



**ANNUAL REPORT 2008**

**NEW YORK CITIZENS'  
COMMITTEE ON AGING, INC.**

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## NEW YORK CITIZENS' COMMITTEE ON AGING

### Annual Report 2008

An independent not-for-profit organization, the New York Citizens' Committee on Aging, Inc. (NYCCoA), addresses the concerns affecting the well-being of New York City's aging population and works to cultivate solutions through collaborative activities and idea exchange. The Committee is unique, in that its membership is comprised of a diverse group of older and younger City residents, as well as representatives of the nonprofit, government, business, labor, civic and academic communities. For nearly 50 years, the Committee has been considered an innovative leader in aging policy and advocacy.

With the support of our membership and a grant from the Isaac H. Tuttle Fund, the Committee continued to bring together seniors, advocates, government entities, service providers, and concerned citizens in an impartial forum to educate and seek solutions on topics of vital interest to the aging network in 2008. Membership reached 68 persons from 40 different organizations and nearly 200 different persons from 96 different organizations attended five Program Meetings. In an economic climate that has reduced funding to non-profits, especially organizations like ours that do not provide direct service, we were unsuccessful in raising money from foundations and government grants, despite our best efforts. We did receive a legacy from the estate of Gertrude Landau; and the Development Committee explored other revenue producing strategies, including a successful Jazz Event held at Birdland in November. We also received continued support from the Brownrigg Charitable Trust, the United Jewish Appeal and individual donors.

Our *Initiative to Reduce Elder Poverty in New York City* has ignited attention in the aging community around this critical issue. The rising costs of fuel, food and other necessities of life have had a direct negative impact on the quality of life for many older New Yorkers. Especially now, with the current economic uncertainties that we all face, elder poverty has become a matter of urgency. Thanks to the support of the Isaac H. Tuttle Fund and its Board, the New York Citizens' Committee on Aging was able to respond to this crisis by organizing partnerships and workgroups in collaboration with other agencies to explore solutions and by informing policy makers of the magnitude and seriousness of this problem. These collaborations have been fruitful in yielding recommendations and in identifying realistic solutions that have a chance to improve the quality of life for New York City's elderly poor.

As we face an uncertain future in an economic climate that has reduced funding to non-profits, our strategy for the upcoming year is to maximize limited resources by forming comprehensive partnerships with organizations that share our goals. We will seek technical and financial support in this endeavor.

In working to achieve its goals and objectives:

- The New York Citizens' Committee on Aging provided an impartial forum to promote the exchange of information among a wide range of agencies and individuals. It sponsored five presentations and/or panels by experts in their fields related to issues that affect older persons.
- A task force was formed and met to prioritize and analyze the recommendations from the 2007 forum on elder poverty. To that end members of the task force met with key legislators and policy makers to solicit realistic and doable solutions to alleviate the problem of elder poverty. A report of its findings was prepared for publication.
- The Committee's Public Policy/Program committee analyzed relevant legislation, regulations and their implications for older persons. Members presented testimony on the issue of elder poverty before government bodies and at statewide conferences.
- The Committee sought new partnerships, resulting in a joint meeting with QICA and QCSW, as well as collaborating with local and wider coalitions to reinforce initiatives of essential issues affecting older persons, most notably for the forum on elder poverty. It worked with a network of organizations that share common goals, such as the *Long Term Care Community Coalition (LTCCC)*, the *SSI Coalition* and the *New York Network for Action on Medicare/Social Security (NYNAM)*.
- The Committee disseminated pertinent news, analyses and recommendations to its membership, policy makers, experts, and the broader public.

## OVERVIEW OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### **Administrative / Organizational:**

- With part-time staff, the Committee was able to keep its mailing and e-mail distribution lists up to date and to provide support for the sub-committees, development efforts and program meetings. Even in the challenging economy, membership and dues collection for 2008-2009 remained constant with 68 paid members, amounting to \$6,095. We reached new audiences at program meetings, thanks to collaborative efforts.

- There were two resignations/retirements from the Board of Directors during 2008. Attendance at bi-monthly Board meetings continues to be excellent. The current officers were re-elected; with Jerry Shroder agreeing to serve as acting secretary until a replacement is found. The Branding Committee completed its work on the Committee's new logo, which was added to the newly designed website, brochure and contributions envelopes.
- The Development Committee was a great support in fundraising efforts, helping to write and review letters of interest and proposals. They also personally contacted or met with potential donors, which helped to secure a large donation from an individual and a grant from Brownrigg. Much work was done on new fundraising materials and a new fundraising event.
- Through its Board of Directors network and its Public Policy/Program sub-committee, the Committee succeeded in obtaining exceptional speakers for its program meetings. An active role was taken by sub-committee members, developing and presenting testimony, as well as writing letters supporting and endorsing issues prioritized by the Committee.

### **Program:**

In pursuing its mission, the Committee sponsors educational programs on a wide range of issues relevant to the aging community and open to the general public. It forms independent task forces, working committees and ad hoc workgroups to develop programs and public policy, and to respond to key and pressing issues such as elder poverty. In an effort toward network building, it shares and disseminates information from other organizations that have a common interest.

The following Program Meetings for members and the general public were held in 2008:

- **February 8, 2008:** Attended by 52 persons from 28 organizations.

**Briefing on Housing & the Elderly Poor:** *Speaker: Jessica Walker, Policy Associate, New York Academy of Medicine.*

**Response to Issue of Housing and the Increasing Poverty Rate among NYC's Elderly:** *Speaker: Rosie Mendez, Chair of the NYC Council Sub-committee on Public Housing.*

- **March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008:** Attended by 76 persons from 48 organizations.

**Meeting with the Director of the New York State Office for the Aging (SOFA):** *Speaker: Michael Burgess, Director of the State Office of the Aging.*

**Enriched Model of Social Adult Day Services:** *Speaker: Kathy Fitzgibbons, Senior Policy Analyst of Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA).*

- **May 9, 2008:** Attended by 49 persons from 34 organizations.

**Aging and Vision Policy and Practice in New York City and New York State: A Panel Presentation.** *Presenters: Dr. Grace Ambrose-Zaken, Hunter College, Professor; Masters Degree Program with specialization in rehabilitation teaching and orientation and mobility for people who are visually impaired; Board Member; NYS AER; Board Member; NYVRA; Dr. Karen Gourgey, President, American Council of the Blind-NYC; Director of the Baruch College Computer Center for Visually Impaired People; Appointed member of the Executive Board to the NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH); Nancy D. Miller, LMSW Executive Director, VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired; President of NY Vision Rehabilitation Association (NYVRA); Alberta L. Orr, MSW Executive Director, Disabilities Network of NYC; Coordinator of DFTA's NYC Coalition on Vision and Aging; and Priscilla Wrobel, Director of Field Operations, NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH).*

- **October 17, 2008:** Attended by 52 persons from 32 organizations.

**The NYC Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) Poverty Measure and Older New Yorkers:** *Panelists: Commissioner Edwin Mendez-Santiago, NYC Department for the Aging; Mark Levitan, Ph.D., Director of Poverty Measurement, NYC CEO; Ron Richter, NYC Family Services Coordinator.*

- **November 5th, 2008:** Attended by 68 from 35 organizations

**Seniors and Poverty: The effects of the economic downturn and city cutbacks. Programs available for relief:** *Speakers: Ms. Catherine T. Giblin, LCSW, Director, Assigned Counsel Project & Social Work Education Initiative; Ms. Maria Alvarez, Deputy Director, New York StateWide Senior Action Council; Ms. Suleika Cabrera-Drinane, Executive Director, Institute for Puerto Rican/Hispanic Elderly; Ms. Alexandra Yannias, NYC Coalition Against Hunger.*

This Panel was a collaborative effort of the New York Citizens' Committee on Aging, Queens Interagency Council on Aging (QICA), and Queensboro Council for Social Welfare (QCSW)

### **Public Policy/Program:**

The Committee's Public Policy/Program Committee analyzed legislation and regulations and their implications for older persons, especially on the issue of elder poverty in New York City. Members helped write testimony and letters on these issues.

In conjunction with the Task Force on Elder Poverty, members of the committee presented testimony at hearings and conferences, and met with key legislators and policy makers regarding the initiative to reduce elder poverty in New York City. See below.

The Public Policy/Program Committee played a key role in identifying topics for the 2008 Program Meetings and in securing speakers.

**Initiative to Combat Elder Poverty in New York City:** Late in 2006, the New York Citizens' Committee on Aging launched a new initiative aimed at reducing elder poverty. In May 2007, the Committee released a report, *Under the Radar: Poverty Among Older Adults in New York City*, showing that the elder poverty rate in NYC was 20.3% and it held a solutions-oriented forum *Under the Radar: Old and Poor in a City of Riches* to present its findings and solicit realistic and specific solutions. A follow-up Task Force analyzed the recommendations that emerged and determined to focus its efforts on four key issues affecting the City's older population:

- 1) Providing income security and employment opportunities;
- 2) Strengthening the existing social safety-net to prevent individuals from descending into poverty;
- 3) Expanding affordable housing options and supports;
- 4) Reducing the financial burden often associated with serious health conditions and/or disability.

Throughout 2008, workgroups met to discuss recommendations in each area and devise strategies to promote the agenda. At meetings with key legislators and policy makers, updates were provided on what was being done to address the economic crisis on the state and federal levels and on what possible actions might be achievable to address elder poverty in New York. A paper developed by the Committee showed statistically *The Link between New York City's Housing Crisis and its High Rate of Elder Poverty* and was presented at the February 8<sup>th</sup> Program Meeting (see above). In addition, the Task Force played a key role in the revival of the SSI Coalition; James Collins, Board Member, co-chairs that coalition and represents the Committee.

Presentations and testimony on elder poverty in New York City were provided by the Committee at the July New York State Economic Security Cabinet hearing, at the October *State Society on Aging of New York* conference, at the NYC Dept. for the Aging's October hearing on its Annual Plan and at the November *Empowering Communities for Successful Aging Conference*.

The Committee's initial concern with the elder poverty rate in the city was affirmed when the New York City Center for Economic Opportunity reported that the poverty rate of older New Yorkers is actually 50% higher (than the Committee's initial finding): 32%, using a more accurate measure of poverty in New York City.

A final report, containing recommendations to alleviate elder poverty, and based on meetings and input from other organizations, was drafted for publication in early 2009.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT:**

### **Membership:**

The Committee's efforts to bring awareness to the issue of elder poverty in the city resulted in its increased visibility and an expanded audience at Program Meetings. Membership remained steady with 68 paid members, including 20 new members. Dues collection amounted to \$6095 for 2008-2009 membership.

### **Development/ Fund-Raising:**

Contributions to the 2007 End of Year Appeal received in 2008 totaled \$525.00; to the 2008 End of Year Appeal received in 2008 totaled \$2,800.00; other contributions in 2008 were \$1,059.00, including contributions from a friends' appeal and from the Combined Giving Campaign of United Way. A Jazz Event in November raised \$630.00.

A legacy was received from the estate of Gertrude Landau, past president of the Committee, in the amount of \$16,405.71. The Brownrigg Charitable Trust provided a grant of \$2,000.00, United Jewish Appeal (UJA) a grant of \$250.00, and Lehman Bros. a dividend of \$80.00.

The Development Committee, under the leadership of Marvin Lieberman, helped with identifying sources of funding, reviewing proposals and contacting potential funders. It also brainstormed creative fundraising ideas, such as the Jazz Event and newly designed brochures and fundraising envelopes for End-of-Year and other fundraising appeals. The Committee submitted proposals to various foundations and government officials to

support its programmatic activities. However, due to the worsening economic crisis in 2008, government support was not forthcoming and our grant from the Tuttle Fund has not yet been renewed.

### **RENEWING OUR COMMITMENT:**

In 2009 the New York Citizens' Committee on Aging will continue to intensify its efforts to build organizational capabilities, enhance its website to deliver its message more effectively, and ensure the future of its mission. It will place special emphasis on expanding its membership to better reflect the needs and communities it serves. It will continue to carry out its Initiative on Elder Poverty in New York City in order to see some concrete action taken on its recommendations.

The Committee is focused and committed to the task at hand and convinced that with the support of its leadership and members and the part time Executive Director and Office Manager, the goals for the coming year will be achieved.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS / OFFICERS / COMMITTEE CHAIRS:**

In 2008, the Board of Directors met seven times. The following persons served as officers of the organization:

- ***Peter Gubernick, LMSW, ACSW, President.*** Administrative Director, NYC Human Resources Administration, Office of Health & Mental Health Services (1986-2001); Consultant to NYS Dept. of Health (2001-2003); Adj. Professor, Fordham Univ. School of Social Service (2004-2004).
- ***Nancy Miller, MSW, ACSW, Vice-President***  
Director, VISIONS Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
- ***Jessica Walker, Vice-President.*** Policy Associate, Division of Health Policy, New York Academy of Medicine.
- ***Jean Ovitt, Treasurer.*** Former Deputy Director, Visiting Neighbors.
- ***Jerry Shroder, Secretary.*** Part-time Executive Director of NY Citizens' Committee on Aging from 1993 to 2001; Community Council of Greater NY.

As specified by its by-laws, the Committee re-elected two members of the class of 2008 to its Board of Directors, while two other members resigned. The two retired members were elected to Emeritus status on the Board. The current officers were re-elected; with Jerry Shroder agreeing to serve as acting secretary until a replacement is found.

## 2008 Committee Chairs:

- **James Collins** served as Chair of the Public Policy/Program Committee.
- **Nancy Miller** served as Chair of the Nominating Committee.
- **Marvin Lieberman** served as Chair of the Development Committee.
- **Jessica Walker** served as Chair of the Branding Committee.
- **Jessica Walker**, assisted by **Mary Mayer**, served as Chair of the Forum Follow-up Committee.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2008:

### President

Peter Gubernick

### Vice Presidents

Nancy D. Miller, MSW, ACSW

Jessica Walker

### Treasurer

Jean Ovitt

### Secretary

Jerry A. Shroder

### Past Presidents / Chairpersons

Robert L. Popper\*

Jean L. Janover

Gertrude Landau\*

Helen R. Hamlin, ACSW

Anne Perzeszty

Doris L. Rosenberg\*

Marvin Lieberman

\* *deceased*

### Emeriti

Kallia Bokser

Jean L. Janover

Mildred Krasnow, M.A.

Daniel Sambol, MSW

Mignon Sauber, ACSW

Bernard Warach

### Board of Directors

Kallia Bokser\*\*

Diane Borko, ACSW

Suzannah Chandler

James Collins

Kathleen Fitzgibbons

Shirley Genn

Helen R. Hamlin, ACSW

Marvin Lieberman, Ph.D.

Mary Mayer

James O'Neal

Michael Rabin

Mignon Sauber, ACSW\*\*

\*\* *Resigned during 2008*