Fighting for our families, our communities & ourselves

COMMUNITY VOICES HEARD

Building leaders ~ Winning Change
2014 Annual Report
dear friends,

thank you for being a part of the community voices heard family and contributing to our success in 2014!

as we look back at yet another amazing year, our work demonstrates that the struggles of our members and the victories of our organization are critical elements in bringing positive change to the cities, counties, state and country that we all seek to build and thrive in. cvh continues to work boldly to win strategic campaigns, grow our membership, develop strong community leaders, build geographic and statewide power, and ramp up our electoral work.

thankfully, the hard work of our members, staff, and supporters paid off once again with numerous accomplishments to show for it. whether it’s working to bring about a truly participatory democracy, winning resources to preserve public and truly affordable housing, or ending worker exploitation, cvh continues to be at the front lines of social change in new york state.

this past year our cutting edge work and unique perspective were acknowledged through an invitation to the white house to discuss participatory governance models and an appointment to serve on a nyc mayoral task force on workforce development and jobs. our influence is growing!

we hope you’ll review our 2014 annual report to learn more about our work and accomplishments, and the important member-leaders behind them. whether it’s working to bring about a truly participatory democracy, winning resources to preserve public and truly affordable housing, or ending worker exploitation, cvh continues to be at the front lines of social change in new york state.

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we hope you’ll review our 2014 annual report to learn more about our work and accomplishments, and the important member-leaders behind them. in the coming year, cvh will proudly celebrate our 20th Anniversary....we’ve come a long way, evolving from a one-city, one-issue organization into a multi-chapter, multi-issue force in new york state.

we appreciate those who participated in our victories of the past year, and all who share in our vision for the future – leading and supporting the movement for change.

in solidarity,

sondra youdelman
executive director

tyletha samuels
co-chair, board of directors

walter lipscomb
co-chair, board of directors

vision
we work toward building a society in which...
• the systems that govern us foster racial, social and economic justice not exploitation – particularly for low-income people of color.

we seek a society in which...
• all people – regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, age, gender expression, sexual identity, citizen status, primary language, and ability – are treated with mutual respect and when privileges of one group do not exist.

• all people are able to work with dignity, have access to a sustainable quality of life, and can obtain unconditional support in their time of need.

• governmental structures are transparent and based on community needs.

• policies address the needs of all people and strengthen our communities.

we believe in a society in which...
• “experts” do not have all the answers, but rather a society in which the people most directly affected are the ones making the decisions.

mission
community voices heard (cvh) is a member-led multi-racial organization, principally women of color and low-income families in new york state that builds power to secure social, economic and racial justice for all. we accomplish this through grassroots organizing, leadership development, winning policy changes, and creating new models of direct democracy.

programmatic goals

winning campaigns
cvh will lead campaigns that build statewide power to achieve racial, social and economic justice for low-income families and communities of color in ny state.

growing & developing membership

cvh will develop a membership base recognized for its scale, and its grassroots members will be recognized for their leadership capacity in building an effective social justice movement.

geographic expansion

cvh will build upon existing bases and establish leadership teams across nyc and the hudson valley with an aspiration of regional influence and statewide power for low-income families in nys.

electoral power

cvh will build electoral power – moving people to the polls to create an influential voting bloc - to achieve racial, social and economic justice for low-income families and communities of color.
OUR MODEL
Community Voices Heard (CVH) believes that we must build the power of low-income people and people of color, particularly women, by developing an organization that they control and lead. We have a successful model that has and will continue to mobilize large numbers of low-income people, and people of color to:

- **DEVELOP** into community leaders,
- **PARTICIPATE** in the policy making process,
- **WIN** concrete policies that improve our members’ lives, and
- **CREATE** a more fair and equitable community for everyone.

OUTREACH:
We actively seek out low-income people in their neighborhoods.

OBSERVE:
We find out what motivates each individual—what change they seek, what drives them to make change.

ENCOURAGE:
We encourage people to step outside their comfort zones and into leadership roles—facilitating a meeting, visiting a legislator, testifying at a public hearing, speaking to the press, etc.

CHALLENGE:
We challenge people to develop their networks-exchanging information and ideas, and moving to action on issues of common importance.

TEACH:
We build awareness and capability through training and workshops-the fundamentals of organizing, the policies and systems that impact communities and people living in poverty, and the movements for economic, social and racial justice that we work within.

UNDERSTAND:
We develop a collective understanding of the issues and systems that most fundamentally challenge people, to understand our power to change them.

PRIORITIZE:
We select issues to move on, based on political opportunities and a clear power analysis.

ORGANIZE:
We develop leadership teams that bring together people ready to bring about change through building their networks, advancing their power, and organizing around issues until they WIN!

DEVELOPMENT OF A CVH LEADER
At CVH’s core is a commitment to leadership development among our constituency so that low-income people directly affected by the issues at hand can be the change agents needed to improve critical policies and programs that impact their lives. CVH taps into innate talent that our members already have and then works to hone and enhance that talent, and direct people’s ignited passion. We reorient anger and frustration—showing people how to re-direct their energy at systems and structures and direct people’s ignited passion. We reorient anger and frustration—showing people how to re-direct their energy at systems and structures and direct people’s ignited passion.

OUR STRATEGIES

**BASE BUILDING**
Getting out and meeting new people consistently—to inform and engage in our work, and invite them to join our membership.

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**
Providing organizing, political, and consciousness-raising training opportunities for members, and supporting people in stepping up and taking on new risks and roles.

**PARTICIPATORY-ACTION RESEARCH**
Formulating research from the ground-up that is informed by our members’ lived experiences; that brings a unique perspective to the issues; that is driven by, and drives action and change.

**RUNNING STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNS**
Crafting campaigns with clear goals and objectives, strategies and tactics, timelines, and end games in order to influence concrete policies, programs, and budgets that affect low-income families’ lives.

**DIRECT ACTION**
Utilizing creative, non-violent actions and demonstrations to bring priorities to those that have power to change things. Engaging in discourse to reveal existing problems, highlight alternatives, and demonstrate possible solutions to social issues.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**
Engaging members in civic life by informing them about basic governmental systems and players. Providing people with the skills and tools to actively and effectively participate. Motivating people to get involved in both political and non-political processes.

CVH MEMBER-LEADER: WENDY CEBALLOS
One of the staff at my children’s school told me about the CVH Anti-Poverty Town Hall Meeting in Port Chester and I went—it was awesome. My experience as a single mother is not easy. I know mothers who work 12-16 hours a day and still live in one room with their kids. I want my kids to have a better life experience. CVH opened my eyes. We lived about our rights; about laws to protect us, but we can’t benefit from these unless we do something. CVH want to let us know that although this life is hard, if we do nothing it will only get worse.

I was asked to speak at CVH’s first anti-poverty meeting in Port Chester. I did a speech in a church about what the After School programs are doing for me. I’m glad my kids are learning there; we need that help. One of our legislators attended; it was so exciting for me—it was the first time I heard and I did not want it to end! Something changed inside me that night—we can’t just stay home and do nothing.

A lot of people don’t know what is happening. I wanted to do something; at least let people know what is happening. As a CVH Leader, I testified in White Plains—spoke about my experience with After School programs. Only two schools have this and it’s one of the things we want to change. We work 2-3 jobs to survive; we need low cost/free, quality programs.

CVH helps me see the world in another way; a new perspective. I’m learning a lot of things and have help from a lot of beautiful people; I don’t feel alone anymore. What we have is 100,000 times better than in my home country (Dominican Republic), but we deserve more than we have now. I want to educate people on what they can get if they apply for it. Inspired by my involvement with CVH, I started the Action for Education Group, working with other immigrant mothers. I also got involved with the Latino Network group; I’m involved with anything that helps the community. There are a lot of good changes in my community and this is all thanks to CVH.
CVH continued its work around post Hurricane Sandy rebuilding, focusing on organizing public housing residents in The Rockaways, Coney Island, and Red Hook and collaborating with community, labor, and faith partners through the Alliance for Just Rebuilding. In March, the partnership released the report, Weathering the Storm: Rebuilding a More Resilient New York City Housing Authority to reveal some of the major issues that New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents have faced since Hurricane Sandy, such as slow and inadequate repairs, malfunctioning boilers, mold, and a lack of job opportunities.

We began to integrate our efforts into a climate justice frame and mobilized a Front Line Communities contingent to participate in the 400,000+ People’s Climate March in New York City in September.

Through our work and that of our partners, $100 million was secured from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to replace 60 boilers at 110 NYCHA buildings. Plans and contracts for rebuilding include innovative components to advance local hiring, job training, job quality and housing support. New collaborative work will address climate change issues while meeting the needs of low-income New Yorkers in securing good jobs.