

# helping PEOPLE help THEMSELVES

breaking the cycle of poverty for 35 years

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

## A Phoenix Rising NEW YORKERS CREATE RESTAURANT POST 9/11

BY CHRISTOPHER C. KELLY, CCHD VOLUNTEER

Owners of *Colors*, a new upscale restaurant in New York City, have spent over two years preparing just the right ingredients to make it successful: they have consulted well-known chefs, obtained international financing, leased a prime Lower Manhattan location and designed a 120-seat dining area that will serve American cuisine with international flair. They also found 30 superb employees to run the establishment—all displaced workers from *Windows on the World*, the famous restaurant that sat atop the World Trade Center. And it happens that the owners and employees are one and the same; *Colors* is the first employee-owned co-operative restaurant in New York City.

*Colors* is supported by the **Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York** (ROC-NY), a Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)—funded organization devoted to improving conditions for restaurant workers citywide. Since 2002, CCHD has provided over \$160,000.00 in economic development grants to ROC-NY for their cooperative restaurants project.

The history of ROC-NY is inextricably linked to the September 11 attack which took the lives of 73 *Windows* employees and displaced 250 others. “I couldn’t find work and wasn’t prepared to work because

of the many friends I lost,” said former *Windows* banquet cook **Sekou Siby**, a native of the Ivory Coast. Siby drove a cab in the months following the attack and soon joined many of his former coworkers in founding ROC-NY.

### Working and Still Poor

Over 160,000 New Yorkers work in restaurants, and like Siby, most are immigrants who are vulnerable to exploitation, low salaries, and unsafe working conditions. With a median income of under \$15,000 a year, they often must hold a second job to help support their families and stay out of poverty. And they are not

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Photos courtesy of ROC-NY

BY GUARANTEEING A LIVING WAGE, HEALTH BENEFITS, SAFE WORKING CONDITIONS AND A DISCRIMINATION-FREE ENVIRONMENT, THEY HIRED THE BEST—THEMSELVES! MEET THE NEW OWNER-EMPLOYEES OF COLORS.

**Catholic Campaign for Human Development**  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 Fourth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017-1194



## FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of CCHD:



Greetings from all of us here at the national office of CCHD!

As we move into the fall season we are happy to share that, this summer, our bishops' committee was able to approve nearly \$9 million in funding to more than 300 community projects working to break the cycle of poverty in their communities. These grants are possible only through your generosity year-round and in our annual parish collection.

I hope you enjoy reading about one of our approved grantees, the **Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York (ROC-NY)**. ROC-NY is scheduled to open an employee-owned restaurant this October in New York City that will provide terrific economic development opportunities for its worker-owners and the community (not to mention the benefits to the grateful stomachs of its patrons). This newsletter continues its food theme with a brief feature on **Urban Oasis**, a refuge of fresh vegetables in a neighborhood where the last supermarket closed years ago.

I hope you enjoy reading about these two community efforts. If you are interested in getting involved with CCHD in your local area, contact us at 202-541-3210 / [cchdpromo@usccb.org](mailto:cchdpromo@usccb.org). Thank you for your ongoing support of our anti-poverty efforts.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Timothy F. Collins  
Interim Director

### WHAT IS CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed more than \$260 million to more than 4,000 low-income led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective and so that CCHD's investment will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between the poor and non-poor.

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Printed on recycled paper with eco-friendly inks.

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NEW YORKERS *continued from page 1*

alone. Across the United States, more than two-thirds of all low-income families with children are headed by one or more working adult.

**Fekkek Mamdouh**, originally from Morocco, worked as a waiter at *Windows* and is currently the assistant director of ROC-NY. He knows first-hand the obstacles faced by those who earn tips for a living. “Restaurants in some cases may assume the wait staff will make tips, so some don’t even supply them with a minimum wage,” he said.

In contrast, Catholics believe that “work should not leave people poor but should provide wages sufficient to achieve a standard of living that is in keeping with human dignity.”<sup>1</sup> CCHD’s economic development grants do just that, by helping community-based organizations create good jobs, just workplaces, and hope for low-income people, their families and their neighborhoods. With early financial support from CCHD, Mamdouh and other ROC-NY leaders organized around the idea of opening their own restaurant—one that would be a model of justice, equity, and fairness.

Since then they’ve worked tirelessly to obtain over \$2 million in financing through a combination of outside investment and federal loans to make the project a reality. Months

of member planning and negotiations resulted in the selection of a 4,000-square-foot space in

Greenwich Village, with detailed studies for the appropriate style and theme. The dining room will be designed to create a pleasurable experience for guests, with attention paid to everything from the lighting to the furniture.

**Justice for All**

Salaries have been set—wait staff will earn a living wage plus tips, while dishwashers will earn a starting hourly wage of \$13.50 which is more than double New York’s minimum wage. Health benefits, workmen’s compensation and promptly-paid overtime will be included, and all 30 owner-employees will one day share in the profits generated. “Since we too will be owners, we want to show other restaurant owners how workers should be treated,” said Siby.

*Since we too will be owners, we want to show other restaurant owners how workers should be treated.*

—Siby



COLORS WILL OPEN FOR BUSINESS IN OCTOBER.


“We have many allies who believe in what we are doing,” Mamdouh noted, “and we know that in the first year and a half we’ll have a lot of customers. We need to make sure they continue to come and eat.”

To do so, a delicious menu of traditional American food will be offered, with special items featuring fare from one of the 22 countries represented by the owner-employees. The *Colors* dining experience will go beyond good food; customers will enjoy meals fresh from the farm to the table, with ingredients purchased from local cooperative/organic farmers who practice sustainable agriculture and promote environmentally-friendly farming practices.

**Fruits of their Labor**

In 2002, nearly 35 million Americans lived in households that lacked enough food for basic nourishment. By aiding local producers who in turn provide their communities with farm-fresh products, *Colors* will put into practice their goal of supporting all who are involved in the creation of a meal.

The *Colors* team knows clearly that service and accountability will make the difference and can serve as a model for future restaurants. The fruit of their efforts will be on display at their gala/preview party on September 12. CCHD is pleased to have provided financial support to ROC-NY as they have worked to reach this milestone. In the words of Fekkek Mamdouh, CCHD funding has truly made a difference. “They’ve been with us since the beginning, believing in what we’ve been doing, and that’s important because it helps us to succeed.”

*Colors* will open for business in October. The restaurant is located at 417 Lafayette St. in New York City. Visit our website ([www.usccb.org/cchd](http://www.usccb.org/cchd)) in late September to read about the success of the gala. 

<sup>1</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc., *A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God’s Children* (Washington, D.C., 2002), 14.

# ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS BUILDS STRONG COMMUNITIES

*OASIS: a situation or place preserved from surrounding unpleasantness; a refuge.<sup>1</sup>*

Imagine not having a single grocery store in your community. Not one. You must make do with what is available in the corner convenience store until you have time to take two buses to reach fresh fruits and vegetables. More than 70,000 residents of one Washington, D.C. neighborhood live this reality.

Fortunately, one community group has stepped in. They took unused space on the grounds of a local hospital and turned it into a garden budding with possibilities. Members of *Urban Oasis*, a project of Community Harvest, grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers and distribute them throughout the community and at a newly established farmer's market. Children and families from the poorest neighborhoods eat more nutritiously because of this effort. An oasis has been created.

*The annual parish collection for CCHD supports anti-poverty efforts through national and local grants. Seventy-five percent of a diocese's CCHD collection is sent to the national office for distribution across the country; 25 percent stays in the local diocese to support community efforts to break the cycle of poverty. Community Harvest*



Print PSA from CCHD

*and its Urban Oasis project has been supported by a local grant from the Archdiocese of Washington's Catholic Campaign for Human Development program.*

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## WHERE'S MY MONEY GOING?

All CCHD funds received are used solely for the support of CCHD's anti-poverty mission. CCHD abides by the charitable standards set by a leading donor advisory service. Our funds are divided as follows: 86% is assigned to CCHD's core program mission of community empowerment, economic development, education programs, and supporting services; 3% is allocated to coordinate the annual appeal; and 11% is assigned to administrative costs. We thank you for continuing to empower low-income people through your ongoing support for CCHD.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can donate your time, talent, and treasure to CCHD in many ways. You can support CCHD with a stock donation or a matching gift from your employer, or consider a lasting legacy to help people help themselves—remember CCHD in your estate planning.

For more information about CCHD, or to receive our most recent annual report, contact Mary Mencarini Campbell at 202-541-3365 / [mcampbell@usccb.org](mailto:mcampbell@usccb.org).

Visit our website at [www.usccb.org/cchd](http://www.usccb.org/cchd), or explore the state of U.S. poverty, made up of nearly 36 million Americans, at [www.povertyusa.org](http://www.povertyusa.org).