



THE NEW YORK
COMMUNITY TRUST



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Tuesday, June 29, 2010

CONTACT: Andrew Yarbrough – (212)-260-8813/(646) 652-9108
ayarbrough@globalstrategygroup.com

2010 New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard Report Indicates More New Yorkers Struggling to Make Ends Meet

New data shows earnings rising much slower than cost of living, few of City's most common occupations pay self-sufficient wage

Earnings that are above official Federal Poverty Level still far below what is needed to meet basic needs

New York, NY – The Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement, in collaboration with The New York Women's Foundation, United Way of New York City, and the New York Community Trust today unveiled the 2010 New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard Report. The Self Sufficiency Standard Report measures—in each of New York City's five boroughs—how much a family must earn to pay for housing, food, child care, health care, transportation, taxes and other basic necessities without public assistance or help from family and friends.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard shows that, for most parents, earnings that are well above the official Federal Poverty Level are nevertheless far below what is needed to meet their families' basic needs.

“The Standard tells us that families have a hard time meeting basic expenses not because they lack responsibility, work ethic, or budgeting skills, but because they lack enough income to cover the cost of basic needs,” said Dr. Diana Pearce, author of the Self-Sufficiency Standard, and Director of the Center for Women's Welfare, University of Washington. “The rising costs of housing, child care, and health care; the lack of education and skills; welfare time limits; and restrictions on training and education all add to the problems faced by many parents seeking self-sufficiency.”

According to the Report, the Self-Sufficiency Standards in New York City have risen significantly between 2000 and 2010 for most family types and in all boroughs. For example, the Self-Sufficiency Standard for a single adult with a preschooler and a school-age child increased 42% between 2000 and 2010 in Brooklyn (from \$44,594 per year to \$63,166 per year). The increase in the Self-Sufficiency Standards is a result of rising costs, especially housing, which have increased by over 50% in all New York City boroughs but North and South Manhattan.

“The data contained in the 2010 New York City Self-Sufficiency Standard report gives us an excellent opportunity to assess, in a reality-based way, what specific economic security goals might be for our New York City working families. Then we can better assess what support they need to reach those goals,” said Merble Reagon, Executive Director, Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement.”

The report, which was last released in 2005, shows that the median earnings have risen much slower than the self-sufficiency standard wage in each of New York City's five boroughs over the

past ten years. For single parent New Yorkers with one preschool age child and one school-age child, the median earnings have risen just 16 percent over the past ten years, while the self-sufficiency standard has risen in the various boroughs by 20 to 42 percent.

The report also finds that only two out of ten of the most common occupations in New York pay wages above 53% of the self-sufficiency standard. These two occupations—executive secretaries/administrative assistants and registered nurses—both require significant education and training.

“The new findings should serve as a call to action to the advocacy, government and provider communities for new public policy solutions to address the challenges facing working families in New York,” said Gordon Campbell, President and CEO of United Way of NYC. “While important programs are already underway, the study points to a need for increased work supports, public benefits and tax credits to help New Yorkers during these tough economic times.”

“This is a groundbreaking and important report, said Nicole Mason, Director of the Women of Color Policy Network, Wagner School, New York University. “It tells us in certain terms what families in New York need not only to survive, but to thrive.”

"For 23 years, The New York Women's Foundation has partnered with local nonprofits to examine barriers and create solutions to achieving economic justice for New York City's women and their families, said Ana Oliveira, President & CEO, New York Women's Foundation. “The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a critical measure that identifies the real costs of living in NYC. It is a useful tool to policymakers, social service providers, community organizers and all others committed to ensuring that NYC is livable for all. We commend The Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement, a partner of The Foundation, and Dr. Diana Pearce for their exemplary work in this field."

"WHEDco staff members have used the NYC Self-Sufficiency Calculator for nine years," said Nancy Biberman, Executive Director, Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation. “With information provided by the standard and using the calculator as a tool, last year alone WHEDco helped over 1,000 Bronx residents make ends meet.

Methodology

The Self-Sufficiency Standard is varied by geography and by family composition. The data used in calculating the Standard are calculated using standardized methodology nationwide, obtained from scholarly or credible sources (such as the U.S. Census Bureau), and updated routinely.

The Standard is calculated for 70 different family types for all New York counties, ranging from one adult with no children, to one adult with one infant, one adult with one preschooler, and so forth, up to two-adult families with three teenagers. The Standard assumes adult household members work full-time and therefore includes major costs associated with employment (taxes, transportation, and child care for families with young children). After the costs of six basic needs are totaled (child care, food, health care, housing, miscellaneous costs, and transportation), taxes and tax credits are calculated.

The result is a set of “bare-bones, no frills” budgets: the food budget has no take-out or restaurant food—not a pizza, Happy Meal, or latte. Likewise, housing costs (which include all utilities except telephone) are generally set at the 40th percentile (based on HUD Fair Market Rents); meaning that 60% of the housing in the area is more expensive and 40% is less expensive. The Standard is the economic equivalent of the minimum daily requirements we see on food packages—the Standard is the minimum needed to adequately meet a family’s most basic needs.

More detail on all of the topics can be found in the report itself, available at www.wceca.org and www.selfsufficiencystandard.org.

###

About The Women’s Center for Education and Career Advancement:

The Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement (WCECA) is a nonprofit organization committed to the career and economic self-sufficiency of women in the New York City metropolitan area.

About The New York Women’s Foundation:

The New York Women’s’ Foundation (NYWF) is a voice for women and a force for change. We are a cross-cultural alliance of women catalyzing partnerships and leveraging human and financial capital to achieve sustained economic security and justice for women and girls. With fierce determination, we mobilize hearts, minds and resources to create an equitable and just future for women, families and communities in New York City.

About United Way of NYC:

United Way of New York City (UWNYC) creates, leads and supports strategic initiatives that seek to achieve sustainable city-wide improvements in the education, income stability, and health of low-income New Yorkers. UWNYC also seeks to foster a more robust and effective nonprofit sector in New York City.

About the New York Community Trust:

The New York Community Trust (NYCT) is one of the country's largest community foundations with assets of more than \$1.7 billion in nearly 2,000 individual charitable funds. In 2008, we made \$123 million in grants. NYCT has been helping charitable individuals, families, and businesses with their philanthropy since 1924. We make philanthropy convenient, professional, and lasting.

