

2025 Cypress Celebrates

*Stronger  
Together*

WITH UCC

Thursday, May 18, 2025

PHD Downtown Dream Hotel Rooftop



**STRONGER TOGETHER**

# HOST COMMITTEE

**Michelle Neugebauer**

**Florence Charles**

**Emily Blank**

**Betsy Maclean**

**Kimberly Coca**

**Jose Nieves**

**Crystal Lopez**

**Teghvir Sethi**

**Tania Rivera**

**Catherine Genao**



## **PROGRAM**

### **Host**

Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Inc

### **Masters of Ceremony**

Marisol Quinones and Jesse Bruce Clark

### **Tribute Video**

CHLDC Stronger Together Video Tribute

### **Cypress Hills Community Builder Honoree**

Citi Foundation

### **Legacy Honoree**

Michelle Neugebauer

### **Community Leader Honoree**

Melodye Harvey

### **Board Leader Honoree**

Michael Golan



Citi Foundation



## **COMMUNITY BUILDER HONOREE**

Citi Foundation has supported Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) for nearly three decades, contributing over \$2 million in support to help advance economic opportunity, and community resilience in East New York. Their sustained investment has been vital to CHLDC's mission of ensuring that our community remains a thriving, inclusive neighborhood where long-time residents and small businesses can grow, stay, and lead.

Through the Citi Foundation's Community Progress Makers initiative—of which CHLDC has been honored to be a two time recipient—we've been able to deepen and expand our work to combat displacement and promote housing stability. This award provided critical core operating support that allowed CHLDC to advocate for and preserve deeply affordable housing, assist low- and moderate-income homeowners, and prevent eviction and foreclosure. Over the years, Citi has also supported our organization in developing supportive housing for senior citizens and acquiring and rehabilitating HUD foreclosed small homes into first-time home buying opportunities. With Citi and Citi Foundation's support, CHLDC has been able to meet the moment and scale solutions to match the urgency of the housing crisis our community faces.

The Citi Foundation's support for our small business assistance services has been equally impactful.



Through targeted funding—including a Small Business Technical Assistance grant in response to the economic devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic—CHLDC has helped hundreds of local entrepreneurs weather financial hardship, access recovery resources, and develop the tools and strategies needed to grow their businesses.

This has fortified our commercial corridors and created pathways for wealth-building and economic sustainability for families in Cypress Hills. Past Citi Foundation grants also enabled CHLDC to build new affordable retail spaces on Fulton Street.

Beyond these cornerstone investments, the Citi Foundation has continued to champion a holistic vision of community development. Their funding has supported affordable housing counseling and homeownership programming, financial literacy education for youth and adults, paid summer internships that open doors for young people, and initiatives to foster community ownership of local businesses. At every step, Citi Foundation has demonstrated a deep commitment to expanding opportunity for low-income communities and supporting neighborhood-rooted solutions.

As we reflect on our shared accomplishments and look to the future, CHLDC is proud to honor the Citi Foundation as our **2025 Community Builder Honoree** for their visionary philanthropy and longstanding support.

**Thank you, Citi Foundation, for helping us build a stronger, more resilient Cypress Hills—where residents, entrepreneurs, and families can thrive and call this community home for generations to come.**





***MICHELLE NEUGEBAUER***  
Legacy Award Honoree

Michelle Neugebauer is a visionary leader, tireless advocate, and lifelong organizer whose deep commitment to justice has transformed the Cypress Hills and East New York neighborhoods—and inspired community development efforts citywide. As the founding full-time staff member and longtime Executive Director of Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC), Michelle has spent over 40 years building one of New York City’s most impactful, holistic, and people-powered organizations. When Michelle joined CHLDC in 1984, it had one program and a budget of \$35,000. Today, under her leadership, the organization operates eight program divisions, serves more than 20,000 residents annually, and manages a \$26 million budget with a team of over 500 staff across 19 service sites.

Michelle has led her team in launching and growing a comprehensive network of services—from high-quality youth and workforce programs to affordable housing development, public education reform, and neighborhood organizing.



She has consistently worked to elevate local leadership and ensure that residents are at the center of shaping their own communities. She brings a rare combination of long-range vision and everyday dedication—always the last to leave a town hall, graduation, or community celebration, and always the first to listen, encourage, and lead with compassion.

A proud graduate of Barnard College and holder of dual M.S. degrees in Social Work and Urban Planning from Columbia University, Michelle brings both academic rigor and lived experience to her work. Raised in Bushwick, Brooklyn during a time of disinvestment and struggle, she understands the deep value of community, resilience, and self-determination. Her identity as a social worker has always shaped her values: empowering those who are too often left out, and nurturing the leadership of others. She is also a proud wife to Wasyl Klokiw, and mother to Nicole, who is in graduate school for her social work degree and shares her mother's justice-driven spirit.

Michelle Neugebauer embodies the spirit of the **Legacy Award**—not only because of what she has built, but because of how she leads. She centers equity, lifts up others, and never stops believing in the capacity of community to create real, lasting change. We honor her today not just for her remarkable achievements, but for the thousands of lives touched, careers launched, homes built, dreams supported, and neighborhoods transformed under her leadership.

**Thank you, Michelle, for your unwavering vision, service, and love for the Cypress Hills and East New York communities. Your legacy is deeply felt—and it will continue to grow in every life you've helped uplift.**





***MELODYE HARVEY***  
Community Leader Honoree

For nearly 14 years, Melodye Harvey has served as a dedicated and trusted member of the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) Board of Directors. A lifelong resident of East New York, Melodye has lived in the community for over 50 years and has spent her life working to ensure that her neighborhood is one where families can thrive, grow, and feel a true sense of belonging.

With over three decades of professional experience in audit and compliance, Melodye has brought invaluable expertise to CHLDC’s Finance and Housing Committees. She has played a pivotal role in strengthening our board governance, ensuring fiscal responsibility, and advancing our work in housing justice and economic equity. Her thoughtful leadership has helped guide critical decisions that impact hundreds of families— from preserving deeply affordable housing to protecting homeowners from displacement.



But Melodye's contributions extend far beyond her professional knowledge. She leads with caring, humility, and an unwavering love for East New York. She shows up—time and again—not just in board meetings, but in moments of real community need. She listens, she advises, she uplifts others, and she brings people together. She is a fierce advocate, a wise counselor, and a quiet force who makes a lasting impact without ever seeking the spotlight.

Tonight, we are proud to recognize Melodye Harvey as our **Community Leader Honoree**. We thank her for her tireless service, her steady hand, and her deep commitment to justice, equity, and community. Melodye, your leadership inspires us all. You remind us that the strongest communities are built not only through policy and programs, but through people like you—who lead with integrity, who care deeply, and who never stop fighting for their neighbors.

**Thank you, Melodye, for all that you've done—and continue to do—for Cypress Hills and East New York. We are honored to celebrate you.**





***MICHAEL GOLAN***  
Board Leader Award Honoree

Michael Golan's lifelong commitment to community justice and grassroots leadership began at just 15 years old, when he first joined the United Community Centers (UCC.) Drawn to its mission of bringing together people from all races, religions, and backgrounds to organize for social change, Michael found a second home at UCC: a place where activism and collective purpose thrived. Whether traveling from the Bronx to East New York or joining demonstrations in Washington, he embraced UCC's challenge to think big and act boldly.

As a young adult, Michael helped organize campaigns for free tuition at CUNY and SUNY, and later made the intentional decision to move to East New York to deepen his involvement. At age 23, he joined UCC's Board of Directors, taking on leadership of the beloved overnight summer camp in the Catskills, where generations of youth experienced not only the joys of nature but the power of social change.



Under Michael's guidance, the camp became a place where children could canoe, fish, stargaze—and also learn about labor history, civil rights, and dignity in all forms of work.

Michael served as UCC's Board Treasurer for three years and played a hands-on role in the renovation of the day care center and in reclaiming land to help launch East New York Farms. From watching young children sing civil rights songs to supporting teens creating films and performances, Michael has always been driven by a deep belief in the power of youth, community, and place.

Now a proud member of the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) Board of Directors, Michael brings with him decades of lived experience and leadership rooted in East New York. In his words, "I have been fortunate to travel the world, but my favorite place has always been United Community Centers. And now, stronger together, Cypress Hills is my favorite place in the world."

We are honored to recognize Michael Golan with the **Board Leader Award** for his unwavering dedication, visionary leadership, and lifelong service to our community.

**Thank you, Michael, for being a tireless advocate, a bridge between generations and a shining example of what it means to lead with heart and purpose.**



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**WITH HEARTFELT THANKS  
TO OUR SPONSORS.**

Thank you for being a part of our *2025 Cypress Celebrates, Stronger Together: Celebrating Community Power*.

Your continued support has been essential to the success and growth of Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation and United Community Centers as we build a shared future rooted in equity, inclusion, and neighborhood pride.

Together, we've strengthened our mission to empower young people, families, and small businesses across East New York and Cypress Hills. Whether through creating affordable housing, cultivating the next generation of leaders, or advancing economic opportunity, your partnership has helped us meet the moment—and the movement—for community-driven change.

As we gather tonight, we are proud to honor those who embody this spirit of resilience and vision. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the ***Citi Foundation***, our Community Builder Honoree, for nearly three decades of transformational support and investment in East New York. We celebrate ***Michelle Neugebauer***, our Community Legacy Honoree, for her extraordinary leadership over 40 years, building institutions, coalitions, and a legacy of hope. We recognize ***Melodye Harvey***, our Community Leader Honoree, for her powerful commitment to youth and community development, and we thank ***Michael Golan***, our Board Leader Honoree, for a lifetime of grassroots service and leadership.

Each of you represents the very best of what it means to believe in and build with community.

To all our funders, elected officials, program participants, board members, staff, and volunteers—thank you. Your dedication and belief in our mission inspire us to dream bigger, reach further, and serve with intention. As we look toward the future, we know that stronger together, we will continue to grow, organize, and thrive.

With heartfelt appreciation,  
***Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation, Inc.***  
***Stronger Together with United Community Centers***

