

# CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR NEW YORK CITY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2008

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## Citizens Committee Awards 54 Groups \$91,000 in Grants for Fall 2008

Citizens Committee for New York City announced the Fall 2008 recipients of *New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods* and Mollie Parnis Dress Up Your School awards. Fifty-four initiatives throughout the city received a total of \$91,505 in grants ranging from \$500 to \$3000. These groups and schools in economically under-resourced neighborhoods will also receive one-on-one assistance, skills-building workshops, and a resource center that offers access to computers and an equipment loan library.

"We believe that people can make important change happen on their streets and in their communities by working together," said Peter H. Kostmayer, president of Citizens Committee for New York City. "We are honored to support groups that address neighborhood concerns such as limited access to green spaces, diminishing availability of low-income housing, and lack of opportunities for community building."

*New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods* support grassroots volunteer groups in economically under-resourced neighborhoods for community improvement projects that bring neighbors together. Thirty-five groups in all five boroughs received the awards this fall, including 16 groups in Brooklyn, 10 in Queens, five in Manhattan and four in the Bronx. Projects supported include increasing access to greenmarkets among low-income New Yorkers and organizing residents to advocate for better housing conditions.

The *Mollie Parnis Dress up Your School* awards support public school-based, student-led projects that beautify schools or neighborhoods immediately surrounding their schools. Nineteen schools received the awards this fall, including seven schools in Brooklyn, four each in the Bronx and Queens, and two each in Manhattan and Staten Island. Student projects supported this cycle include painting murals, building community gardens and launching school recycling programs.

For more information about Citizens Committee's New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods grant program, contact Arif Ullah at [aullah@citizensnyc.org](mailto:aullah@citizensnyc.org).

## Citizens Committee and Council Member Jackson Honor a Harlem "Cultural Institution"



Citizens Committee president Peter H. Kostmayer and Harlem Council Member Robert Jackson presented Citizens Committee's New Yorkers for Better Neighborhoods award to Marjorie Eliot, who has been promoting community involvement in Harlem by hosting free weekly jazz concerts in her home on Edgecombe Avenue since 1995.

"Marjorie Eliot is a cultural institution in upper Manhattan," said Jackson. "Sunday afternoon Parlor Jazz sessions in her home at the 'Triple Nickel' are a treasure for jazz aficionados and young people who have never heard the music. I'm glad

that Citizens Committee has chosen to support Parlor Entertainment because it is a project that uplifts the neighborhood and preserves a valuable cultural tradition."

"Parlor Entertainment's jazz sessions offer a unique combination of culture and civic engagement," said Kostmayer. "Over the years Marjorie Eliot's concerts have become an important cornerstone of neighborhood revitalization, where local residents can share ideas on how to improve the quality of life in Harlem. Citizens Committee is privileged to be a part of this project to encourage community development through music."

Parlor Entertainment is one of the six resident-led improvement projects funded by *New Yorker for Better Neighborhoods Awards* in Council Member Jackson's district in the past one year. Other grant recipients, including West Harlem Action Network Against Poverty (WHANAP), Cocolart, Friends of Payson Avenue, Riverside Oval Association, and Buyers and Renters United to Save Harlem, were also recognized for their work in contributing to the quality of life in Harlem.



## Tell the Governor to Bag it!

You don't have to look very closely to notice that there are too many plastic bags in New York City. The typical, petroleum-based plastic bag is generally used for only a few minutes, but takes about 500 years to decompose. The bags are so cheap to make, however, that there has been little incentive for stores to use alternative corn-based, biodegradable bags, or just fewer bags overall.

Thanks to the work of organizations like Citizens Committee, environmental advocates, and the work of the New York City Council, New York City passed a law encouraging large and chain stores to limit the use of plastic bags. These stores would be held responsible for collecting and disposing of plastic bags, including any brought back to the stores by customers, with the intention of encouraging them to use fewer bags or switch to more environmentally-friendly options.

However, that law is now in danger of being overridden by a much weaker state law, the "Plastic Bag Reduction, Reuse and Recycling Act". Despite opposition from the City Council and numerous environmental groups, it has made its way unchanged to Governor Paterson's Desk.

This act will reverse the hard work done by those who want cleaner streets and less petroleum from landfills and litter in our city's water. The Governor now has until December 12th to act on this bill, and we encourage you to make your concerns heard!

Contact the Governor's office at [518-474-8390](tel:518-474-8390), and tell him not to let this weaker legislation stand. You can also visit the New York City Council Website to send an email to Governor Paterson: [council.nyc.gov/html/action\\_center/no\\_to\\_plastic\\_bag\\_bill.shtml](http://council.nyc.gov/html/action_center/no_to_plastic_bag_bill.shtml).

Citizens Committee is rallying our groups who work so hard to keep their streets clean to speak out about this legislation. For more information on what we're doing, contact Pinky Vincent at [pvincent@citizensnyc.org](mailto:pvincent@citizensnyc.org).