

# COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



## CASE STUDY

## Human Impacts Stories Project Fosters Creativity through Sustainability

The Human Impacts Institute is an organization of social entrepreneurs who create and share innovative approaches to tackling social and environmental issues. Founded in 2011 in Brooklyn, New York their programs pair artists and scientists to engage new audiences in climate change solutions, bring youth to the boardroom, and get policy makers' hands dirty as they care for local street trees. Their goal is to help people of diverse ages and backgrounds personally connect to the most pressing environmental issues of our times, and give them the tools needed to take positive, long-term actions.

### CHALLENGE

North Brooklyn is a socio-economically undeserved region bearing a disproportionately high pollution burden; its residents may be vulnerable to health risks, which have been positively correlated to air pollution, water pollution, and chemical exposure.

Particulate matter air pollution is produced mainly from diesel-burning vehicles and can cause long-term impacts in air quality and human health. North Brooklyn experiences long-term health impacts from particulate matter air pollution derived mainly from diesel-burning vehicles from transport to and from its many industrial business zones. North Brooklyn faces pressure because residential housing and industrial facilities are often within close proximity, making residents vulnerable to indoor and outdoor air pollutants.

North Brooklyn is disproportionately saddled with a high pollution burden in terms of both solid waste and wastewater. Wastewater treatment plants burden communities with foul odors and when overcapacity may discharge raw sewage into the waterways. North Brooklyn is home of The Newtown Creek Water Pollution Control Plant, which serves approximately one million residents and is one of NYC's largest wastewater treatment plants. In addition, according to the Newtown Creek Alliance, North Brooklyn neighborhoods host 19 waste transfer stations. Collectively, these WTS handle almost 40% of the 12 million plus tons of waste moving through WTS in NYC annually. This is the densest concentration of WTS stations in New York City.

Another risk to residents includes the widespread use of household hazardous chemicals. Harmful cleaning products can cause skin irritations, allergies, respiratory problems, cancer, developmental and reproductive toxicity issues.

### SOLUTION

While addressing all of the above challenges was outside the scope of this project, they illustrate the great need for a community-based, participatory approach to pollution prevention. It is important to showcase residents' stories relating to pollution, to put a "face" to the environmental risks, exposures, and solutions in the community is paramount. Through the Human Impacts Stories project, Human Impacts Institute (HII) personalized pollution impacts and enabled people to engage with fellow community members who are experiencing these complex issues and are working to find innovative ways to address them.

### CHALLENGE

- North Brooklyn experiences long-term health impacts from particulate matter air pollution derived mainly from diesel-burning vehicles from transport to and from its many industrial business zones
- North Brooklyn is disproportionately saddled with a high pollution burden in terms of both solid waste and wastewater. These wastewater treatment plants burden communities with foul odors and when overcapacity may discharge raw sewage into the waterways

### SOLUTION

- Through the Human Impacts Stories project, Human Impacts Institute personalized pollution impacts and enabled people to engage with fellow community members who are experiencing these complex issues
- The Human Impacts Stories project developed and offered a successful series of community trainings, focus groups, and storytelling which culminated in the creation of a Climate sHeros event

### RESULTS

- Four community trainings were held with a total of 56 participants
- Climate sHeros event was held at the French Consulate on June 17, 2015 to showcase a combined StoryCorps exhibit
- The Health and Consumer training materials were shared at an inaugural Youth Leadership Intensive at the Green School

## CONTACT INFO

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The Human Impacts Stories project developed and offered a successful series of community trainings, focus groups, and storytelling which culminated in the creation of a Climate sHeros event, showcasing stories related to pollution from 20 local residents.

## RESULTS

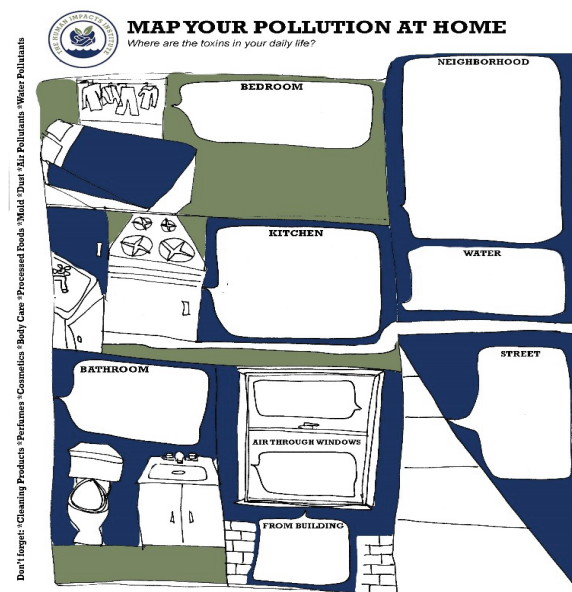
Four community trainings were held with a total of 56 participants. PowerPoint presentations, a brochure, and educational tip sheets for each topic were developed and disseminated to all attendees. Participants received non-toxic cleaning kits. On June 17th, 2015 a Climate sHeros event was held at the French Consulate to showcase a combined StoryCorps exhibit that shared stories about pollution prevention and climate change concerns directly from 20 women in the community. The successful event had 300 people in attendance. The Health and Consumer training materials were also shared at an inaugural Youth Leadership Intensive, a six week environmental program for local high school students, at the Green School.



(Photo Credit: HII)  
Attendees from Climate sHeros event on June 17, 2015.

## RESOURCES

- Human Impact Institute [Blog Post](#)
- [Environmental Justice and Consumer Advocacy Tip Sheet](#)
- Map Your Pollution at Home Worksheet (below)



## ONLINE MEDIA

[Website](#)  
[Facebook](#)  
[Twitter](#)  
[Instagram](#)

<sup>1</sup>Newtown Creek Alliance. <http://www.newtowncreekalliance.org/waste-transfer-stations>

## TESTIMONIAL

"NYSP2I made it possible for our organization to expand the resources we offer to the North Brooklyn community and educate residents about pollution prevention. As a result of our successful project, local women had access to information about how to reduce toxics and improve their environment, as well as the opportunity to share their stories. We appreciate the funding from NYSP2I and look forward to their support in the future."

-Tara DePorte, Executive Director  
Human Impacts Institute

## NYSP2I PARTNERS

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UB

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New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

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