



# 2020 IMPACT REPORT







## Each year, Red Hook Initiative impacts the lives of over 6,500 residents of Brooklyn's largest NYC Housing Authority campus, the Red Hook Houses.

### OUR MISSION

At Red Hook Initiative (RHI) we believe that social change to overcome systemic inequities begins with empowered youth. In partnership with community adults, we nurture young people in Red Hook to be inspired, resilient and healthy, and to envision themselves as co-creators of their lives, community and society.

Since our founding in 2002, RHI has worked with young people and residents to identify local issues, design solutions and lead by example in their own neighborhood. *Youth development, community building* and an innovative *local hiring model* that pays over \$1M annually to residents of Red Hook, are at the core of RHI's approach to strengthening Red Hook's future.

This report details the impact of RHI's 2020 program year (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020). Spring of 2020 brought the global epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic to New York City, and RHI found itself on the front lines of yet another crisis disproportionately affecting Black and Latinx community members. In the coming pages, you will meet RHI's team of participants and staff who — provided with tools, resources and opportunities — drive the narrative and lead the way toward a more equitable, hopeful future.

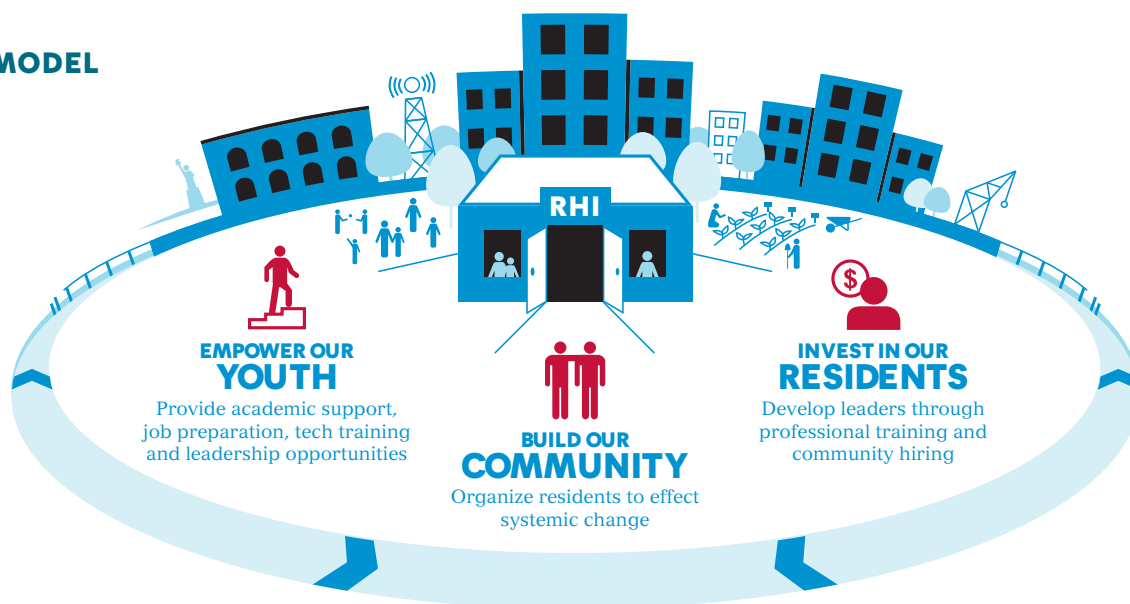
# Community-Based Approach

## CONFRONTING SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN RED HOOK

- Half of families with children under 18 live below the federal poverty line
- Fewer than 50% of adults have graduated from high school
- Due to significant health disparities, residents of the Red Hook Houses endure disproportionately high rates of preventable illnesses including asthma and diabetes
- Nearly 70% of households participate in the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*

**The Red Hook Houses, comprising 32 buildings on 39 acres, is home to a close-knit community of multigenerational Black and Latinx families. RHI confronts the continued impact of racial inequities and systemic disinvestment by prioritizing the needs of young people and residents.**

## OUR MODEL



*\*Data provided via 2013–2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates and NYC Food Policy, 2018 Food Metrics Report.*



# Responding to COVID-19

Since March 2020, when COVID-19 hit New York City, RHI has remained fully open through a hybrid model. RHI's deep roots in Red Hook, our culturally and linguistically competent staff and our history of working with neighborhood partners, government agencies and local elected officials, uniquely positioned RHI to rapidly coordinate a multi-pronged response.

**Our work in the spring of 2020 prioritized:**



## **Access to Information**

Through Red Hook WIFI and Red Hook Hub, RHI's local communication networks, we provided up-to-date public health information and resources. Residents used more than three terabytes of WIFI data and received near daily bilingual Hub updates with information about local, free and low-cost services.

## **Connection to Care**

Through our leadership in the Red Hook Community Health Network, RHI created a community-based screening tool and surveyed 697 residents to identify medically fragile and food insecure households. We used the findings to advocate for community needs and to connect residents to telehealth screenings, counseling services, public benefits such as unemployment and SNAP and emergency food.





## Food Security

RHI partnered with GrowNYC, Dig, Red Hook Transfer Co. and Red Hook Relief to distribute 3,758 food boxes containing 36,041 pounds of produce to vulnerable and food insecure residents. On average, RHI served 400 households per week; 125 of the boxes fed those unable to safely leave their homes.

## Support for Red Hook Youth

During the COVID-19 crisis, RHI's youth programs focused on four goals: connection, income, emotional support and retention. Over 250 young people aged 12–24, maintained contact with RHI.

- RHI employed 78 high school Youth Leaders who provided peer education over remote and social media platforms
- 100% of our college students received outreach to support a safe return to Red Hook
- 1,500 young adults joined a new virtual Entrepreneurship Series
- 46 young people accessed 400 counseling sessions
- While the City cut Summer Youth Employment, RHI developed a model of virtual and in-person programming, offering close to 100 summer jobs to Red Hook youth



*\*Reports on COVID-19 response work and services offered through June 30, 2020.*

# Empowering Youth

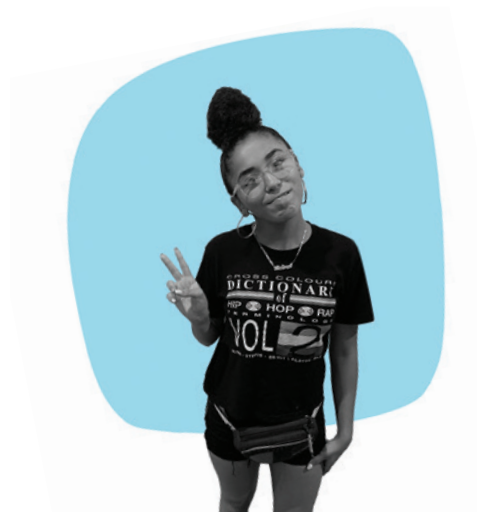
Last year, RHI engaged over 400 youth from 6th grade through age 24. Our youth development programs offer year-round support for middle schoolers, high schoolers and young adults. These programs ensure that Red Hook youth can work toward academic success, explore college and careers, develop life skills, strengthen social support systems and lead by example in their neighborhood.





## Middle School Program

Daily after-school programs for 6th–8th graders provided enrichment activities including: homework help, STEM projects, college and career exploration, counseling and educational advocacy.



## Summer at RHI is rooted in the American Civil Rights Movement

In summer 2019, RHI partnered with the Children's Defense Fund to host Freedom Schools, a literacy and cultural enrichment program rooted in the history of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer. Freedom Schools instills a love of reading through a lens of Black history and culture. By the end of the summer, on average, RHI middle and high school youth improved their reading skills by two grade levels. Youth not only focused on literacy, they also created a social justice campaign, #ProtectChildrenNotGuns, and learned about gun violence and its effects on youth across the country.

## High School Youth Leaders Program

Through the Youth Leaders Program, 115 high school students accessed academic support and leadership opportunities while earning a steady income. Youth Leaders participated in daily educational programs, college access guidance, career readiness training, socio-emotional counseling, reproductive health support and leadership development opportunities.



Youth Leaders earned

**\$260,000**

for their work to create positive change in Red Hook, in roles like:

Peer Health Educators, Peer Counselors, Youth Organizers, Peer Health Navigators, Photojournalists and Youth Farmers

**2,500+**

community members were engaged through organizing workshops, community health fairs, seasonal farm stands and zines — all designed and implemented by Youth Leaders

**85%**

of Youth Leaders graduated from high school on-time

**87%**

of Youth Leaders believe they are able to have a powerful influence on their community



## SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

Kashief Scott was awarded the Jordan Brand Wings Scholarship, a competitive annual honor given to 24 high school seniors nationwide. In his final semester of high school, Kashief stepped up in his community, co-producing a PSA with his peers to share the early facts about COVID-19 while mobilizing peers to protest New York City's decision to defund the Summer Youth Employment Program. Kashief, who was chosen for his determination, authenticity and potential for greatness, is now a freshman at Ithaca College. Kashief is expanding his connection to Jordan Brand through a t-shirt design project and a social justice campaign around voting.



## Becoming a College Scholar

In fall 2019, 29 young people began their freshman year of college, joining dozens of Red Hook peers in becoming RHI College Scholars. Through our College Scholars Program, young adults received help navigating financial aid applications, managing class enrollment and schedules and finding internships and jobs aligned with their interests and majors.

65 RHI College Scholars, most of whom are first-generation students, attend 36 schools nationwide including:

- Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Community College of Baltimore County
- Cornell University
- Ithaca College
- Medgar Evers College
- Monroe Community College
- Morgan State University
- St. Francis College
- SUNY Albany
- SUNY Buffalo State College
- SUNY Geneseo
- Utica College
- Virginia Union University

In April 2020, 92% of high school seniors who expressed interest in furthering their education gained admission at public and private 2 and 4-year colleges. Despite the challenges of long distance learning imposed by COVID-19, 88% of College Scholars maintained active engagement with RHI's team throughout the springtime as students completed an unprecedented semester in college.



## Young Adult Program

With RHI's support, 220 young adults aged 19–24 strived toward individual goals for education (high school diploma, HSE or college degree), employment and professional or personal growth.

*“When I first came to Red Hook Initiative I did so with the intent of finding a temp job. I was so desperate for work that my friend had told me to visit this location and see what they could do for me. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that I was going to enter a program to develop my skills exponentially in a short period of time AND meet individuals that I would want to be involved with my long term goals.”*

— Brian, Career Starter Series Graduate



## BUILDING A LOCAL WORKFORCE

**102**

young adults secured employment, started college or enrolled in vocational training within six months of completing RHI's workforce development program

**108**

young adults accessed case management and emotional health support to help them overcome potential barriers to their success

Young adults earned

**\$220,000**

through subsidized job placements, RHI Fellowships and special task forces such as our Anti-violence Committee



# Building Community

Our approach works to improve the health of Red Hook public housing residents and builds on the existing resiliency of the Red Hook community. Community Building programs provide Red Hook youth and adults opportunities to organize, exercise leadership to drive positive change for the community and increase social cohesion to build a more resilient neighborhood. In 2020, RHI trained an intergenerational cohort of 25 Red Hook residents in community organizing and advocacy; led local public housing actions; mobilized hundreds of Red Hook residents to participate in housing justice campaigns; and sparked youth leadership and organizing at the local and citywide levels.



# Community Organizing Highlights

## Get Counted!

Our multilingual, multigenerational census outreach team launched a campaign in partnership with the New York City Complete Count Fund to ensure an accurate count in the 85th and 59th census tracts. The team logged 28,301 engagement activities; collected 2,999 pledge cards; and assisted 6,630 neighbors to complete the census, resulting in a record-setting self-response rate of 68% as of October 2020.

## #FullyFundNYCHA

Twenty-five youth and adult residents of the Red Hook Houses completed RHI's Organizing Academy, an intensive 8-week training academy. RHI organizers joined neighborhood meetings and city and statewide public housing actions, advocating for an increased investment in NYCHA's infrastructure.



## Mobilizing Local Leaders & Parents

RHI joined community leaders and parents to organize a letter-writing campaign and petition relating to Brooklyn's District 15 public school rezoning process. Over 400 petition signatures drove the NYC Department of Education's decision to extend the rezoning timeline and invest in a Participatory Action Research project for the district.

## Red Hook WIFI

In 2011, RHI launched Red Hook WIFI, a free, local mesh network. The resilient infrastructure was built with the capacity to expand to the NYCHA Red Hook Houses. In March, with COVID-19 exacerbating the digital divide, RHI went into full advocacy mode with local elected officials to jumpstart this project. As a result, the NYC Economic Development Corporation has earmarked funds to expand Red Hook WIFI to the Red Hook Houses and RHI is exploring ways to ensure that Red Hook youth are part of the expansion and adoption process for Red Hook residents. In May 2020, during NYC's ongoing quarantine, over 1,500 users logged onto Red Hook WIFI — a peak for the year.



# Hiring Locally and Creating Pathways to Advancement

**RHI invests locally and has emerged as one of the largest community employers with over 150 youth and adults from Red Hook on staff. Our comprehensive professional development approach builds on the strengths, resilience and tenacity of Red Hook's current and future leaders. We created the RHI Institute to offer programs that confront and reduce barriers to professional advancement that are rooted in systemic inequities and racism.**

*“Career Accelerator was the permission I needed to do the work that would be required of me to grow in my field. I think that [the program] also gave me the courage to pursue those dreams.”*

— RHI Career Accelerator Participant

People from Red Hook earned  
**\$1.6M**  
through staff salaries, stipends  
or contracts with local businesses

**30+**  
alumni have joined RHI  
as permanent staff members  
since our founding in 2002

**\$22,000**  
in scholarships were awarded  
to 5 staff to put toward debt,  
college tuition or accredited  
training programs





# Growing a Local Movement

**Red Hook Farms is an innovative model for urban agriculture, youth development and community-led food production. We operate one of Brooklyn's largest urban farms, transforming once-vacant land into vibrant community-centered green spaces. Since 2001, the farm team has improved community access to healthy, affordable produce, while nurturing a new generation of green leaders.**

*"I farm because my goals align with the goals of the farms within my community — to empower others (especially youth) and to educate others about the importance of food justice and making sure others are embracing healthy habits. I farm because it is not only just a workplace for me, but also a passion that I have adapted to for the past 4–5 years of learning a new environment and what it endures."*

— Chane, Red Hook Farms Assistant



*\*This data reports on the Red Hook Farms 2019 season (January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019).*



## RHI Operates Two Farms in Red Hook



### Changing Local Health, Menus and Minds

Red Hook Farms grew and harvested 60 varieties of vegetables and herbs using organic and regenerative farming practices. Produce was distributed locally through weekly farm stands, CSA and Fresh Food Box programs.

**24,412**

pounds of produce were harvested on two urban farms

### Nurturing the next generation of green leaders

Red Hook Farms hired, trained and mentored teenagers from Red Hook in urban agriculture while cultivating their leadership, career and job readiness skills. Last year, 21 Youth Farmers and four young adult Farm Assistants led all aspects of production from seed to sale including urban farming techniques, farm stand operations, food justice advocacy and peer learning.

Youth Farmers collectively earned

**\$94,583**

### Learning in outdoor classrooms

Children and youth rolled up their sleeves to learn about plants and explore where their food comes from. Focusing on institutions that serve Red Hook youth, we hosted groups from schools, summer camps and local teen programs. Visits included a farm tour, plant exploration, service-learning activities and a farm-fresh snack.

**650**

students explored Red Hook Farms during  
group visits to the farm

## Red Hook Farms staff recognized as leaders of urban agriculture

### 40 Under 40: The Rising Stars in NYC Food Policy, Class of 2020



**Nefratia Coleman**  
Wolcott Street  
Farm Manager



**Souhair Kenas**  
Farm Education  
Manager

In June 2020, The Hunter College New York City Food Policy Center released its annual class of 'Rising Stars' — 40 individuals under 40 years old who are working to transform the food system. The Center honored two leaders on the Red Hook Farms team along with their peer policymakers, educators, community advocates, farmers and innovators who are making significant strides to create healthier, more sustainable food environments and to use food to promote community and economic development.

# Celebrating RHI's leaders past and present



**Jill Eisenhard**



**Morgan Monaco**

In 2020, after 18 ½ years of dedication and leadership, our beloved founding Executive Director stepped away from RHI. The organization's first Board President, Lisa Pilar Cowan, shared this reflection on Jill's extraordinary legacy:

"RHI is a vibrant institution because of Jill and so many others. She has challenged and inspired so many of us to ask ourselves: what impact can I make in my community? How can I confront injustice, take on unfair systems and build hope? Jill has encouraged, comforted and celebrated generations of Red Hook families. She has given so much to all of us — the young people, staff and board of RHI — and she has in turn gotten even more from the community."

Following an intensive six-month search, RHI is proud to welcome Morgan Monaco as our next Executive Director! An experienced New York City leader dedicated to our mission and committed to building collective power, Morgan joins RHI with over 13 years of public service at the intersection of environmental sustainability and social justice. On her new role, Morgan offered: "As a born and raised New Yorker and longtime Brooklyn resident, I am excited to join the Red Hook community to help combat systemic injustices, and to create change from within."

# THANK YOU

to our team of  
volunteers &  
partners  
including the  
following groups

Americon HITT

Getty Images

Home Studios

Kantar

NY2X

Red Hook Relief

Sustainable Summer

Sir Kensington's

The New School

The Retreat

## 654+

volunteers dedicated 1,330  
hours with RHI, mentoring and  
supporting youth, packing and  
delivering boxes of fresh food  
and gardening on the farm



Thank you to everyone who contributed to our 13th annual fundraiser in 2019. Taste of Red Hook would not be possible without the generosity of the following local establishments.

Alma

Ample Hills Creamery

Baked

Blue Marble

Brooklyn Crab

Brooklyn Pharmacy &  
Soda Fountain

Brooklyn Ice House

Brooklyn Crafted

Buttermilk Channel

Court Street Grocers

Defonte's Sandwich Shop

Dolce Brooklyn

Fort Defiance

Hometown Bar-B-Que

Ipsa Provisions

Jessie Sheehan Bakes

Joe Coffee

Kevin's

La Slowteria

Mazzat

Pilot Kombucha

Pizza Moto

Popina

Raaka Chocolate

Red Hook Copper Pot

Red Hook Farms

Red Hook Winery

Rick's Picks

San Pedro Inn

Saxelby Cheesemongers

Sixpoint

Steve's Authentic Key Lime Pies

The Chocolate Room

The Good Fork

Travel Bar

Van Brunt Stillhouse

Wet Whistle Wines

Whipped Pastry Boutique

White Moustache

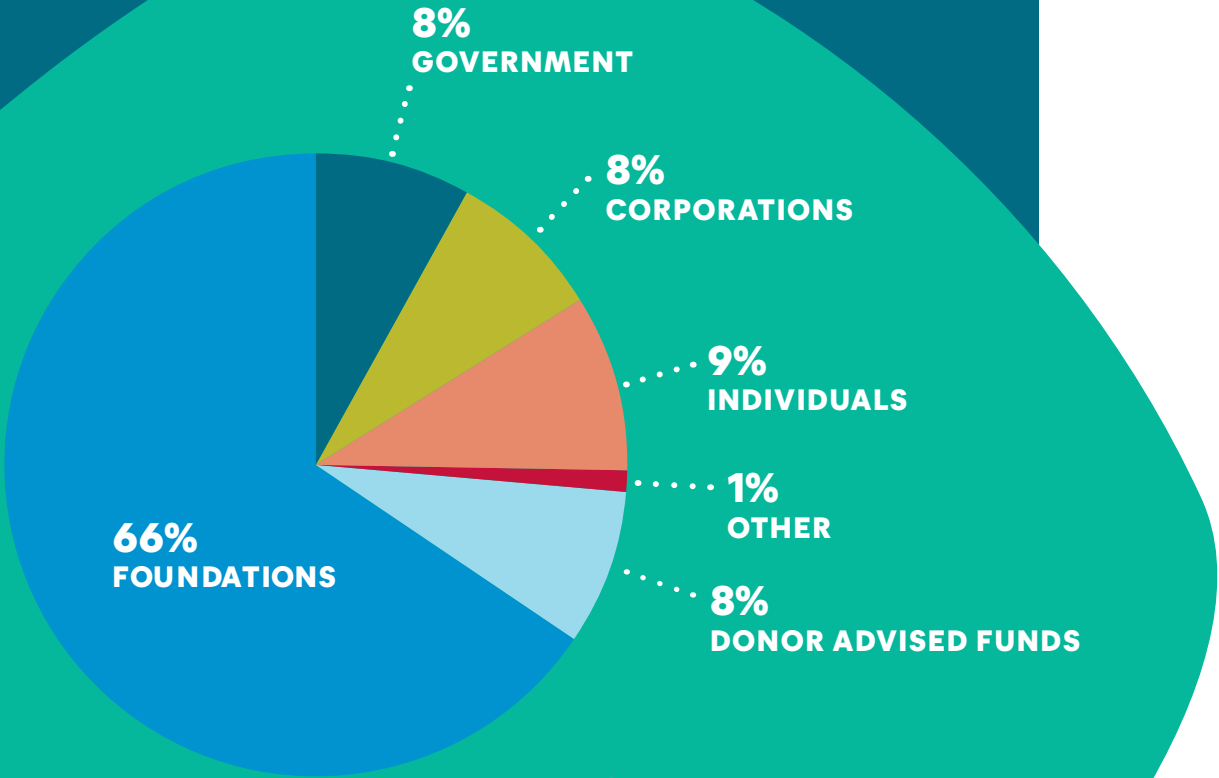
Widow Jane





# 2020 INCOME

Total Expenses: \$4.5M



# INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1834 Project  | Heron Foundation                                   | NYC Economic Development Corporation              |
| Adya Family Fund                                    | Homebase   | NYC Human Resources Administration                |
| AECOM   | Hornblower New York                                | NYC Service Civic Impact Fund                     |
| Alfred P. Sloan Foundation                          | Hyde and Watson Foundation                         | NYC Young Men's Initiative                        |
| American Eagle Outfitters Foundation                | Industry City                                      | NYU Langone Family Health Centers, Sunset Terrace |
| Andrew Strauss and Katie Buckels Fund               | Irene Ritter Foundation                            | O'Connell Family Foundation                       |
| Barker Welfare Foundation                           | J.M. Kaplan Fund                                   | Paul Balser and Paula Del Nunzio Balser Fund      |
| Benevity Fund                                       | Jefferies Financial Group                          | Penobscot Fund                                    |
| Bloomberg Philanthropies                            | Jennifer Wheary and Paul Walker                    | Phillip and Norma Gordon Charitable Fund          |
| Brookfield Properties                               | John and Mary Brock Fund                           | Pinkerton Foundation                              |
| Brooklyn Community Foundation                       | Jordan Brand                                       | Rebecca and James Katz Fund                       |
| Bulova Stetson Fund                                 | Joseph S. & Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust    | Red Hook Transfer Co.                             |
| Carson Family Charitable Trust                      | Joy of Giving Something Foundation                 | Rio Vista Fund                                    |
| Charles Hayden Foundation                           | Kamco Supply Corporation                           | Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation           |
| Citi Bike   | Keith Haring Foundation                            | Robert Sterling Clark Foundation                  |
| Coleman Family Charitable Foundation                | Kettering Family Foundation                        | Robin Hood Foundation                             |
| Collegiate Church Corporation                       | Koya Leadership Partners                           | Russell Grinnell Memorial Trust                   |
| Commonplace Fund of RSF Social Finance              | Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust    | Santander Bank                                    |
| Complete Count Fund of the CUNY Research Foundation | Levitt Foundation                                  | Scherman Foundation                               |
| Con Edison  | Lily Auchincloss Foundation                        | Seth Sprague Education & Charitable Foundation    |
| Council Member Carlos Menchaca                      | Lonuzzi Team   Compass                             | Signature Bank                                    |
| Cushman & Wakefield                                 | Lower East Side Girls Club                         | Sitex   |
| Customers Bank                                      | M&T Charitable Foundation                          | Stainman Family Foundation                        |
| Daniel Arnow Fund                                   | Mariposa Foundation                                | TD Charitable Foundation                          |
| DH Property Holdings                                | Mary J. Hutchins Foundation                        | TerraCRG  |
| Dig   | Matelski Family Fund                               | The Durst Organization                            |
| Donald A. Pels Charitable Trust                     | May Ellen and Gerald Ritter Foundation             | TR Pipe   |
| Doris Duke Charitable Foundation                    | Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC                        | Trio Foundation of St. Louis                      |
| E. Wachs Family Foundation                          | Merck Family Fund                                  | United Neighborhood Houses                        |
| Edward S. Moore Family Foundation                   | MJS Foundation                                     | Urquhart Charitable Fund                          |
| Enterprise Community Partners                       | Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund                      | van Ameringen Foundation                          |
| Equinor   | Mother Cabrini Health Foundation                   | Wachs Family Fund                                 |
| Erie Basin Marine Associates                        | Munzer Foundation                                  | Walentas Foundation                               |
| Fishman Family Fund                                 | New York Business Development Corporation          | Washington Square Fund                            |
| Ford Foundation                                     | New York Community Trust                           | Weld Foundation                                   |
| Formula E   | New York Foundation                                | WellMet Philanthropy                              |
| Freygish Foundation                                 | New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets | Wunsch Foundation                                 |
| David Friedman and Halee Sage                       | New York Water Taxi                                |   |
| Gerstner Family Foundation                          | New York Women's Foundation                        |   |
| Goldman Sachs                                       | NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene          |   |
| GrowNYC   | NYC Department of Youth & Community Development    |   |
| Gwen Libstag Fund                                   |  |   |
| Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation              |  |   |
| Heckscher Foundation for Children                   |  |   |

*\*This list includes institutions contributing \$2,500 or more.*





767 Hicks Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11231



*“Being a part of Peer Health Navigators is a life changing experience! People see us as a well oiled group who can get the job done no matter what or the time. We’re not just a group that can get the job done, we’re also a family. I know while I have been working here with my group, I have just as much support here at RHI with people who care and support me like at home.”*

— Anthony W, Senior Peer Health Navigator,  
who worked with his cohort to distribute over  
600 personal hygiene kits to peers in Red Hook

#### 2020 Board of Directors

**President** Chris Cardona **Vice-President** Janice McGuire **Secretary** Maria Mottola **Treasurer** Andrew Strauss

**Directors** Gregg Bishop • Millicent Comrie • David Friedman • Donovan Hamlet • Brandon Holley • Rebecca Kirsznar Katz  
John Kline • Michael Lee • David Xi Bing Ma • Tom McMahon • Nanda Prabhakar • Jennifer Wheary • Eden Wurmfeld

**Executive Director**  
Morgan Monaco

**Founding Executive Director, 2002–2020**  
Jill Eisenhard

## CREATING CHANGE FROM WITHIN

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