COMMUNITY RENEWAL SOCIETY empowers people to build just communities by working to eradicate racism and poverty. It does so by informing, organizing, training, and encouraging individuals and communities in sustained and strategic efforts to engender systemic change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Letter from the Executive Director  3 Knowledge  7 Action
11 Change  15 Campaign Update  23 Financials  28 Awards  29 Donors  35 Staff & Board
By any measure, 2008 will stand as one of Chicago’s most remembered. But while most in our nation – and many around the world – will think of the historic election of President Barack Obama, we at Community Renewal Society worked to ensure equity, justice and respect for the thousands who never made it into the national headlines.

We shared the story of the East Garfield Park renter that began when she came home one day to find a letter offering her $1,000 to move, even though she’d made her payments on time. It took her months to learn who owned her soon-to-be-foreclosed building and find out when she had to leave. Eventually, after she tried in vain to resolve the situation, a moving company damaged her belongings to the point where she didn’t even want them anymore.

That story helped us work with both state officials and faith leaders in Evanston to do more to hold lenders accountable and help families faced with evictions they didn’t create.

We partnered with activists like Louise Evans, a parent and member of Nicholson Elementary Local School Council, concerned about whether other parents in her Englewood neighborhood truly valued their children’s education. Our reporting had revealed a disturbing trend: state-funded preschool seats sitting unfilled in this underserved neighborhood. That work helped spur parents and community leaders to ensure that those children now have access to the education they deserve.

“...we at Community Renewal Society remain proud of the ways we kept our focus on those whose stories remain unheard far too often.”
We helped grandparents like Adrian Charniak, who cares for Joey while his parents serve a prison sentence. Through our campaign on behalf of Children of the Incarcerated, we supported a network of organizations that fought to increase government payments to these families. Despite deep economic challenges in our state, officials agreed and approved larger payments.

In all of these cases, we used our organization’s strengths – award-winning investigative journalism, community organizing through a network of congregations and strong relationships with policymakers and grassroots activists – to promote large and small-scale policy and programmatic improvements that benefit our region as a whole. When renters have safe, affordable places to live, our communities remain vibrant. When young children get a head start on gaining the knowledge they’ll need to contribute to society, they can grow into leaders. And when grandparents and other relatives can care for the family members that fall through traditional safety nets, we don’t have to place that burden on our social service agencies, churches, synagogues and mosques. While Chicago made news for many reasons in 2008, we at Community Renewal Society remain committed to those whose stories remain unheard far too often. As our mission states, neither race nor class should limit any person’s full participation in our society.

Truly, it was a year in which our nation demonstrated the importance of making sure that ever-greater numbers of us can achieve this goal.

Reverend Calvin S. Morris, Ph.D.
Executive Director
In December, Catalyst Chicago became the national go-to source on education issues. Fueled by our reputation and pull-out-the-stops marketing efforts, we told the nation what it might expect from outgoing Chicago Public Schools chief Arne Duncan as the next Secretary of Education. This led to more than a hundred stories and appearances in the national and local media—television, radio, print and web—and a tenfold increase in web hits. Coverage included The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Associated Press, The Christian Science Monitor, ABC -7, NBC - 5, CBS - 2, WGN- 9, CNN American Morning, PBS-WTTW 11 Chicago Tonight, The Take Away Radio Show (NYC), KPCC- FM “Air Talk” (Los Angeles), and Plains Radio Network “Honest American News” among several on-line media outlets.
The Chicago Reporter was cited in a July 7 front-page article in The New York Times about Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama. The article chronicled Obama’s organizing efforts around the Reporter’s 1986 investigation that found asbestos in the Ida B. Wells public housing development.

“I taped up [the asbestos] because that stuff was flying everywhere. I was always cleaning it off the furniture and floor...my kids were getting it on them, and they were itching.”

- Ida B. Wells Resident Willie Jefferson
In September 2008, Catalyst Chicago launched the first of its new product line, Catalyst In-Depth. These reports, which represent the first in a series of shifts in Catalyst’s focus, methods and mission, take a close look at one subject of interest to school reform advocates and educators.

“...Most discussion of educational policy and practice is dangerously disconnected from the daily realities of urban schools, especially the bottom-tier schools.”
- University of Chicago Researcher Charles M. Payne
More than 500 people from throughout the region connected with religious leaders and dozens of social service, government and community-based organizations at an October 5th Faith Summit hosted by CRS’ Civic Action Network at the University of Illinois-Chicago Forum.

The summit called for a move away from an ineffective system of criminal justice—focused solely on punishment and retribution—to one rooted in the principles of prevention, transformation, restoration and healing. The action items moving the system take into account the needs of victims, offenders, and the communities from which they come. The new vision for criminal justice in Illinois is contained in a Faith Statement, the driving policy for the Summit. This work continues through 2009 by keeping our networks informed of new legislation through a news issues team.
Catalyst drew together more than 300 education stakeholders in April to present its first In-Depth report - a Report Card on Chicago public high schools. The event included a presentation of the report card by Catalyst staff members, a speech by Washington Post education columnist Jay Matthews, a panel of high school students offering perspective from inside the schools, and comments by former CPS CEO Arne Duncan.

“This is the kind of public engagement that can lead to real change if we ask ourselves, where do we go from here?”
- Woods Fund of Chicago President Deborah Harrington
In September, Catalyst and The Chicago Reporter hosted a forum addressing the dire need for reform of the state's public schools financing system. We convened several state legislators and civic leaders among which were State Sen. Rev. James Meeks and Chicago Urban League President Cheryle Jackson. The forum was moderated by Dawn Clark Netsch, an advocate who ran for governor of Illinois on a school reform platform in 1994.

Catalyst's Data and Research Editor John Myers and the Reporter's Jeff Kelly Lowenstein presented statistics on

“School funding has been a major crisis in the state of Illinois for a long, long time.”

- Dawn Clark Netsch
statewide funding inequities. Ralph Martire, the executive director of the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, presented data that showed a correlation between funding and student achievement. In the months following the forum, Myers and Kelly Lowenstein summarized their presentation for a special meeting of the Chicago Board of Education, lawyers at Jenner & Block (who are handling the Urban League lawsuit), and for the assembled membership of the Civic Action Network at the Community Renewal Society’s Annual Meeting.

“I don’t think that this issue is going to be solved unless we do something drastic.”
- Illinois State Senator James W. Meeks
In October, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced an $8.7 billion settlement in the state’s predatory lending lawsuit against Countrywide, the nation’s largest mortgage lender. Madigan cited The Chicago Reporter in announcing the settlement: “Countrywide also was the largest seller of high-cost, or subprime, home loans in the Chicago area in 2006, according to a 2007 Chicago Reporter study,” she announced. The Reporter’s study revealed that the Chicago region led the nation in the number of high-cost loans granted, with overrepresentation among African-American and Latino borrowers. Madigan joined the Reporter, the Chicago Urban League and around 200 community leaders at the 2007 event where the data was released.
In October, CRS’ Children of the Incarcerated Campaign achieved a victory when the Illinois Department of Human Services included in its budget an increase in the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Grant.

This victory came after years of effort by the Illinois Department on Aging, in partnership with Community Renewal Society’s Civic Action and Senior Action Networks, along with many other groups focused on the needs of children whose parents are imprisoned. The TANF Grant allows states to allocate resources for a broad array of services. It is often sought by relative caregivers to help offset the costs of raising children whose parents are incarcerated. A more detailed outline of our work on behalf of these families in 2008 follows.
In early 2008, Catalyst Chicago, Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI), Family Focus Englewood, Illinois Action for Children, Power-Pac (Parents Organized to Win, Educate and Renew Policy Action Council) and the Salvation Army convened a forum to help fill seats in Englewood pre-schools. The event was inspired by a story published in Catalyst last year that revealed disparate demand for the state-funded Preschool for All program. In Latino communities, preschool seats were filled and families were clamoring for more; but in some African-American areas like Englewood, slots were widely available and going unfilled.

Following this event, activists in the community hit the pavement, going door-to-door to promote the pre-school program and spread the word about the importance of early learning experiences. The activists blanketed
the neighborhood with door hangers, distributed fliers at schools and gave away schoolbags, T-shirts and books at summertime events such as the Bud Billiken Parade, African Festival of the Arts at Washington Park, Taste of Chicago and the Englewood Back to School Parade. Thanks to their efforts, today nearly every pre-school seat in Englewood is filled.

“The forum has had two levels of impact, local and citywide. We are continuing to meet to tackle this issue. Many people are still very involved.”

- Organizer Kellie Magnuson
The Children of the Incarcerated Campaign (COI) is a multi-year initiative to improve outcomes for the children of incarcerated parents. The campaign is the first major collaborative effort among the Community Renewal Society’s three departments: Civic Action, our community organizing and advocacy arm; The Chicago Reporter, our award-winning watchdog publication on issues of race and poverty; and Catalyst Chicago, which uses investigative journalism to improve the education of children.

Reporting by Catalyst and the Reporter found that prisoners and their families, as well as school social workers, often were unaware of available services.
We had a major breakthrough with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). In December 2007, we met with Arne Duncan, former CEO of CPS and he agreed that CPS ought to develop a plan to address related issues facing many students. We identified two leading national experts who consult with school districts throughout the country and arranged for them to meet with CPS personnel. As a result, CPS agreed to train all of its school-based social workers to address the needs of children with incarcerated parents in the school setting. We recently learned that CPS is engaged in a reorganization of its Social Work Department, which has delayed the training. The office of the CEO and Director of Policy remain committed to this effort and look to us to help them move it along.
Children of the Incarcerated

LEGISLATION

SB 2879 - Incarcerated Parents: The Illinois House and Senate unanimously passed legislation drafted by a CRS-supported coalition that commits the Illinois Department of Human Services to provide, as part of the prisoner intake process, information on visitation, family counseling, mentoring and school-based programs for children whose parents are incarcerated. Reporting by Catalyst and the Reporter found that prisoners and their families, as well as school social workers, often were unaware of available services.

“Because of the explosion [in prison numbers] and because it’s clear that there is an impact on the children... we risk having an even larger number of incarcerated people.”

-Gail T. Smith, Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers
March/ April 2008 (print / online):
The cover story package called “Visiting Day” looked at the experiences of families of the incarcerated, finding that visiting their loved ones in downstate prisons is an expensive, time consuming and increasingly rare trip.

One of the Reporter’s investigations revealed that while more than half of Illinois’ prisoners come from the Chicago area, a similar proportion of correctional facilities are more than 200 miles away. In many cases, the distance and cost of travel are big hurdles for families of prisoners. The Reporter’s analysis of data from the Illinois Department of Corrections showed that inmates at prisons within two hours driving distance of Chicago were nearly two-and-a half times as likely to receive visits as inmates in prisons more than five hours away.

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

THE CHICAGO REPORTER

Ed Paschal waits for passengers near 87th Street and the Dan Ryan Expressway on Chicago’s South Side before taking them to visit inmates at prisons in downstate Centralia and Vandalia.

Ed Paschal waits for passengers near 87th Street and the Dan Ryan Expressway on Chicago’s South Side before taking them to visit inmates at prisons in downstate Centralia and Vandalia.
September/October 2008 (print / online):

The Reporter’s cover story “Always an Afterthought” provided a look inside the criminal justice system more than a year after a call for statewide hearings to address the situation for children with incarcerated parents. Illinois law provides in some ways for children whose parents are incarcerated, but a survey of the agencies involved reveals that often their needs are addressed on an individual basis. In addition, in a follow-up story, the Reporter explored how ongoing gridlock in Springfield has delayed the passage of important legislation for the children of incarcerated parents.

“This is a moment that has to include children as the future investment.”

- Ranjana Bhargava, Connections, a prison and family ministry program of Lutheran Social Services
In the April 2008 issue on Social and Emotional Learning, Catalyst addressed the issue of how the Chicago Public School system currently addresses this population. In one story called “Lights the Way for Kids,” Catalyst looked at the Lawndale Amachi Mentoring Program (LAMP), which is the first local chapter of the well-regarded Amachi program started in 2000 in Philadelphia by Rev. Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr. The faith-based program has won national recognition for its work to bring together mentors with children whose parents are in prison.

“I am only one person...I don’t see anything wrong with giving [my grandchildren] a little more [love] from a mentor.”
- LAMP Grandmother Cynthia Washington

Juan Ortiz listens to his 2nd grade teacher Roxanna Guerra-Durazo at Spry Elementary. Guerra-Durazo, who was trained in social and emotional learning, says it has helped her better manage classroom behavior.
A major area of focus for Civic Action during 2008 was the Faith Summit for Criminal Justice Reform. The event effectively showcased the desire of faith communities to address the needs of families and communities impacted by incarceration. Summit participants had an opportunity to learn from individuals and families affected by the criminal justice system through testimony. Participants reported feeling compelled to take action, both by reaching out directly to other families of incarcerated people, and by working for criminal justice reform more broadly. Our Resource Fair featured 35 community-based organizations and service providers. Many remarked that the Resource Fair was one of the best networking opportunities in recent memory. New volunteers signed up to assist families by helping them travel to visit their incarcerated relative. A number of people committed to driving their own cars hundreds of miles to allow for these important visits.
## UNRESTRICTED

### Assets

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**TOTAL ASSETS** $6,577,007

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**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS** $6,577,007
## Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

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**TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES, GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT**  
$4,384,917

### Operating Expenses

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**TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES**  
$4,202,989

**CHANGE IN NET ASSETS - OPERATING**  
181,928

**NON-OPERATING GAINS AND LOSSES**  
(1,025,639)

**CHANGE IN NET ASSETS**  
(843,711)

**NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR**  
7,030,328

**NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR**  
$6,186,617
## Consolidated Statement of Financial Activity

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MIDWEST LIGHT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

Since 2000, the Midwest Light of Human Rights Awards, presented by The Heartland Alliance and the National Immigrant Justice Center, has honored human rights workers and celebrated contributions of business, civic, and philanthropic leaders in promoting human rights. In 2008, *The Chicago Reporter* was given the award as a part of the team that produced the Chicago Matters series “Beyond Borders”.

HERMAN KOGAN AWARDS

In May, *The Chicago Reporter* was honored with a Meritorious Achievement Award for “Missed Signals” in the print category of the 2008 Herman Kogan Awards.

31st ANNUAL PETER LISAGOR AWARDS FOR EXEMPLARY JOURNALISM

The Peter Lisagor Awards for Exemplary Journalism are considered by many local journalists as “the Academy Awards of Chicago journalism.” Both *Catalyst Chicago* and *The Chicago Reporter* were finalists for the Lisagor Awards for business reporting in a trade or specialty magazine, newspaper or newsletter in 2008. *The Chicago Reporter*’s Kimbriell Kelly and Alden Loury captured the award for “The High Price of Home Ownership.” Jeff Kelly Lowenstein, Angelica Herrera and Kimbriell Kelly won a Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting in a trade or specialty magazine, newspaper or newsletter for their work in the Chicago Matters series on immigration.

2008 WATCHDOG AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC INTEREST REPORTING

*The Chicago Reporter* won the 2008 Chicago Headline Club’s Watchdog Award for its series, “Missed Signals.” The series was written by the Reporter staff writer Jeff Kelly Lowenstein, Managing Editor Rui Kaneya and *ColorLines Magazine*’s former editor Tram Nguyen. “Missed Signals” was an exhaustive look at police shootings in Chicago.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Executive Director Rev. Calvin S. Morris, Ph.D. received the Boston University School of Theology Distinguished Alumnus Award. This award honors alumni/ae whose work has brought them recognition within their professions or other fields of endeavor, whether in the field of Christian ministry or in other professional areas, or whose work has contributed significantly to the advancement of their professions.

Additionally, Dr. Morris was awarded the Voices of Freedom Award from Harriet Beecher Stowe Fine and Performing Arts Academy.

*Chicago Reporter* writer Jeff Kelly Lowenstein was awarded a Dart Center Ochberg Fellowship.

*Chicago Reporter* writer Fernando Diaz was named the 2008 Emerging Journalist of the Year by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. The selection committee noted Diaz’ impressive accomplishment, his work as a bilingual reporter, his ability and desire to converge to other media platforms, and his commitment to the Latino community through his excellent investigative reporting.

Additionally, Diaz received the 2008 Justice and Journalism Fellowship for Ethnic Media from USC Annenberg’s Institute for Justice and Journalism.
$200,000 and above
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
Joyce Foundation
Louise Gunn Smith and Russell Herrick Smith

$100,000 and $199,999
Chicago Community Trust
Mary and Charles Liebman

$50,000 - $99,999
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Ford Foundation
Lloyd A. Fry Foundation
McCormick Foundation
Polk Bros. Foundation
Spencer Foundation
Woods Fund of Chicago

$25,000 - $49,999
Richard H. Driehaus Foundation
McDougal Family Foundation

$10,000 - $24,999
Advocate Healthcare
Alphawood Foundation
The Henrietta Lange Burk Fund
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Chicago Tribune Foundation
Ruth D. Davee Field Foundation of Illinois, Inc.
Kraft Foods, Inc.
Rev. Calvin S. Morris, Ph.D.
The Albert Pick, Jr. Fund
Prince Charitable Trusts
The Seabury Foundation
Wieboldt Foundation

$5,000 - $9,999
Anonymous
The Boeing Company
The Fund for Investigative Journalism, Inc.
Glencoe Union Church
The Koldyke Family Fund
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