



# 2021 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 2021 program year (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021). With the Covid-19 pandemic forever altering our community, we asked ourselves: what does the future hold, and how can Red Hook rebuild from the Covid-19 pandemic in ways that shift the systems and conditions that weren't serving us well? We cannot erase how the pandemic exposed decades of disinvestment in our schools, job prospects, public housing conditions, and healthcare systems due to systemic racism that already existed. This year, we launched a recovery agenda that will tackle emerging neighborhood needs and spark long-term change.

# Community-Based Approach

## CONFRONTING SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN RED HOOK

- Half of families with children under 18 live below the federal poverty line
- Nearly 70% of households participate in the *NYC Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*
- Less than half of adults have graduated from high school
- Residents develop preventable illnesses, like asthma and diabetes, due to significant health disparities

## OUR MODEL



**RHI works to shift the levers of power from transactional change to transformational change beginning with the 6,500 residents and youth we serve.**

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



# Leading a Local Recovery

RHI continued to work with neighborhood allies to bring Covid-19 resources into our neighborhood through a recovery plan that is rooted in healing and aims to improve outcomes across health, education, economic mobility, and food access.

## Health & Emergency Relief

RHI provided multilingual vaccination outreach and worked with our local Red Hook Community Health Network to advocate for the establishment of a quality healthcare facility in Red Hook. Over 600 residents accessed vaccines at RHI's community center and received \$217,000 in financial assistance.

## Support for Red Hook Youth

When schools remained remote, RHI offered customized academic, employment, and socio-emotional support for 270 Red Hook youth. This past year, RHI's high school and young adult participants collectively earned \$429,000 for their work in the community.

## Food Access

Red Hook Farms ensured affordable and accessible healthy food for thousands of local residents with a harvest of over 20,000 pounds of produce.





**We are determined not to return to “business as usual,” but will work instead to address the impact of Covid-19 and the underlying systemic inequities that made our community vulnerable during the pandemic. RHI will continue to build and implement an equitable recovery agenda through the following strategies:**

#### **Community Organizing and Civic Engagement**

- Engage Red Hook public housing residents in resident-led community building initiatives and organizing campaigns that promote resiliency and health.

#### **Education and Youth Development**

- Work with parents and local schools to address Covid-related learning loss and advocate for high-quality local educational opportunities.

#### **Employment and Economic Mobility**

- Create sustainable employment for young adults through new industry partnerships that build pathways to gainful employment in high growth sectors such as: tech, healthcare, green jobs, and entrepreneurship.
- Advocate for broadband access as a basic right.

#### **Community Safety**

- Promote public safety in Red Hook through a youth-led Public Safety Transformation organizing campaign.

#### **Health and Well-being**

- Play a lead role in the Red Hook Community Health Network and advocate for local access to a quality healthcare delivery system that will lead to improved health and mental health outcomes.
- Provide multilingual case management services that connect residents to vaccines, public benefits, emergency rental assistance, and other critical social supports.

# Empowering Youth

Last year, RHI engaged over 270 youth from 6th grade through age 24. Our youth development programs offered year-round support for middle schoolers, high schoolers, and young adults, ensuring that Red Hook youth persisted with academic success, explored careers, developed life skills, strengthened social support systems, and led by example in their neighborhood.



## Education

This school year was like no other. RHI provided comprehensive academic support and college access programming for over 200 young people. Supporting BIPOC youth to realize their goal of becoming the first in their family to graduate college is core to our mission. For Red Hook Initiative's high school seniors, the road to college meant staying on track with academics, writing personal statements for applications, and completing financial aid forms — all while contending with a remote learning environment during one of the most critical times for college preparation.

**140**

youth participated in homework help, STEM programs, college exploration, socio-emotional programming, and educational advocacy

**85%**

of Youth Leaders graduated from high school on-time

**100%**

of RHI seniors who applied to college gained admission

**171**

young adults pursued goals around furthering their education





## Summer in Red Hook

### Rooted in the American Civil Rights Movement

In summer 2020, 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 Project. Freedom Schools is an opportunity for middle and high school youth to gain a love of reading and learn more about Black history and culture. Each student participated in virtual programming that improved literacy skills, deepened historic knowledge of systemic inequality, and built critical social action tools.

The Integrated Reading Curriculum, a core component of Freedom Schools, featured classroom activities that use a variety of teaching models, including cooperative learning, group discussions, reading aloud, paired reading, creative writing, and visual arts. Each scholar took home at least one new book each week.

### Ready for College

A centerpiece of our summer program is the College Institute — a two-week intensive for rising college freshmen that prepares them for the transition to campus life. This year, 11 College Scholars learned about crucial topics such as virtual study habits, the dynamics of race and safety on campus, campus support services, and attended a panel with peer upper class college students. To support a successful transition to campus, each scholar received a laptop at the completion of the College Institute.



# Senior Spotlights

Last fall, 19 young people began their freshman year of college, joining dozens of Red Hook peers in becoming RHI College Scholars. Through our College Scholars Program, students received help navigating financial aid applications, managing class enrollment and schedules, and finding internships and jobs aligned with their interests and majors.

## Meet the Class of 2021

“I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can’t accept not trying,” Laura reflected upon graduation from Brooklyn Prospect Charter School. She is now attending SUNY New Paltz with plans to pursue a major in Biology. Laura is also the recipient of the prestigious 2021 Jordan Brand WINGS Scholarship.

Judah graduated from Art and Design High School and started at SUNY Buffalo State College, majoring in Health and Human Services. Judah is also the recipient of the 2021 ViacomCBS scholarship.

Both Laura and Judah continued to work at Red Hook Farms this past summer while attending SUNY Educational Opportunity Programs.

**50**

RHI College Scholars, many of whom are first-generation students, attend 40 schools nationwide





# Building Community

RHI's Community Building Program worked toward improving the health of residents of public housing in Red Hook and strengthening the resiliency of the Red Hook community. The program provided 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 2021, hundreds of local residents took part in leadership development trainings, case management, public housing advocacy, and participatory action research.**

#### **Emergency Response**

As Covid-19 vaccines became available, RHI partnered with Red Hook's local Nate's Pharmacy to vaccinate over 600 local residents.

#### **Red Hook Open Streets**

RHI has been a NYC Department of Transportation "Open Streets" partner since May of 2020. Since then, we have offered multilingual, weekly 'community office hours' for over 225 residents and distributed over \$217,000 to families needing emergency financial assistance.

#### **#FullyFundNYCHA Organizing**

RHI's Local Leaders and Youth Organizers engaged over 75 residents in community meetings, citywide actions, and policy discussions to advocate for equitable funding for public housing.

#### **A Seat at the Table**

RHI hosted resident meetings with NYCHA Chairman Greg Russ and Mayor Bill de Blasio, strengthened connections to Community Board 6, and hosted two Ranked Choice Voting informational sessions for community members to learn about the new voting process.



# Investing in Red Hook Residents

**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. Throughout the past year, RHI provided year-round, meaningful employment for emerging nonprofit leaders of color, Red Hook youth, and community members.**

When the Covid-19 pandemic cost young people their jobs and set off financial instability, RHI provided steady employment opportunities year-round. Our programs prepared young people to enter the workforce and developed leadership skills that foster peer education and community engagement.

## STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL WORKFORCE

**\$1.6M**

earned last year by people from Red Hook through staff salaries, stipends, or contracts with local businesses

**\$429,000**

earned by Youth Leaders and young adults working to create positive change in Red Hook, in roles like: Peer Health Educators, Youth Organizers, Peer Navigators, Photojournalists, Public Safety Organizers, and Youth Farmers

**2,500+**

community members reached through organizing workshops, community health fairs, seasonal farm stands, and community zines designed and implemented by Youth Leaders

**79**

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

**30+**

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



## Designing Youth-centered Public Safety

RHI employed a team of 10 Public Safety Organizers to: promote neighborhood safety through youth-led organizing and community-based alternative approaches to over-policing; create an inventory of resources for returning citizens; and open opportunities to lift young adult voices in formal community spaces — all through a lens of reducing police violence.

This year, the training program began with a focus on seminars in the public safety discourse, which study and unpack how violence occurs in communities like Red Hook.

### Seminar topics included:

- Behavioral Design for Effective Voter Engagement
- History and Current Reality of Racism Against Asians in America
- International Models of Non-Police Crisis Response
- LGBTQ+ Healthcare Disparities

### ***A Life of Dedication and Service*** **Sheryl Nash-Chisholm** **1954 - 2021**

On October 22nd, 2021, RHI and the Red Hook community lost our beloved Ms. Sheryl. The entire community will be forever impacted by Ms. Sheryl's love and dedication. For 16 years, Ms. Sheryl fulfilled her calling as a teacher and mentor at RHI, a job she cherished with all her heart. Ms. Sheryl's neighborhood was important to her; she became a community activist and was very vocal in promoting change. Sheryl's earthly light has been dimmed, however it will continue to shine brightly within those she loved and those who loved her.



*Art by Jose Hernandez*



A PROJECT OF RED HOOK INITIATIVE  
**RED HOOK  
FARMS**



# Growing a Local Movement

**Red Hook Farms works to increase access to healthy, affordable produce and nurture the next generation of BIPOC green leaders. We operate two urban farms, and our programs include a teen farm apprenticeship, weekly farm stands, a CSA, Fresh Food Box, and a school workshop program.**

Last year, we joined farmers around the world to continue the essential work of feeding and nourishing our neighbors. We began the 2020 farm season by transforming almost overnight into a hub for food security in Red Hook, coordinating a new weekly produce distribution to feed hundreds of families. This summer, we were thrilled to see so many of you come out for the fresh veggies and fresh air — a kind of solace and respite that only our city's treasured green spaces can provide.

**5,471**

hours worked by  
youth farmers

**\$82,057**

earned

**235**

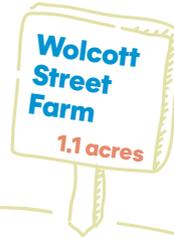
students hosted  
through 14  
virtual visits



*“I farm because it helps me connect to the earth and my ancestors before me...Our work on the farm is about the community it brings together and how it changes our perspectives on the way we eat in such a positive way.”*

— Airiell, Youth Farmer

## RHI Operates Two Farms in Red Hook:



## FRESH FOOD ACCESS

**20,567**

pounds of produce harvested on two urban farms

**7,853**

Emergency Fresh Food Boxes distributed to 915 families

**2,837**

shoppers visited the farm stand over 22 weeks

**73**

households participated in our CSA

### 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 4 young adult Farm Assistants participated in all aspects of production from seed to sale.

### Farm Based Learning

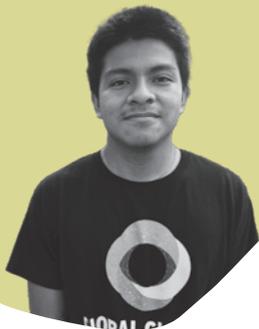
When New York City school children began learning from home, the Red Hook Farms team worked with teachers from P.S. 15, P.S. 676, Arts and Letters, and The International School of Brooklyn to offer Farm Fridays. Virtual visits gave students the chance to see what was blooming and growing, explore the seasons on the farm, and peek inside the chicken coop.

### Changing Local Health, Menus, and Minds

Every season we grow and harvest a variety of culturally relevant vegetables and herbs using organic and regenerative farming practices. Nearly 60 varieties of vegetables were planted this year, carefully chosen using the results of resident and Youth Farmer surveys. A record number of shoppers picked up produce at the weekly farm stand operated by the Youth Farmers.

*\*Reports on the Red Hook Farms 2020 season (January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020).*





# Recognizing Red Hook Leaders



## ***They're Young, Unemployed and Facing Bleak Prospects***

The New York Times introduced readers to Knowledge Westbrooks, one of the many Red Hook young adults employed by RHI during a time when job losses have especially hurt young Black and Latinx workers. Knowledge, with his neighbors and peers in RHI's local workforce, collectively earned \$1.6M, conducting outreach in response to Covid-19, distributing fresh food, and organizing for equity in Red Hook.

Scan each of the QR codes with your camera:



## **Urban Farms Work To Get Healthy Foods To Their Communities**

Youth Farmer Alex welcomed Craig Melvin & The TODAY Show for a new series, "Inequality in America."



## ***I Believe Good Food Is a Right. So I'm Teaching Kids to Farm.***

*"Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter demonstrations haven't changed our mission at Red Hook. They've solidified it. Good food is a right. Farming is political—especially to farm on a small scale, in urban areas, and organically. It's a political act because for so many years the kind of farming our U.S. government supports has been the complete opposite of those things: large, rural, and nonorganic."*

– Brendan Parker, Columbia Street Farm Manager





# THANK YOU

## to our team of volunteers & partners

1834 Project  
Aruliden  
Blackstone Charitable  
Foundation  
Capgemini  
Grace Church  
Home Studios  
Mayer Brown  
Red Hook Relief  
Red Hook Transfer Co.  
Rockets of Awesome  
Social Creatures  
Thankview  
Urban Clarity  
Whole Cities Foundation

**500+**

volunteers dedicated countless hours with RHI, mentoring and supporting youth, planting veggies, harvesting, and turning compost.



Thank you to everyone who participated in our first ever *virtual* Taste of Red Hook. Taste would not be possible without the generosity of countless restaurants and small businesses.

### Taste of Red Hook featured:

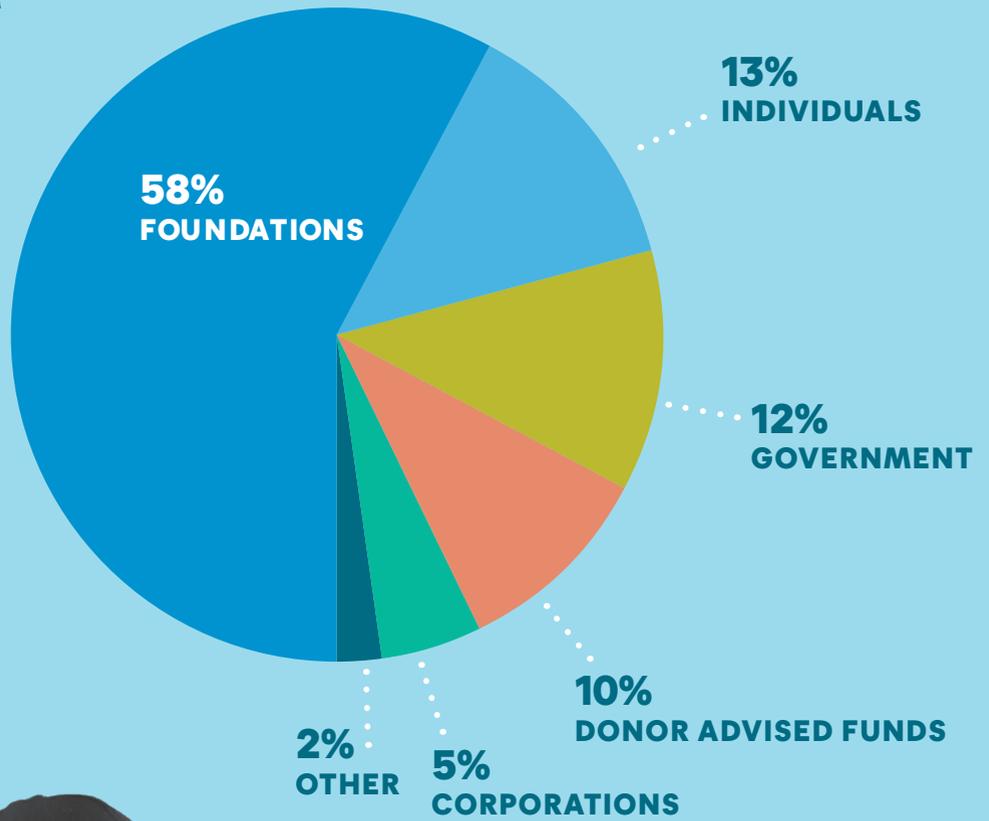
Ample Hills  
Buttermilk Channel  
Calexico  
Insa  
Dolce Brooklyn  
Dry Dock  
Fishers Island Oyster Farm  
Fort Defiance  
Henry Public  
Hometown Bar-B-Que  
Hyssop  
Ipsa  
Jam'It Bistro  
Jessie Sheehan Bakes  
Joe Coffee  
Margaret Palca Bakes  
Pizza Moto  
Popina  
Poppy's  
Raaka Chocolate  
Red Hook Tavern  
San Pedro Inn  
Saxelby Cheesemongers  
Sixpoint  
Travel Bar  
Van Brunt Stillhouse  
Wet Whistle Wines

Scan here for the recipe book:



# 2021 INCOME

Total Expenses: \$4.5M



# INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS

1834 Project  
Alan P. Winters Fund  
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation  
Altman Foundation  
American Eagle Outfitters Foundation  
Americon HIIT  
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Jennifer Wheary and Paul Walker  
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Kettering Family Foundation  
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Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC  
Merck Family Fund  
MJS Foundation  
National Innovation Service  
Neighborhoods First Fund  
New York Community Trust  
New York Foundation  
New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets  
NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene  
NYC Department of Youth & Community Development  
NYC Economic Development Corporation  
NYC Human Resources Administration  
NYC Ferry  
NYU Langone Family Health Centers, Sunset Terrace  
Paul Balser and Paula Del Nunzio Balser Fund  
Penobscot Fund  
Phillip and Norma Gordon Charitable Fund  
Pinkerton Foundation  
Pursuit  
Rebecca and James Katz Fund  
Red Hook Model Block  
Red Hook Terminals  
Regent Atlantic  
Ripple  
Robert J. Katz Charitable Fund  
Robertson Foundation  
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation  
Robert and Mercedes Eichholz Foundation  
Robin Hood Foundation  
Rockefeller Foundation  
Rockets of Awesome  
Russell Grinnell Memorial Trust  
Santander Bank  
Scherman Foundation



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Sitex  
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Stainman Family Foundation  
Stavros Niarchos Foundation  
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The Durst Organization  
Thigpen Hill Family Fund  
Toby and Paul Koren Charitable Fund  
Trio Foundation of St. Louis  
United Neighborhood Houses  
Urquhart Charitable Fund  
van Ameringen Foundation  
Wachs Family Fund  
Washington Square Fund  
Weld Foundation  
Wellspring Foundation  
Whole Cities Foundation



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



767 Hicks Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11231



“My favorite thing about RHI is that you constantly go above and beyond to meet the needs of the people in our community. It is a place in Red Hook where I feel safe and where I feel my voice is heard. RHI made me aware of problems in my neighborhood that I didn’t even know about and allowed me to think critically about the ways I could help solve them.”

— Karla, Young Adult Intern

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## CREATING CHANGE FROM WITHIN

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