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New Red Hook-Gowanus program aims to fight poverty

Fifth Avenue Committee, Inc. (FAC), an award-winning, Brooklyn-based community development corporation, has formally launched a program that seeks to fight poverty in Red Hook and Gowanus by providing free job training and placement, as well as adult education and individual and family support services. The program, called Stronger Together: Creating Opportunities for Public Housing Residents in Red Hook and Gowanus, held an inaugural program outreach day and press conference, which Councilmembers Carlos Menchaca and Brad Lander attended.

Stronger Together is a program partnership led by FAC in collaboration with its partners Brooklyn Workforce Innovations (BWI), Red Hook Initiative (RHI) and Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC). Over the next four years, more than 1,200 adults living in poverty in NYCHA developments in Red Hook and Gowanus — or one in three adults living in poverty in these developments — will gain access to these free services through Stronger Together.

“The Stronger Together model represents the best of Brooklyn — government working with community-based and trusted organizations to improve the lives of local residents,” said Menchaca, who serves as co-chair of the Council’s Brooklyn Delegation. “This model can serve to meet the needs of communities from across our city concerned with unemployment, lack of education and lack of access to a higher quality of life.”

More than 500 Stronger Together participants will gain access to quality careers and benefits to support themselves and their families, and an additional 500 will improve their math and literacy skills, obtain their HSE, graduate high school or move on to college.

“Stronger Together stands poised to lift over 1,200 public housing residents in Gowanus, Wyckoff and Red Hook Houses out of poverty through new opportunities in education, workforce development and placement into good jobs,” Lander said. “This initiative also strengthens our ‘Bridging Gowanus’ effort to insure that the future of the area around the Gowanus Canal brings real benefits for neighborhood families.”

The Stronger Together program will expand existing award-winning services provided by the four partner organizations and will improve referrals among the partner organizations, ensuring participants get more of the services they need. A new performance measurement system will track outcomes on individuals and the community, documenting the program’s effectiveness in reducing poverty.

The program was developed thanks to core multi-year support from Change Capital Fund (CCF), a collaborative of 17 major New York City funders working to develop data-driven strategies that alleviate poverty among individuals and families living in persistently low-income neighborhoods. CCF is providing FAC and its partners \$1 million in funding over the next four years for the Stronger Together program.



The Brooklyn Delegation of the New York City Council has also provided \$77,500 to support the inaugural year of Stronger Together as part of the Delegation's JOBS 2015 Project to enhance workforce development programs provided by thirteen highly effective Brooklyn based nonprofits.

"We are enormously grateful for this support and to be given the opportunity to expand our programs in NYCHA in Red Hook and Gowanus and ensure that our programs are maximizing their impact," said Michelle de la Uz, executive director of FAC.