

Wednesday, December 5, 2007

**NEW YORK CITY RECEIVES \$125,000 FOR NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED  
FINANCIAL COUNSELING**

**INSURANCE INDUSTRY GRANT TO PILOT NEW PUBLIC/PRIVATE  
PARTNERSHIP**

***Pilot to Test Bringing One-on-One Counseling on Debt, Credit, and Banking  
Services to Scale Citywide***

The New York City Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) today announced it received a \$125,000 grant to pilot the City's ability to provide one-on-one neighborhood financial counseling in low-income communities. The donation, made by the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation of New York to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, will support an experimental program at the Phipps Opportunity Center, administered by non-profit partner Phipps Community Development Corporation, in the Melrose section of the Bronx. Melrose is one of the neighborhoods at the center of the Bloomberg Administration's efforts to break the cycle of poverty through its Center for Economic Opportunity. With an eye toward citywide scale in the future, OFE's pilot project will explore the ability of local government to partner and provide reliable, trusted, and accessible financial counseling to help those New Yorkers in crisis or with complex situations. Counselors will be trained to help with a variety of topics that include managing debt and credit, basic banking, and providing access to affordable financial products and services in the community. OFE expects to officially launch the pilot in spring 2008. Mayor Bloomberg will help kick off the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation's first annual New York City gala dinner this evening.

"The Center for Economic Opportunity continues to implement groundbreaking approaches to tackling poverty in the City," said Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs. "These funds will give us the opportunity to try a new bold idea and help build financial stability for those who need it most."

"This grant represents another exciting opportunity for the Bloomberg Administration to test large-scale financial empowerment initiatives through far-reaching, innovative public-private partnerships," said Jonathan Mintz, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs. "We thank the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation and Phipps Community Development Corporation for their generous commitment to work with us exploring a critical piece of the anti-poverty puzzle: solid, one-on-one financial counseling."

"Private-public partnerships work," said Ned Cloonan, Chairman of the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation. "We're honored to work with Mayor Bloomberg and the entire insurance industry to tackle the city's most pressing issues. By giving OFE a seed grant for the financial literacy center in the Bronx, we're one step closer to reducing poverty."

"We are honored to work on this exciting project that will help people in poverty resolve pressing financial issues and, more importantly, acquire practical skills to help them better manage their lives," said Stephen Tosh, Executive Director/CEO of Phipps

Community Development Corporation. "This pilot project in Melrose will meet critical needs in this community and will also be 'proving grounds' to help develop similar centers throughout the City."

The Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) is working to educate, empower and protect New Yorkers with low incomes so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. OFE is the first program to be implemented under the Center for Economic Opportunity and it is part of Mayor Bloomberg's aggressive efforts to fight poverty in New York City. Coordinating closely with government agencies and non-profit organizations, as well as the private sector, OFE is working to develop smart financial products and services like the Opportunity NYC Account; provides targeted watchdog protection through enforcement, advocacy and outreach efforts; helps New Yorkers get the Earned Income Tax Credit and other financial credits they've earned; is establishing a dynamic network of financial service providers; and more. For more information, call 311 or visit [www.nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers) .

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City serves as an umbrella not-for-profit organization for the City of New York. Through private sector contributions the Mayor's Fund supports many of the City's economic opportunity initiatives, including those of OFE and the Opportunity NYC conditional cash transfer program, which is made entirely possible through generous contributions. For more information, visit [www.nyc.gov/fund](http://www.nyc.gov/fund) .

The Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation, the first pan-industry charitable initiative, develops public-private partnerships to find solutions to today's societal challenges. The Foundation's goal is to use the industry's intellectual capital, expertise in economic development and risk management skills to address global issues such as disaster preparedness, the environment and poverty alleviation at a local level.