved to 119th was a different kind of spirit on the block," says Stovall. "People were always getting together—for tenant meetings and small parties and little outings. People talked to one another on the street and helped one another out. Every time I asked what was behind all this neighborliness, I got the same answer: Community Pride.

"So when the tenants in my building, 55 West, learned that there was a program that could help us become owners, we went right to Community Pride to find out how. They were just wonderful. They sat down with us and talked us through the process. When we entered TIL, they stayed with us every step of the way. And believe me, it was a long journey."

The first step of the TIL journey is for tenants to learn how to manage their own building. The program provides participants with access to courses in building and financial management, where tenants learn about everything from boiler repair to group dynamics. They need every bit of that information, because once tenants assume ownership, they need to make and implement decisions on every aspect of their building's operations, including upkeep, repair, rent collection, bill payment, and criteria for new tenant selection.

While tenants are studying these concepts in a classroom, they are also practicing them in their own buildings. TIL tenants are required to collect rent from each apartment in the building, save the money, and use some of it to help pay for necessary maintenance and repairs. If, after several years, the building is well maintained; if, with the help of HPD, all required reno-



novations are completed; and if tenants have demonstrated the skills and cooperation necessary to continue running the building, they are permitted to purchase their building from the city for \$250 per apartment.

On October 10, 2002, five years after they first entered the TIL program, Veron Stovall and the three other families who live at 55 West 119th Street became cooperative owners of their building. A few weeks later, the new owners threw themselves a housewarming party and invited all their friends and neighbors. Everyone on 119th Street and, it would seem, a good part of the rest of Central Harlem showed up for the event.

"This makes you think that nothing is impossible," says Stovall, as she brings out a platter of cheese for her numerous guests. "I've always said, in God, all things are possible, but you also need some help from your friends. We did this for ourselves; we worked hard to become owners of this building. But we couldn't have done it without the grace of God and the help of our good friends at Community Pride. They were a blessing and a guide. When we sometimes lost our way in all the paperwork and legal work, someone at Community Pride always knew, this is what you do next—one, two, three. When we sometimes got discouraged, Community Pride was always there to say, it's going to be all right.

"Well, now you can see, it's more than all right.



Before I got involved with Community Pride, you could say I was just living in this neighborhood. Now I'm living in the community, a real part of community life.



It's wonderful. There are many reasons it's great to own your own place. On one level, it just makes economic sense. You're paying money to live somewhere no matter what. But when you own, you pay the money to yourself. When you own, it's you, not the landlord, who profits from all those years of investing in the property.

"Somehow, owning also gives you a different, deeper stake in your community. You will take the fight for a good neighborhood even further. When Sanitation doesn't pick up the garbage, when Transportation doesn't fix that pothole in the street, you don't just

call those city agencies. You get on the phone and call your congressional representatives. You hold people responsible until you get what you need."

As Stovall speaks, the other families in her co-op gather near her, nodding assent. "This is the American dream," says Stovall, gesturing to her co-owners. "And it isn't just about owning a house. It's about making a home. That's what we've done together over the last few years. In the process of gaining ownership, we've worked together and talked together and lived together. We've become a family. My mother is far away in Trinidad, and my father is deceased. I consider this to be my family here. That's my American dream. And now it's come true."

Community Pride is Community Empowerment

While Community Pride originally focused its tenant organizing and housing efforts on a single block, the program also offered a wide array of services to residents throughout Community Board 10, which covers most of Central Harlem, from 110th Street north to 155th Street and from Fifth Avenue west to Eighth Avenue. Residents, especially those at risk of homelessness, were encouraged to walk into the Community Pride office, where the small staff might talk with them, help assess their needs, and refer them to appropriate existing agencies. Through Community Pride, residents

could get help finding the right schools for their children, locating day care, getting into job training programs, or registering at local healthcare organizations. Staff members also provided direct services to families and individuals, helping elderly residents fill out Social Security or Medicaid forms, running a summer program for neighborhood youths, and sometimes just spending an hour or two talking with someone who was feeling lonely, isolated, or overwhelmed.

With social services, as with housing, the emphasis at Community Pride was always on helping people to help themselves: building skills, bringing community members together, connecting them with useful resources, cultivating self-reliance and initiative. So over time, many community members who first came to Community Pride to receive help went on themselves to become a source of support, service, and leadership in the community. One of them is Benita Stemberidge.

In 1997, Stemberidge moved to Garden Court, a large housing complex on West 119th Street, between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. "I had lived in Harlem before, as a young woman," says Stemberidge. "After my husband passed, I wanted to move back. I think I associated the neighborhood with happier times. I do know that once I got to Garden Court, I wanted to stay there. So I attended a tenants' meeting at Community Pride. I'd heard we could get some help from them in converting our building to a co-op. At that meeting, I opened my big mouth to speak out on some issue, and the next thing I knew I was the secretary of the tenants' association. I've been committed to working with Community Pride ever since."

The tenants of Garden Court did in fact receive a great deal of help from Community Pride in converting the city-owned building to tenant ownership. Ineligible for the TIL program, tenants negotiated a complex deal with the city through which they obtained a loan that enabled them to renovate and purchase the building.

Stemberidge was very active in every stage of the process. Varied experience in her working life, from research to real estate, had given her a number of skills that proved valuable at the negotiating table. She also took advantage of resident training programs, workshops, retreats, and conferences offered through Community Pride to boost her skills and broaden her outlook.

"I came to the table with something," says Stemberidge, "but Community Pride helped bring out a lot more. For one thing, I got to learn how to work effectively with different groups of people. I was always assertive, but I learned how to make my points quickly and well. I think as a group, the tenants in my building all got very good at deciding what we wanted and knowing how to go after and get it.

"The first time we put our purchase application



through the pipeline, it was rejected by our local councilman. Well, we scheduled a meeting with him. After our Community Pride training, we knew exactly how to impress him as a group that A, knew what we wanted and why; B, cared about the building; and C, could run that building and run it well. He practically signed off on the application before the meeting was over.”

Working with Community Pride on housing issues, Stembridge grew closer to other residents in the building and in the neighborhood. She took on more responsibility in local housing groups. From secretary of the Garden Court tenant association she became president of her block association, and she is now president of the Block Unification Association, including 118th, 119th, and 120th Streets. In her housing work, she came to appreciate the strengths of united community action. And she soon began to notice, and respond to, other community needs.

“You can never do enough for the children,” says Stembridge. “All this work we’re doing, building up the community, it’s all for nothing if we aren’t preparing the children to step up and take over when we can’t handle the load any more.

“The key now for children—for everyone, really—is education. And there are not enough young people in our community getting enough education. My church, Greater Zion Hill Baptist, started a college scholarship fund six years ago. We announced a penny drive, everybody turn in their pennies from their pockets, pennies they found on the street. We aimed to create a \$10,000 endowment, and we just reached that goal.

“But in talking with the youngsters in the neighborhood, I realized many of them didn’t have clear goals themselves. They couldn’t really take advantage of a scholarship, because they didn’t know what they wanted to do with it. So I talked to my pastor, and he talked to other pastors, and we started up a larger youth education and training program. Eleven churches and two agencies partnered in running the program, which has several components. We sponsor college fairs, where representatives from different colleges come and talk to our youngsters. We have college tours, where we take high school students around to different college campuses in the city so they can see what different colleges are like. Then we have a mentoring component; that’s very important. We try to match up young people interested in some field with adults who work in that field. We had a young boy who thought he wanted to join the FBI. We called the police precinct and asked if some policeman would mentor the young man, and they found someone, and that’s been a great success. One

young girl wanted to be a cosmetologist, and we connected her with a woman who ran a beauty salon in the neighborhood. Finally, we have a vocational training component. It’s for youths who are at risk of incarceration or who are returning to the community after being incarcerated. Those young people have to learn a trade, to find an honest way to make a good living, and we help them do that.

“I love this work. When I had a full-time job, I spent at least as much time on my community work as I did on my nine-to-five work. Now that I’m retired, I do this all day long. There’s so much to do. Every year now, I work with my church to set out a beautiful Thanksgiving dinner for seniors and others who can’t cook for themselves. The young people are servers at the table. It’s a wonderful way for them to bond with the elders. I work with Youth Action, which helps train young people in the building trades. I help out with the block party each year.

“How does all this make me feel? To be honest, part of the answer is, tired. It’s a lot of work. But I love doing it. I feel I’m helping to build something important—a better Harlem, caring and strong. I’ve lived in Harlem for a great part of my life. But before I got involved with Community Pride, you could say I was just living in this neighborhood. Now I’m living in the community, a real part of community life, making a contribution and benefiting from the contributions and companionship of others. Working alone, I know

*It’s a lot of work.
But I love doing
it. I feel I’m
helping to build
something
important—a
better Harlem,
caring and
strong.*





Community Development Institute and three National Community Building Network conferences.

In the area of housing, Community Pride has worked with residents of 68 city-owned buildings. With the help of Community Pride, nine of those buildings, containing 264 apartments, are now owned by tenants as Housing Development Fund Corporation cooperatives. The conversion of those assets has resulted in a spectacular rise in their value. Those nine buildings, whose total worth was estimated at approximately \$810,000 while they were owned by the city, are now worth approximately \$3.8 million, an increase of nearly 500 percent. In addition, 33 other buildings, with 319 apartment units, are now participating in the city's Tenant Interim Lease program, which prepares them to become HDFC cooperatives. Fourteen

buildings, holding 432 apartment units, are now in the Neighborhood Entrepreneurs Program, a low-income rental initiative. Community Pride has also organized 55 tenant associations, 18 block associations, and one multi-block network.

To enhance the physical environment, Community Pride has installed 150 tree guards and organized more than 200 neighborhood projects to improve conditions in local parks, city-owned buildings, community gardens, schools, and playgrounds, including more than 50 events involving corporate volunteers.

Partnership is a key strategy for Community Pride. To accomplish its ambitious goals of stabilizing housing and promoting home ownership, improving the physical environment of the neighborhood, and fostering resident involvement, leadership, and empowerment, Community Pride collaborates closely with a host of organizations, including city government, community-based agencies, universities, elementary and middle schools, hospitals, faith-based institutions, and local and corporate businesses.

But of course the strongest partners of Community Pride are the other programs of the Harlem Children's Zone, which work together to provide comprehensive services for Harlem residents. In the eleven years since it began, Community Pride has evolved and grown as a part of HCZ. With HCZ, its boundaries have broadened geographically. It now serves the entire 24-block HCZ area, and it is poised to expand as HCZ extends its operations northwards.

As the boundaries of its work expand, Community Pride has in a certain sense come full circle. When it began, Community Pride operated as

In the eleven years Community Pride has been in Harlem, they've helped to train and motivate hundreds, if not thousands, of people like me. Together, we're now a powerful force in this community.

now that I can do a lot of good. But in the eleven years Community Pride has been in Harlem, they've helped to train and motivate hundreds, if not thousands, of people like me. Together, we're now a powerful force in this community."

Community Pride is a Dream Come True

Since 1992, when it was first established, Community Pride has indeed worked with thousands of community residents in Central Harlem—often one at a time. Every individual, every family, who works with Community Pride seems to get the same warm, personal attention, and often the same effective results from staff members. Over time, all those people together have come to represent a critical mass, tipping the balance in favor of positive change for the community. A quick look at the numbers shows how significant that change has been.

Over the past 11 years, Community Pride held more than 4,000 community meetings with groups ranging in size from two to more than 100 residents. These include approximately 3,600 tenant association meetings, 400 block association meetings, and more than 100 community advisory gatherings. Most meetings are now led by residents themselves. In addition to those meetings, 270 community residents have completed 2,960 hours of training through Community Pride and various organizations. Community Pride has also sponsored more than 600 neighborhood activities and seven community-wide retreats and has supported residents' attendance at four leadership-training sessions at Tufts University's Management and





When the residents themselves take the lead in cleaning up their neighborhood, it's going to stay clean. And when residents are in charge of rebuilding their own neighborhood, that rebuilding is going to last. The skills and the learning that come out of the work stay right in the community.

an organizing program focused on a single issue, homelessness prevention, using a holistic approach, often involving service referrals to outside agencies. During its early years, Community Pride's staff also contained a number of social workers who provided a range of services directly. Today, Community Pride is able to provide a wide array of services by referring

residents to other programs in the Harlem Children's Zone. Embedded in the HCZ continuum of care, Community Pride can once again focus intensively on organizing and housing issues.

At the same time, residents who have developed and honed their leadership skills within Community Pride now exercise those abilities throughout all the work of the Harlem Children's Zone. The Residents Advisory Council first developed by Community Pride has evolved into a 48-member Community Advisory Board, which serves as a guide, monitor, and partner to the entire HCZ, assisting in every aspect of the organization's work, from planning to implementation to evaluation.

Phyllis Mills, Veron Stovall, and Benita Stembridge are all on the CAB. So is Reverend Robert Smith. Like most CAB members, Reverend Smith first got involved with the Harlem Children's Zone through Community Pride. As pastor of First King Baptist Church on West 122nd Street, located directly across the street from Community Pride headquarters, he first met many staff members as neighbors in the street.

"I would see Lee Farrow, Bridget, and others coming in and out of the office every day," says Reverend Smith. "They would always stop and talk, and after a while, I started going to some of their meetings. At that time the block was in bad condition, and people didn't talk to one another the way they do now. We didn't really know one another.

"At one of those early meet-

ings, I remember saying I'd like to just get out there and clean up the streets, which were filthy. Community Pride stepped right up and offered to provide the tools. They gave us brooms and garbage bags, and the staff volunteered to help. That set the pattern. The residents led the way, and Community Pride provided support and training and tools. And that's the way it's been ever since.

"It works better that way. It's a powerful example to see your pastor out there with a broom in his hand. When the residents themselves take the lead in cleaning up their neighborhood, it's going to stay clean. And when residents are in charge of rebuilding their own neighborhood, that rebuilding is going to last. The skills and the learning that come out of the work stay right in the community.

"I've worked on many, many projects with Community Pride. I've done a lot of training with them, and I've learned a lot. I think the most important thing I learned is how much all of us in this community can accomplish when we work together. When I first came to the neighborhood, I wanted to make Harlem a better place. But I was working on my own. We were all on our own. Now we're not alone. We have the whole Harlem Children's Zone behind us. You talk to a young mother who's feeling overwhelmed, you can send her to The Baby College. You see young people wasting their time on the street, you can get them into TRUCE. It can be done casually, just a conversation on the street corner, word of mouth, which is sometimes the best way to get the message out and across.

"In my mind, the biggest message we got across was the message on the sign over the door of Community Pride, just across the street," says Reverend Smith. "Today's Dreams, Tomorrow's Realities. In the end, that's exactly what Community Pride has helped us do: see clearly, not only see what is and what can be, but see one another and all that we can do together. See it, and then make our vision of a better community into a reality."





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Cont. from page 1

rency, social capital is created out of work and trust. The work is accomplished holistically, through HCZ programs linked to provide residents with comprehensive services, from prenatal care to family development, from employment counseling to assistance in receiving Social Security benefits.

In our first edition of *A Look Inside*, we described the work of The Baby College, which provides residents in the Harlem Children's Zone who are expecting or raising children between the ages of 0 and 3 with information and support. But as these children grow up, we can't expect them to flourish socially or academically in an unhealthy or dangerous environment. Community Pride is working to transform that environment, turning debris-filled vacant lots into playgrounds, cleaning streets and planting gardens, helping tenants become homeowners and residents become neighbors, bound together in networks of support and solidarity.

So although the numbers that quantify the work of Community Pride are impressive, we at HCZ don't think those numbers tell the real story or describe the most important part of that work. The real story is about the change in the lives of the community members who work with and through Community Pride. The most important part of that work is that they are now its leaders. And the chief aim of this report is to allow you to hear those community members tell their own story in their own words.

The Harlem Children's Zone has a few new numbers of its own that we want you to know about. Soon we will be entering the first phase of our planned expansion, extending the boundaries of our operations north to 138th Street and east to Madison Avenue. And while our new headquarters building is being constructed, we have moved our administrative offices to 1916 Park Avenue, Suite 212, New York, N.Y. 10037. Our new phone number is (212) 234-6200. Our new fax number is (212) 234-2340.

As we move into new territory from a new base, we remain committed to the same mission: improving the lives of the people of Central Harlem. In this and future issues of *A Look Inside*, we hope you will enjoy hearing from the community residents and HCZ staff who are helping us fulfill that mission.

GEOFFREY CANADA
President/CEO

A LOOK AHEAD

In the 11 years since it was founded, HCZ's Community Pride has made remarkable strides towards achieving its goal: revitalizing the structure and spirit of central Harlem. But, as one resident leader says, "All this work we're doing, it's all for nothing if we aren't preparing the children to step up and take over when we can't handle the load anymore. The key now for children is education."

Through the Harlem Children's Zone, the next generation is stepping forward to take on the work of rebuilding their community. In one HCZ program, the Harlem Peacemakers, young adults operate Freedom Schools, work in public school classrooms, and run afterschool programs to enrich the social, cultural, and academic life of neighborhood children.

The HCZ is a comprehensive service organization, whose programs, listed below, form a continuum of care for Harlem residents. The next issue will feature the Harlem Peacemakers.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Harlem Children's Zone, Inc.
1916 Park Ave., Suite 212
NY, NY 10037
Tel: (212) 234-6200
Website: www.hcz.org
Geoffrey Canada
President/CEO

Booker T. Washington Center 54 Beacon

J.H.S. 54
103 West 107th St.
NY, NY 10025
Tel: (212) 866-5579
Renard Cardona, Director

Countee Cullen Community Center Beacon

P.S. 194
242 West 144th St.
NY, NY 10036
Tel: (212) 234-4500
Robin Hannibal, Director

Family Development Program

201 West 144th St.
NY, NY 10030
Tel: (212) 234-6714
Lynn Burt, Director

Family Support Center

207/209/211 Lenox Ave.
NY, NY 10027
Tel: (212) 666-7390
Wilma Morton, Director

Project CLASS

2061 Frederick Douglass Blvd
NY, NY 10026
Tel: (212) 678-4201
Anthony Mills, Director

Midtown Family Place

Sacred Heart School
457 West 51st St.
NY, NY 10019
Tel: (212) 315-1707
Laura Rice Stein, Director

Truancy Prevention

2061 Frederick Douglass Blvd
NY, NY 10026
Tel: (212) 678-4201
Anthony Mills, Director

The Baby College

2037-39 7th Ave.
NY, NY 10027
Tel: (212) 665-9832
Marilyn Joseph, Director

The Harlem Gems

P.S. 149/207
41 West 117th St.
NY, NY 10026
Tel: (212) 876-1638
Caressa Singleton, Director

Community Pride

157 West 122nd St.
NY, NY 10027
Tel: (212) 932-1920
Lee Farrow, Director

Employment & Technology Center

170 Lenox Ave.
NY, NY 10026
Tel: (212) 369-5912
Leroy Darby, Director

Parents' Help Center

P.S. 149/207
41 West 117th St.
NY, NY 10026
Tel: (212) 876-1638

Harlem Peacemakers

157 West 122nd St.
NY, NY 10027
Tel: (212) 666-4163 (staff)
Tel: (212) 234-6200 (Director)
Rasuli Lewis, Director

TRUCE (The Renaissance University for Community Education)

147 N. St. Nicholas Ave.
NY, NY 10026
Tel: (212) 663-0555
Laura Vural, Director

TRUCE Fitness & Nutrition Center

147 N. St. Nicholas Ave.
NY, NY 10026
Tel: (212) 864-7159
Will Norris, Director

Publication Management/
Writing: Kitty Barnes
Photography: Burt Glinn,
Lee Farrow
Design: Van Gennep Design