We are of and for the community. We stand for what is right and believe opportunity is not a privilege. We understand that a thriving community is a healthy community. We believe in results. We are a catalyst for change in the lives of people seeking secure and prosperous futures.
We are the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation.
NMIC is a community-based not-for-profit organization founded in 1979 to serve the Northern Manhattan neighborhoods of Washington Heights and Inwood. Designed to respond to the particular needs of this first-generation Dominican immigrant community, our comprehensive work includes community organizing, tenant organizing, housing development, weatherization services, legal services, social services, workforce development, education, and community health support. Under the leadership of Barbara Lowry since our founding 30 years ago, NMIC has grown to become one of the city’s most respected community-based organizations. Today, with a staff of nearly 200 and a budget of over $12 million, NMIC serves more than 30,000 individuals and families. We are a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our community on their paths to secure and prosperous futures.
What does it mean to believe in your community? It means understanding the community you serve, standing up for what is right, believing in the power of opportunity, striving to build a thriving, healthy community, and being committed to achieving results that will be a catalyst for positive change.

Everything we do at NMIC converges on this one goal: To make our community stronger by making its people stronger. Our means for achieving this are many: chief among them are organizing tenants to advocate for their rights, keeping families from falling into homelessness, teaching parents ways to guide their children toward academic and social success, getting laws changed to protect children’s health, training men and women to find and keep dignified work, helping women recover from and oppose domestic violence, and connecting people with public benefits as a bridge out of poverty.

Moving Forward. Thirty years is a big milestone for any organization. For us it is not only a time to look back at our progress but a time to focus firmly on the future. NMIC enters this next era of service with a renewed sense of purpose and a strategic focus on our continued growth. This begins with a stronger client-centered service model to better connect NMIC programs with our clients’ diverse needs. We will commit to agency-wide outcomes so that we can measure our impact in addressing the needs of the community.

Building on over two decades of “green” experience in weatherization, we will find new opportunities to train individuals in emerging green jobs. We will continue to respond to emerging community issues, like financial literacy and preventive health care, with action and innovation.

Our most visible change may be in the form of a new home for NMIC. Planning is underway for the development of a new building to house NMIC and other community services. New facilities will improve our ability to serve the changing needs of the community and create new groundbreaking programs.

Thirty years of investing in the people of Northern Manhattan, through times of crisis and times of celebration, have allowed us to understand the changing needs of this unique part of New York City. We do not know what new challenges our neighborhoods will face in the years to come, but we do know that we will be there to help the community meet them. This is what NMIC was founded for, and it remains the guiding promise of all our work.

To the dedicated staff, board, and all those who make sure we never turn our back on the people of Northern Manhattan, we thank you for your commitment. And to those who want to join our mission, we welcome your support.

Barbara Lowry
Executive Director

Jeffrey Rosengarten
Board Chair
THIS IS OUR COMMUNITY. For more than a century, successive waves of newcomers have settled Northern Manhattan. Many eventually moved on again as plentiful jobs in nearby boroughs or across the Hudson made economic mobility possible. But by the 1970s, just as a new wave of immigrants from the Dominican Republic was arriving, that economy had vanished. Lacking the education needed for most employment, many people soon found that rising rents caught them in a bind: too poor to stay and too unskilled to move out. NMIC emerged in 1979 to address this rising tide of need, joining local churches and synagogues to provide lifelines to vulnerable families throughout the community.

Today, supporting the diverse needs of Northern Manhattan’s 200,000-plus residents continues to be the work of many dedicated organizations, but NMIC remains the leader in providing a comprehensive range of services to our most at-risk residents. Working together, we have made progress in clearing away many of the obstacles that prevented the community from thriving. Nevertheless, our most critical challenge, solving the systemic problems of poverty, remains before us.

EMPOWERING PEOPLE. Every family deserves a place to live that is safe, with heat in winter, working plumbing, and bedrooms free of rodents. These are basic rights that many landlords in New York handle well, but a substantial number of landlords are willfully neglectful, creating life- and health-threatening hazards.

Our clients come to us not knowing how to communicate with city agencies or negotiate with landlords. We provide guidance, assistance, and training, and if building owners are unresponsive we take legal action. Each time we win a case, we know it is a victory that can change the lives of the people we serve.

We learned early on that improving the quality of housing throughout our community will never happen if we try to resolve each crisis separately. When landlords seek to empty whole buildings of their tenants by letting them crumble, ending the abuse requires that tenants act in a coordinated way. For thirty years, NMIC has been a leader in tenant organizing. We help tenants communicate with landlords and, when that fails, we organize rent strikes, legal actions, and administrative proceedings. Since our inception, we have helped organize hundreds of buildings, and today we are actively working with nearly 50 tenant associations at any one time.

To gain a voice strong enough to be heard by political officials and respected by large landlords, we recognized, would require neighborhood-wide organizing. This is why in 1981, working with community leaders, NMIC helped to organize the Washington Heights-Inwood Community Union – or The Union Comunal. This independent, membership-run community association empowers residents to be active players in civic life. With consistent training and technical help from us along the way, the Union Comunal has more than 2,700 members and is a major reason why municipal authorities today are more responsive than in the past to residents’ needs.

Protecting families from the nightmare of homelessness has been a top priority of ours for more than 20 years. Through our legal services, social services, and partnerships with the city, we have achieved an unmatched record in keeping financially distressed families in their homes. Although our neighborhoods have among the highest poverty rates in New York City and almost no public housing, we have the lowest rate of individuals entering the city’s shelter system of any poor neighborhoods in the city.

LEADING INNOVATION. NMIC also has a long history of innovative partnering with both the private and public sectors to improve conditions in Northern Manhattan. In the
Community Snapshot

With the Hudson River to the west and the Harlem River to the east, for more than a century our companion neighborhoods of Washington Heights and Inwood have been a haven for waves of American immigrants. The low-rise cityscape has been home to tight-knit communities of Irish, Greek, Eastern European, African American, and most recently Dominican New Yorkers. While the neighborhoods are experiencing gentrification, they also contain some of the city’s greatest concentrations of poor people.

208,867 people live in Washington Heights/Inwood alone

16% growth in population since 1980

59,000 people live below the poverty line, the 5th highest number in NYC

$32,000 median household income, 38% less than the average for NYC

90% of NMIC clients make less than the median income

44% of the population receives income supports (public assistance, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income)

53% of the population is foreign-born, 70% of whom are from the Dominican Republic

54% of the population is proficient in English

80% of low income renters are spending more than 30% of their income on rent

75% of the housing was built before 1939
late 1980s, we began a program for people at risk of eviction, making counselors available at some of the city’s neighborhood welfare centers; within a few years, New York City adopted this as a standard practice, partnering with service organizations across the boroughs.

Our weatherization program, one of the longest-running “green” efforts in the city, represents a multifold partnership with building owners, banks, utilities, and public agencies. Since 1981, we have leveraged $7.5 million in additional resources with public funds to upgrade the windows, insulation, and heating systems in more than 380 buildings.

When new needs emerge in the community, we listen and respond. Every decade has brought fresh challenges, and we have never hesitated to step up and take action. Our deep roots in community organizing and client services keep us in touch with the needs of the people we serve and empower us to create responsive programs that work.

Building a New Northern Manhattan—One Building at a Time

Drug dealers, giant holes between apartments, and collapsed floors—life at 504 West 171st Street was a nightmare for decades. As the building violations mounted, NMIC supported tenants in organizing several rent strikes which finally forced the landlord to abandon the property. We worked with the residents to take over ownership of the building using NYC’s Third Party Transfer Initiative. What was once a blight is now a renovated tenant-owned cooperative. On September 17, 2009 the ribbon was cut on the $2 million dollar renovation that boasts modernized apartments with a 30% increase in energy efficiency thanks to a $200,000 NMIC weatherization grant. NMIC is currently working on four other similar projects—representing over $14 million in construction—NMIC’s biggest initiative to date.
We Stand for What Is Right

A TRUSTED ALLY. Being a catalyst for change means fighting for what is right and helping individuals with their most difficult challenges. Our staff have roots in the community, speak the language of our residents, and understand their issues first-hand. The community trusts us. This means a great deal to a struggling mother with young children, knowing she can get help with social services without having to travel across the city or waiting for weeks to get a call-back. We are trusted as well by the local faith community and various partners in all parts of New York City.

From supporting women who are facing domestic violence to helping families begin the path to citizenship, our door is open every day, ready to support those in our community who need help.

FOCUSING ON THE WHOLE PERSON. The way NMIC empowers women battered by domestic violence is representative of the way we approach all our clients. A woman in this situation might come to us asking for no more than a shelter referral, but she will not be sent away with a slip of paper and an address. We assign her to a small interdisciplinary team dedicated to discerning her needs, whether that means legal assistance or help finding health insurance. If she enrolls in one of our classes and a teacher notices that she has unexpectedly missed several, we will follow up. We do not allow people to fall through the cracks.

At NMIC, we take a client-centered approach and treat each person with dignity and respect. Quite a few of our residents do not know what public benefits they are entitled to — whether it is precious refunds owed them from the Earned Income Tax Credit or health insurance for their children. We give them advice about public benefits, legal counseling, and financial guidance including debt counseling.

MEETING A COMMUNITY CHALLENGE. NMIC is the community’s leading provider of eviction prevention services, including legal, case management, and emergency homelessness advocacy. The current economic crisis is putting many families at risk of being forced out of their homes, while budgets for these critical programs are being cut. There are simply not enough attorneys, paralegals and legal caseworkers and case managers to provide full service homelessness prevention to every threatened local resident.

In another innovative program, NMIC represents and assists other Manhattan clients through its Housing Court Office. Even with this effort, only one out of ten tenants has a lawyer while landlords almost always have counsel. The odds of a poor, non-English speaking tenant or senior citizen successfully navigating the legal system under these circumstances are abysmal.

While its focus is on the day-to-day legal challenges of the community, NMIC’s legal team has also taken the lead on group representations, class actions, and law reform (or impact) litigation. Their successes, including groundbreaking work on lead poisoning, have had an impact far beyond Northern Manhattan.
The Brides March:
Building National Awareness for Domestic Violence

Gladys Ricart was a Dominican immigrant who originally settled in Northern Manhattan, worked her way off public assistance and became the first in her family to graduate from college. Her story was cut short on September 26, 1999, her wedding day, when a jealous former boyfriend shot and killed her in front of her family.

Two years later, a courageous activist named Josie Ashton made a 2,000 mile journey in her own wedding gown from Ms. Ricart’s home in New Jersey to Miami, Florida, stopping at women’s shelters along the way. NMIC and a core group of organizations, including the Dominican Women’s Development Center, the Dominican Women’s Caucus, the Violence Intervention Program and the National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza), worked with Ms. Ashton and Ms. Ricart’s family to inaugurate that solo walk with a local march of allies in wedding gowns. The annual Brides March was born.

That first year, in 2001, there were a few dozen of us, and every year since then the event has grown, reaching as many as 300 participants. Individuals march through the streets of Northern Manhattan, Harlem, and South Bronx, the women in white and the men in black. The Brides March is a sight that is impossible not to notice and it has spawned similar events across the country, including marches in Lawrence, MA, Newburgh, NY, Miami FL, Milwaukee, WI, and Washington, DC.
NMIC Legal Services in Action: Providing Help, Changing Lives

The stories are often heartbreaking and even tragic, but every day the NMIC Legal Services team provides high-quality representation to individuals and families who have nowhere else to turn. Here are three of thousands of stories where lives have been changed through NMIC’s work:

**A RECENT IMMIGRANT FACING EVICTION**
A recent immigrant and mother of two young children, Ms. M had been evicted for over three weeks before she came to NMIC's Housing Court Office for assistance. A NMIC lawyer was able to immediately stop the landlord from re-renting the vacant apartment and discovered that not only was Ms. M eligible for public assistance and a rental subsidy, but the rent sought by the landlord was also not correct. After six weeks of homelessness, Ms. M returned to her home and had the assistance benefits that will help her pay her rent in the future.

**A SINGLE MOTHER DEALING WITH A FINANCIAL JUDGMENT**
Her bank accounts were frozen and she started being charged fees for a financial judgment she was not aware existed. For Ms. H, a single mother already struggling to stay employed and get her bills paid, this was an emergency situation. The NMIC team contacted the bank and then her creditor's attorney to eventually find out the alleged judgment was from a prior Housing Court case where the client had appeared without an attorney. After searching for the court files, it turned out that there had not actually been a judgment entered, and NMIC was able to get the accounts released immediately. The team even got the law firm that had frozen the account in error to cut a check to reimburse the client for the bank fees.

**AN ELDERLY WOMAN WHO STRUGGLED WITH 60 YEARS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE**
Seniors are not immune from many of the problems we usually associate with struggling young parents, and when a senior comes to NMIC seeking legal services we respond with the same attention and resources. Mrs. V, age 84, was living in mortal fear of her husband, from whom she had endured more than 60 years of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. She finally sought help, coming to NMIC's domestic violence program only after her husband had begun threatening to poison her. We offered Mrs. V help with social services and linked her to our legal staff who represented her in court. After a three-day trial, in which she testified convincingly despite her fear, she won a two-year order of protection. Mrs. V is now able to live peacefully in her apartment, free from potential harm, and hopes to obtain a divorce in the next year.
We believe opportunity is for everyone. Our Northern Manhattan community members are hard-working people who want the same freedoms and security every American wants. That is why for 30 years we have been providing them with the opportunity to succeed through our customized workforce development and adult education programs, as well as citizenship counseling and immigration assistance.

We don’t just talk about opportunity, at NMIC we are about action. No matter what the area of need is, we create opportunity by creating unique programs that respond to the evolving community landscape and the individual needs of clients.

HELPING THE WHOLE PERSON. When someone new arrives seeking training, we do not simply send them to a classroom. Our case managers discuss their needs and we evaluate their skill levels. If a young man asks to enter our building-trades certification program, for example, and we find that his spoken English skills are weak, we enroll him in our adult ESOL program as well and may also offer citizenship counseling. Being client-centered also means crossing service boundaries. If a parent completing workforce training is worried about housing issues, we can refer her to our legal services department, while our benefits counselors can help her qualify for low- or no-cost health insurance. This approach prepares each client not just to start a job but to succeed in a new working life that is stable.

The felt need for all of these programs far outpaces our current capacity. Roughly 1,400 adults participate in our adult ESOL classes each year, for example, and as of this writing we have a waiting list of 2,600 people. Our trainees and students are passionate about staying the course, and their high completion rates show it.

RESPONSIVE TO THE REAL WORLD. Both our workforce training and our adult education programs are rooted in real-world needs. The marketplace is always changing and our workforce development frequently changes to align with it. A case in point is our training for work in the construction and building maintenance trades. These jobs have long been in high demand in Manhattan with its booming real estate market, so NMIC has been doing quality skills training in this area for some time. But the recent collapse of the construction business, spikes in energy costs, and growing public attention to climate change have now created intense interest in workers who can tackle environment-friendly construction and rehab. We are therefore launching a new training that focuses on preparing our clients for these green jobs.

A hunger for self-reliance is also evident in the popularity and success of our vocational training for the direct-care health field, a field with still rising demand that allows many women to take a first step toward professional advancement. Our program focuses on training aides to work with people with mental disabilities, which requires certifications in patient management and the administering of medications, among other essential skills. Our graduates of this program have had a 100 percent placement rate, and a majority of them are currently working for large and well respected institutional employers where job stability is good.

A UNIQUE APPROACH. Workshops and courses at NMIC have been carefully designed, tested, and improved by years of application, so our curriculum is unique. Adult students in our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses, for
A Unique Approach to Literacy

Research shows that learning to read and write in a second language is severely hampered when an adult has not had the opportunity to develop their literacy. A distinctive challenge in our immigrant community is literacy in their first language of Spanish; and there are very few places, even in New York, where an adult can go to develop that literacy. NMIC chose to fill that gap, adding a program called BENL (Basic Education in Native Language). This program works collaboratively with our other immigrant services and citizenship counseling. Institutionally, this is not easy for us, since few funders are comfortable supporting non-English learning, but we are determined to go forward with it because we have already witnessed the difference it makes in later English-based learning.

example, build the fluency to handle everyday situations through mock on-the-job scenarios drawn from community residents’ experiences. This is what makes NMIC’s one of the largest, most respected adult education programs in the city.

Our menu of training and education courses is long and varied. In addition to ESOL we offer pre-GED courses, classes in civics and citizenship, workshops on domestic violence prevention, and classes in parenting. Tenant organizing and leadership workshops are run as well, in order to equip residents with the skills they need to advocate for themselves and manage their own buildings.

Our relationship with our workforce development clients does not end when they receive their certificates or find jobs. We offer a support system for graduates that has no cut-off date. If a client returns to us needing help with their taxes we offer free tax preparation services. Our caseworkers remain available to assist clients through rough patches, and our vocational staff can advise them on next steps in developing a career pathway. Opportunity should never have limits, and we work every day to make that a reality for our clients.
Happy Faces Family Daycare Network: 
Addressing a Community Need and Creating Opportunity

Our Happy Faces Family Daycare Network was launched in 1997 after a dozen welfare recipients told us that learning how to run a licensed daycare program was at the top of their agendas. It only made sense: These were women trusted among neighborhood families and ready with a good work ethic and a love for children. But before their micro-enterprise dreams could become real, they would need to meet city and state licensing standards. Many had informal experience caring for others’ children but lacked an understanding of American parenting culture and important skills such as how to identify a child showing signs of physical abuse.

In Washington Heights-Inwood, waiting lists for parents seeking daycare are very long, and the neighborhood just doesn’t have the space needed to create large daycare centers found in many other parts of the city. The growth of home-based daycare can be a net gain for the whole community as long as services meet high standards. For these reasons, we built a program that would prepare women for certification and establish rigorous accountability.

Potential providers must undergo a background check and participate in 30 hours of training in a free six-month program. Over the past decade, this program has trained hundreds of providers, and today more than 60 daycares are active and licensed, serving 300 children from infancy through age 12.

Entrepreneurs in our Happy Faces network are ambitious about professional growth as well—nearly half of them have pursued further study to earn a Child Development Associate credential. The network has truly become an institutional part of the economic and family life of Northern Manhattan.
None of our programming is “off the shelf,” which is illustrated by our approach to family literacy. The four components of our Family Literacy Program, now in its sixth year, weave together child-focused and parent-focused development and do so in a uniquely sensitive way. The parents who enroll in this intensive program are nonnative speakers of English who are determined to give their children every opportunity to flourish. They must enroll along with their children, and through the course of the school year both parent and child gain in skills that they take back into their home lives.

Parents improve their English through ESOL classes while their children strengthen their academic skills in the same convenient local setting, and families then come together to enjoy structured time for informal learning, reading to one another and enjoying guided cultural field trips. This unique program underlines parents’ role as their children’s most important educators, nurtures both parents’ literacy and children’s school readiness, and opens up the wider world to every family.

Through engagement in the Family Literacy Program, children have consistently made measurable progress in their academic achievement, and both children and parents have experienced very noticeable gains in their emotional bonds. The program has received widespread recognition for its quality and impact.
We Believe a Thriving Community
Is a Healthy Community

While it is no secret that access to health care and prevention programs is essential to being healthy, it is also integral to building a community where individuals and families can thrive. Poverty and unemployment result from a web of challenges, and some of the most overlooked are health-related barriers.

More than one in three residents of Northern Manhattan are uninsured or have gone without insurance in the last year, and this number continues to grow. Our staff works with individuals and families on all aspects of health care access, from navigating the complicated health care system to determining their eligibility and filling out applications. Each year, we enroll thousands of uninsured residents in free or low-cost health insurance programs. Our health care access team is committed and resourceful – if there is any way that our programs can support a client, our staff will find it.

Our direct work with individuals and families through community organizing, legal services, and other NMIC programs helps us to understand how health-related challenges are impacting the Northern Manhattan community. Lead poisoning, asthma, and diabetes are just some of the issues that disproportionately impact people in our community and have led us to develop innovative prevention and education responses. Our programs, which have proven to be extremely effective, rely on nationally recognized best practices.

We are keenly attuned to the importance of prevention. Prevention is key to the success of our asthma workshops and our classes on lead poisoning, empowering parents to safeguard their children’s well-being. Another widespread chronic health problem facing our community is obesity. Obesity prevention is an area where we believe NMIC could have a positive impact on the community. Preventive programs, combined with health care access and specialty programs, are how we envision helping Northern Manhattan residents to be a part of a truly healthy, thriving community.

NMIC’s Lead Safe House:
A Safe Place for Families

Perhaps one of our most distinctive community health programs is our Lead Safe House on Amsterdam Avenue and West 168th Street. The beautiful mural on the Safe House’s outer wall distinguishes it in the neighborhood, but it is the unique set of services provided to families on the inside that make it one of the most innovative in New York City. After our legal team worked to pass significant lead legislation in 2001 that put an end to the “lead corridor” of New York City—which included large parts of Northern Manhattan—the community felt it was important to support families whose lives were impacted by lead poisoning and the cleanup process. In February 2002, the Lead Safe House opened its doors to families who have a child (or children) diagnosed with lead poisoning and need to relocate while their home is being abated – which usually takes 45 to 60 days. Available to residents from all five boroughs, the Lead Safe House is made up of separate apartments. Not only are families provided with a place to live, but the case manager serves as a liaison between the family, the landlord, and the city until the repairs are complete, providing full support to the family during this stressful time.

To date, 96 families have been served. The Lead Safe House also serves an important community outreach role, providing lead safety training and educational courses that are held at daycare centers and community organizations throughout the neighborhood.
Community-designed mural at the NMIC Lead Safe House.
Ana’s Story: 
Combatting Asthma in Northern Manhattan

“Ana” was nine years old when she was referred to NMIC, having been diagnosed with asthma when she was ten months old. She had already missed 20 days of school due to asthma in the previous 12 months and had experienced asthma symptoms six out of the past 14 days. Our community health workers carried out a home environmental assessment and pointed out potted plants, stuffed toys, stacks of books, and a cage of birds that contributed to excess dust in the apartment that was likely contributing to Ana’s asthma symptoms. Together, the community health worker and Ana’s mother established goals for reducing dust, cleaning the bird cage frequently, and limiting other indoor pollutants that could be causing problems. At the six-month follow-up interview, Ana’s mother reported that Ana had only missed three days of school due to asthma since starting the program, and had had no symptoms in the past 14 days. The plan, combined with Ana’s reduced symptoms, has left the family feeling confident in their ability to manage Ana’s asthma symptoms in the future and grateful for the education they received.

Asthma is a disease that affects a large number of children in the Washington Heights and Inwood neighborhoods. While a serious disease, it is also one that with the right training and education can be managed, thereby reducing both the number of visits to the emergency room and the number of school absences. In 2005, with funding from Merck, we were able to partner with New York Presbyterian Hospital, which is located in the heart of Washington Heights, to create the WIN for Asthma program. This program has increased our ability to support and reach out to families with children suffering from severe asthma. In addition to referrals, our care coordinator can now make rounds in New York Presbyterian’s pediatric emergency room to identify children who are being treated for asthma and may benefit from a home assessment and can hold workshops for the community.

It is a program that works. Hospitalizations for asthma are down, and on average, families entering our program can expect to see a 72 percent reduction in time spent in the emergency room and a 64 percent reduction in school absences.
We Deliver Results

30,000 clients served. 2,100 students learned English. 36 tenant associations supported. $14.5 million in housing rehabilitation completed. 116 daycare center owners trained. 729 people placed in jobs. By the numbers, NMIC’s outcomes are impressive, but at the end of the day what really matters to us is our ability to be a positive change in the lives of the people in our community.

Adult Education

NMIC’s Adult Literacy/Adult Education programs provide quality educational classes that give community residents the opportunity to expand their skills and improve their lives. Program areas include:
- English as a Second Language (ESOL)
- Disconnected Youth Pre-GED
- Family Literacy
- Basic Education in Native Language (BENL)
- Citizenship Exam Preparation

KEY RESULTS*
- 2,100 students completed courses and made a measurable educational gain
- 60 families participated in Family Literacy
- 40 individuals earned their U.S. citizenship

Community Organizing/Housing Development

NMIC’s Community/Tenant Organizing and Housing Development supports tenants and residents in forming empowered groups that can effect positive change. The Neighborhood Preservation program at NMIC works to maintain the community’s diverse character and preserve low-income housing by assisting residents to renovate and buy their buildings.

KEY RESULTS*
- 29 tenant associations in privately owned buildings, and nine tenant-controlled buildings received assistance
- $14.5 million major rehabilitation of 113 units in four occupied, substandard buildings
- One rental building converted into a limited equity cooperative
- Stabilized a faltering low-income housing development to ensure it remained under tenant control

Legal Services

NMIC’s Legal Services protect the rights of residents who would otherwise be unable to afford high-quality representation. Legal Services defend the community on issues including:
- Housing
- Public Benefits
- Employment
- Health
- Domestic Violence

KEY RESULTS*
- 15,000 clients in total assisted with issues involving landlord and tenant disputes, public benefits, domestic violence, disability, consumer debt and environmental justice matters
- Seven tenant associations assisted with legal representation
- 630 families with children supported on eviction matters
- 200 public assistance families provided with housing and benefits legal advocacy
- 102 individuals provided with full-service legal representation
- 400 senior clients provided with a variety of legal services

Weatherization

NMIC’s Weatherization Assistance Program enables low-income families to permanently reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient.

KEY RESULTS*
- 576 units in 9 buildings provided with energy efficiency audits and funds to replace inefficient windows, boilers, appliances, and insulation

Workforce Development

NMIC’s Workforce Development programs empower community residents by building language, vocational and civic skills and helping individuals and families access key benefits. Programs include:
- Job Readiness and Placement Services
- Building Maintenance and Weatherization Retrofit Training
- Health Career Training
- EarnBenefits (government benefit enrollment program)

KEY RESULTS*
- 729 participants placed in jobs
- 494 individuals enrolled in benefit programs

Social Services

NMIC’s Social Service programs provide services to the community on critical issues that support families, provide safety and improve health. Programs include:
- Tax/Earned Income Tax Credit Assistance
- Health Insurance Enrollment
- Case Management Assistance to Seniors and Disabled Clients at Risk of Homelessness
- Happy Faces Family Daycare Network
- Immigration Counseling and Translation
- Northern Manhattan Lead Safe House

KEY RESULTS*
- $4 million worth of cash and noncash benefits provided to clients
- 4,183 persons enrolled in health insurance
- 60 family day cares licensed
- 116 daycare providers provided with education, training, and one-on-one coaching
- 358 citizen applications completed

* Results in 2009
“Going green” is a popular trend, but understanding what that means in the lives of people living in Northern Manhattan and its value has been a challenge. For the past 28 years, NMIC has been a green leader through our weatherization program. From this experience, we have learned that going green can change lives.

Weatherization

Try to picture keeping your family warm on a January day in Northern Manhattan, with a cold wind blowing off the Hudson River. Your building’s boiler is unpredictable, drafts are coming in through the windows, and the best source of heat for your unit is the gas stove – which you leave on night and day. Unfortunately, this story is a common one in Northern Manhattan.

Beginning in 1981, with the support of the federally funded Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), NMIC began to weatherize buildings throughout Northern Manhattan, and the results have been astounding. Not only are the buildings more energy-efficient, driving down the living expenses for both landlords and tenants, but the overall impact on tenants’ quality of life is profound. New windows let in more light, decrease air drafts, and block out the sounds of noisy city life, making for a more pleasant living environment. New light fixtures and fire alarms also increase the safety and security of those living in the building. Landlords participating in this program must also agree to maintain rent levels once the apartments have been weatherized, allowing families to stay in their homes and enjoy the improvements.

Since the program’s inception, 13,513 units in 415 buildings have been weatherized and 2,400 are in the pipeline. This year, NMIC received $10.4 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and we hope to receive more funding, in order to support this growing program and meet the needs of our community.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The success of our long-running building weatherization program has taught us what going green means, and we are now incorporating additional green components throughout the organization and focusing on environmental awareness and green jobs. Our education and training programs are exposing youth and adults to green concepts and employment possibilities. This summer, students participating in our Disconnected Youth program pursued their GED diplomas while becoming familiar with “green” culture. In this contextualized learning model, students heard from a variety of speakers and took field trips to various green organizations around the city. During these visits, experts educated students about the environment, and spoke to them about careers in green industries. This model helps students to see how their GED curriculum connects to opportunities emerging in the green workforce.

We are currently designing a program that will build on this model and is set to begin in early 2010. Students will be studying for GED and/or ESOL certificates while acquiring hands-on weatherization skills training. Our workforce development team will then work with the students on job readiness and job placement.

“My house is warmer, I am comfortable, and I am sure that my utility bill will be less ... I admire the workers, their professionalism, and respect for my home.”

MILDRED P.
90-Year-Old Senior Citizen and Homeowner
Did You Know...

- Low-income families will save an average of $350 in reduced first-year energy costs, at current prices.

- Taken together, for every $1 invested in a WAP funded program, weatherization returns $2.73 in energy and non-energy related benefits.

- Weatherization measures reduce national energy demand by the equivalent of 18 million barrels of oil per year.

- NMIC has been weatherizing apartment buildings in the Northern Manhattan community for 28 years and counting!
“Thank you NMIC for the amazing effort put forth for our building. It was plain to see that you and your contractors made the extra effort to consider the elderly tenants in our building. Today, everyone enjoys their new windows and upgraded lighting while the building has reduced utility consumption, thanks to your team’s efforts.”

DIRECTOR OF HOUSING, JEWISH ASSOCIATION FOR SERVICES FOR THE AGED HOUSING MANAGEMENT
What Is Weatherization?

Beginning in 1976, the US Department of Energy launched the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), created to assist low-income families who lacked resources to invest in energy efficiency. Organizations like NMIC that receive WAP funds are able to use the most advanced technologies available in the housing industry to improve the energy efficiency of low-income homes. The energy conservation resulting from these efforts helps to reduce both our country’s dependence on foreign oil and the cost of energy for families in need, making weatherization one of the earliest “green” efforts in the United States.

NMIC’s building weatherization program requires collaboration among our staff, building landlords, and tenants – truly a group effort. Landlords apply for weatherization support, proving that fifty percent or more of their building’s tenants are at or below the income guidelines. Once the application has been accepted, a team of energy auditors assess the building and its units to determine which parts of the building should be weatherized. This is based on a formula that measures the amount of energy saved, versus the cost of weatherizing that part. While NMIC carries out some of the weatherization ourselves, most of the work is contracted out, creating employment opportunities for hundreds of New Yorkers.

Weatherization Components

1 **INSULATION**

Properly insulating the roof cavity of apartment buildings keeps the buildings cool in the summer and warm in the winter, resulting in a reduction in energy use and cost.

2 **ENERGY EFFICIENT REFRIGERATORS**

Refrigerators are assessed for energy efficiency. In addition to cutting energy-associated costs in half for tenants, many energy-efficient refrigerators offer precise temperature controls and advanced food compartments to keep food fresher, longer.

3 **CARBON MONOXIDE AND SMOKE ALARMS**

During the weatherization process, carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms are installed where none exist for safety. When gas emissions are found, they often come from faulty stoves, which are then repaired or replaced. Faulty carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms are replaced as well, providing tenants and landlords with peace of mind and a safe living environment.

4 **LIGHTING AND LIGHTING FIXTURES**

Lighting is important to the ambiance and safety of any apartment unit or hallway. We use Energy Star-rated bulbs, which use at least one-third the energy of a comparable standard incandescent bulb and generate about 80 percent less heat, which reduces home cooling costs and keeps homes more comfortable. They are also safer than halogen bulbs, which are typically used in floor lamps and torchieres, reducing the risk of fire.

5 **WINDOWS**

Windows that are weatherized prevent cold drafts during the winter and block the sounds of the noisy city, resulting in lower fuel use and a quiet, relaxing atmosphere for families and individuals.

6 **WEATHER STRIPS**

Weather stripping is used around doors and windows to seal air leaks. Made of felt, foam, rubber or metal, weather stripping also prevents moisture-laden air from coming inside and increasing the likelihood of condensation, mold, and rot. The result is reduced energy bills and improved air quality.

7 **BOILER**

Boilers provide heat and domestic hot water to tenants, and in many of the buildings served by NMIC these systems are very old and inefficient. In a best-case scenario, a faulty boiler may result in a cold shower, while in a worst-case scenario there is no heat. A weatherization assessment will check for the safety and energy efficiency of a boiler. The result of installing a new, energy-efficient boiler is a warm building with lower fuel costs.
Supporters/Financial Report

Supporters

**Government**
- New York City Administration for Children’s Services
- New York City Department of the Aging
- New York City Department of Homeless Services
- New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development
- New York City Department of Youth & Community Development
- New York City Office of Criminal Justice
- New York State Department of Education
- New York State Department of Health
- New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
- New York State Division of Housing & Community Development
- New York State Office of Children's Services
- New York State Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance
- New York State Unified Court System
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
- U.S. Department of Justice

**Private**
- Altman Foundation
- Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Inc.
- Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi
- David Berg Foundation
- CAMBA Legal Services
- Capital One Foundation
- Children’s Aid Society
- Citigroup Foundation
- Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health
- Commission on the Public System, Inc.
- Consortium for Worker Education
- Ira W. DeCamp Foundation
- Enterprise Foundation
- Food Change
- The Glickenhaus Foundation
- The Hearst Foundation
- Hyde & Watson Foundation
- JPMorgan Chase
- The Junior League of the City of New York, Inc.
- LISC
- The M & T Charitable Foundation
- MetLife Foundation
- New York Community Trust
- New York Presbyterian Hospital
- New York City Managed Care Consumer Assistance
- New York State Bar Foundation
- New York State Psychiatric Institute
- The William J. and Dorothy K. O’Neill Foundation
- Ridgewood Savings Bank
- Robin Hood
- Safe Horizon, Inc.
- St. James Church
- Save New York City
- Seedco
- The Sirus Fund
- Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation
- United Neighborhood Houses
- United Way of New York City
- van Ameringen Foundation
- Washington Mutual Bank

**University Partners**
- Columbia University Center for Homelessness
- Citizenship Project of the City – University of New York
- Columbia University School of Social Work

**NMIC Memberships, Affiliations & Partners**
- Association for Energy Affordability
- Association of Neighborhood Housing Developers
- Emergency Rent Coalition
- Human Services Council
- Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition
- Literacy Assistance Center
- National Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence
- National Coalition to End Homelessness
- New York City Employment and Training Coalition
- New York Immigration Coalition
- Nonprofit Coordinating Committee
- Supportive Housing Network
- United Neighborhood Houses

Supporting NMIC through Service – Celebrating Our Partners and Volunteers
NMIC’s innovative programs leverage the support of the community through numerous volunteer initiatives and unique collaborations, including:

- Participants from the city’s summer youth employment program who provide support across the agency.
- Local teens from community religious institutions who work with NMIC as part of their community service project.
- A physician at New York-Presbyterian Hospital who volunteers to assist with forensic evidence collection for battered women.
- Law school summer interns from around the city who provide research support to the legal services department.
- Columbia University School of Dentistry students who provide free dental services to victims of domestic violence.
- Social work students from NYC universities who support community organizing, social services, and workforce programs as part of their academic studies.
- Students who provide free dental services across the agency.
- Individuals from NYCare who provide one-on-one conversations with English language students through. Volunteers from companies like IBM, Coach, Deloitte, Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, Citibank who run mock interviews, workshops on employment in the corporate sector through corporate volunteer days.

NMIC has also participated in an NYC Parks Department sponsored event – “Hike the Heights” – and organized a benefit theater production of The Vagina Monologues where the entire production consisted of volunteer labor, a director, and actors; in addition, performance space was donated by a local outpost of City University of New York.
Financial Summary

NMIC ANNUAL BUDGET 1980-2009

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SUPPORTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY
NMIC’S ROLE IN THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT (ARRA)

It’s the worst economic crisis in a generation and its impact is being felt especially hard in poor neighborhoods like Washington Heights and Inwood. ARRA funding is providing NMIC programs with critical support:

- Weatherization: $10,432,578
- Adult Education/Workforce Development: $269,038
- Legal Services: $167,491
- Social Services: $90,000

FY 2009 FUNDING SOURCES

- State: 31%
- Federal: 23%
- City: 23%
- Other grants: 22%
Dedication

NMIC is mourning the loss of our beloved friend and co-worker Yajaira Mercedes. Not only was Yajaira devoted to her family and friends, she loved her community. Whether she was working with family daycare providers in our Happy Faces Family Day Care Network, conducting benefits screenings as part of our Single Stop Program or serving as a paralegal with our Domestic Violence Project, Yajaira gave her all to help everyone who crossed her path. Her smile, love for life, courage, and gentle spirit will be missed. Those who had the honor of meeting and working alongside her were truly fortunate.