Summary

2022 was a year of reflection, learning and growth for Sixth Street Community Center (SSCC). With all of our programs back in-person year round, our focused attention was placed on making them as robust as they were before the COVID19 pandemic. In addition, we have continued to run all of the new programs we launched during the pandemic [Emergency Food Distribution, Mutual Aid Kitchen Project and our Community Fridge] to support local families in need. At the same time, we continued our organizing for climate justice and to create a Community Land Trust (CLT) on East 5th and 6th Streets in collaboration with our neighborhood partners. While we still grapple with the economic impacts of the pandemic, we remain committed to continue our vital work in 2023!
Teen Climate Justice Program

Since launching our Teen Climate Justice Program in September 2021, the program has grown and flourished. Over the course of 2022, we engaged 54 teens in our fight for climate justice, with 21 teens attending the program in the Spring semester, 14 teens in our Summer intensive program, and 28 teens in the Fall. Teens attend our program free of cost and receive a stipend at the end for their participation.

The Sixth Street Teens kicked off 2022 in January with a climate march to Governor Kathy Hochul’s office demanding the rapid phase-out of fossil fuels and transition to renewables. The march and direct action which shut down traffic on Fifth Avenue, was organized in collaboration with the statewide Public Power Coalition and called for immediate passage of the Build Public Renewables Act. For all of our teens, it was their first experience in non-violent direct action as tactic to demonstrate the urgent need for climate action.

During the Spring semester, teens were trained as “neighborhood scientists” in collaboration with LES Breathe, conducting indoor air quality tests as well as collecting data on outdoor air quality from East 6th Street to East River Park. Teens developed facilitation skills by leading workshops for their peers on topics of choice, such as reducing plastic pollution in the ocean, exposing the dangers of factory farming in the meat and agricultural industry, and discussing the literature of climate fiction. Teens also built on a workshop exploring ARTivism by creating protest art for a NY Renews rally in Albany, and created signs to take to the Fridays For Future youth-led strike on March 25th. One of our teens assumed a leadership role and gave a moving speech at that rally in front of a crowd of 300+ young people! Our teens attended the Extinction Rebellion Festival for Earth (Crisis) Day during Spring break. Teens ended the semester with a bicycle trip to Governor’s Island, where Metro Area Governor Island Coalition discussed the fight against overdevelopment on the Island and then conducted a tour of hidden gems including the Island’s plastics recycling micro factory. Check out teen’s work from Spring 2022, such as Zine excerpts on the Dangers of Fast Fashion, No North Brooklyn Pipeline, Food Justice, and Speculative Fiction, as well as select environmental justice short essays, on our blog.
Teen Climate Justice Program

SSCC Teens rallied for the passing of the Build Public Renewables Act (BPRA) this past summer in downtown Manhattan alongside climate coalitions SSCC organizes with.

Our summer program lunchtime meals were organized as a learning experience. Teens cooked meals in our center’s commercial kitchen in collaboration with our Teen Summer Program Coordinator Noel Sanchez. The teens utilized local produce from Sixth Street’s Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Our Teen Climate Justice Program culminated their summer work through a handmade Zine they collaboratively compiled.

In the fall of 2022, we began the semester by defining what climate change is and why it is an issue of environmental and social justice. We studied inequities in emissions from the Global North and Global South, the Land Back movement and Indigenous resistance to fossil fuel projects, case studies of Environmental racism, and local movements fighting fossil fuels here in NYC. We participated in the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition's organizing by making art and graphic designs to post on the coalition’s social media, as well as hosting an art-build for teens to meet organizers and contribute art to the fight against fossil fuel expansion.

We had guests from Girl Be Heard lead an empowerment workshop, focusing on environmentally-themed theater exercises to unlock our voices as activists. Eco-designer Rosie Mae led a workshop about textile waste, introduced the Fashion Act and related legislation, and teens researched the environmental impact and worker ethics of leading clothing brands.

Teens created textile art with artist Dani Fabrizi for the ReHecho exhibit at the Clemente Soto Velez Community Center, working hands-on with working artists while learning about the most overused materials and how “trash” can be reimagined into environmental art. Teens worked together to sow, pin, and glue together a doll out of used clothing, and one teen created a dress out of newspapers that was featured in the ReHecho photoshoot.

In mid-November, a cohort of our teens attended the Climate, Jobs, & Justice campaign launch rally in coalition with NY Renews. To prepare, we studied the bills included in the campaign, and made signs related to the legislation. Teens also wrote letters to legislators including Governor Kathy Hochul, using their voices as young people to advocate for a healthy future.

Next semester and into 2023, the Teen Climate Justice Program plans to expand our citizen science work by building air quality monitors with CUNY Sensor Lab, give hands-on support to local green spaces such as the green roof at the Wild Project and El Jardin Del Paraiso, learn about the intersection of climate justice and housing through monitoring NYCHA conditions, and organize a beach or park cleanup.

The Teen Climate Justice Program was led by our Teen Program Director Anna Tsomo and was supported by our Teen Summer Program Coordinator Noel Sanchez. Additional support was provided by our Climate Justice Organizer Hennessy Garcia and Youth Educators Ebony Cawthorne and Samantha Fabian.
Sixth Street Youth Program

The Sixth Street Youth Program (SSYP) operated year round during 2022 for after school and summer, supporting a total of 115 families. In 2021, when we returned back in person, SSYP continued to support our youth’s understanding of climate justice and sustainability through an anti-racist lens. Our program develops strong community, expressive creative skills, mindfulness, and social and environmental awareness and activism among our youth. We offer a unique curriculum that uses the arts as a vehicle for kids to learn about urban sustainability, climate justice, and issues that affect our local community while cultivating a warm and inclusive atmosphere that honors each student’s unique strengths.

After School Program

The Sixth Street Youth Program (SSYP) After School served a total of 85 families during the Spring and Fall seasons. Our current Fall semester supports 40 students from four local public elementary schools and one homeschool representing a diverse cross-section of the Lower East Side community. We provide daily pick-up service from the four public schools, a nutritious snack from our Center's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program, homework support, community building playtime, and a daily enrichment workshop. 74% of our enrolled families benefit from our reduced sliding-scale program fees, with 20% of students attending the program free of cost thanks to support from Assembly Member Harvey Epstein. We are especially proud of our daily enrichment workshops which focus on environmental sustainability, climate justice, urban agriculture/food sovereignty, visual arts, expressive arts, social justice, and other creative offerings through our local neighborhood partnerships.

SSYP Fall Season Highlights

Our Sixth Street Youth Program and Teen Climate Justice Program collaborated on several occasions. The youth were able to showcase their art work and what they have learned while the teens shared what they were unpacking in their climate justice workshops. The kids loved seeing the mural the teens were working on.

We leaned into our kids’ love for textile arts this fall, focusing on sustainability and up-cycling. We made dream catchers, fabric scrap wallets and tote bags using old t-shirts. “Warm Wednesdays” are a crowd favorite where we explore levels of warmth, from tea making workshops using herbs from our CSA, writing warm fuzzies (encouraging notes to one another) to creating gifts for loved ones using sustainable materials.

Our cooking workshops are always a hit. We intentionally use what is locally grown and in season from our very own Sixth Street CSA. We made jams with fresh cherries and gooseberries; roasted squash and pumpkins for amazing snacks and pies, made earth cupcakes, and even made sushi!

We continued our longstanding partnership with Wide Rainbow, another local non-profit organization that connects contemporary artists with the community. Through this collaboration, students were exposed to contemporary artists (NYC based and international) and art exhibits at Manhattan-based galleries like Hauser Wirth, Pace and David Zwirner.
Summer at Sixth Street (SASS)

Summer at Sixth Street, our summer program for youth ages 5-13 supported over 30 families for 6 full weeks in July and August. With an average daily enrollment of 18 kids per day, Sixth Street Youth Program was able to offer families quality programming while considering COVID safety. While at Sixth Street, kids participated in twice-weekly urban farming workshops at El Jardin Community Garden and 6BC Botanical Garden. Our urban farming and gardening workshops were guided by one of our lead Youth Educators, Ivy Denham-Conroy. The kids learned all about tending to a garden in an urban setting and planted herbs in El Jardin Community Garden. We witnessed pollinators and crop destroyers and learned about the process of harvesting apples from start to finish. Here at Sixth Street, we hosted special workshops with our volunteer beekeeper Ray Sage. It’s always exciting for our kids to learn that we have beehives on our center’s roof that house up to 180,000 bees during the summer!

We had the amazing opportunity to collaborate with Misou Magazine, a children’s magazine on their fall issue which included handmade puzzles by the students. Various art mediums and forms of creativity were threaded throughout the program including mural making, performance art, photography, dance, tie-dye, and cooking.

SSYP was led by our Youth Program Directors, Krystal Bydonne (SASS 2022 & SSYP Fall 2022) & Shania Santana (Spring 2022), with critical support from Youth Educators Alex Lopez Guevara, Onyx Clarke, Sara Morales, Ryan Moore, Samantha Fabian, Ivy Denham-Conroy, Maddy Giles, Sarai Garcia and Ebony Cawthorne. Every summer including SASS 2022, we were supported by SSYP alumni Maddie (now a Junior in HS) and Mambwe who headed off to the University of New Mexico at the end of the summer!
Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program

SSCC has been committed to expanding food access and food justice for Loisaida residents for over 26 years. Bringing fresh, organic produce directly from a local farmer in the Hudson Valley to what has long been considered a food desert, SSCC offers their CSA to Lower East Side community members via a sliding scale membership that is based on household income. In this model, low-income households have their membership fees subsidized by higher-income households. Families can also use SNAP (food stamps) or EBT to pay for their CSA share.

Sixth Street's CSA Program supported a total of 80 family and household memberships in 2022. As one of the first CSA programs established in New York City, we've maintained our 21+ years of partnership with Hepworth Farms for our Summer/Fall 22' season and our longstanding partnership with Norwich Meadows Farm for the Winter/Spring 22' season.

We offer access to farm-fresh, organic produce on a sliding-scale membership based on household income, and we accept EBT/Food Stamps from low-income households. 75% of our households received shares at a reduced sliding scale rate and 10 additional shares were provided at no charge to low-income families and those financially affected by the COVID19 pandemic.

SSCC's 2022 CSA Program was led by our CSA Coordinator, Ryan Moore.

Emergency Food Distribution Program

Dating back to the homesteading movement in the late 70's and early 80's, Sixth Street Community Center has historically had free food lines wrapping around the block and extending down Avenue C. In 2020, when the COVID19 pandemic hit, we did what we know how to do best and responded to the drastic spike of food insecurity that was experienced by our community members. 2020 and 2021 was a year of learning how to run the program on scarce resources and funding.

In 2022, we continued our Emergency Food Distribution Program year round taking a short summer hiatus to recalibrate and rest. Financially, we sustained the program solely through small contributions and fundraising events organized by local community members. SSCC has continued to buy fresh produce at a discount for each distribution from Tay Shing, a wholesale distributor based in Queens, NY. Tay Shing has also donated nearly 100 cases of produce in addition to providing a discount for the Program. We relied on recurring support from The People's Bodega, our mutual aid partner, who provided critical transportation/delivery of the produce from Queens, NY to our Center. Special thanks to Benham Jones for their time and energy.

The line from our most recent Emergency Food Distribution on Dec. 19, 2022 extending down E 6th St. and wrapping around Avenue C.
Sixth Street Community Center | Annual Highlights

Emergency Food Distribution Program (cont.)

Since the onset of COVID19, SSCC has distributed a total of over 40,000 bags/boxes of fresh produce and food via our Emergency Food Program. The Program currently supports an average of 125-150 families per distribution with 100% of the participants low-income and BiPOC. An estimated 95% of our Emergency Food Distribution participants are immigrants, elders, and seniors who reside in public and supportive housing just a few blocks from SSCC.

SSCC's Deputy Director, Jen Chantrtanapichate, created a zine to accompany the film and unpack the issues surrounding food access, food justice, and heightened food insecurity due to the onset of the COVID19 pandemic. To watch the film and view the zine, visit: www.sixthstreetcenter.org/on-the-line.

SSCC Volunteer Bo Bao has been supporting our distribution since we started it in 2020.

In November 2022, SSCC was granted $5,000 from the Rainbow Sandals foundation, which will allow us to sustain our Emergency Food Distribution monthly until May 2023.

SSCC's Emergency Food Distribution Program is organized and led by SSCC's Deputy Director, Jen Chantrtanapichate. The Program is made possible thanks to the love, labor and financial support of our incredible community members and volunteers.

To learn more about SSCC’s Emergency Food Distribution, watch, “On the Line,” a short 10-min documentary about the program. The film was directed and Produced in 2021 by Naomi Schiller and Dan Fethke with support from the CUNY Graduate Center, The Center for Humanities Andrew W. Mellon Seminar on Public Engagement and Collaborative Research.
Sixth Street Community Center | Annual Highlights

Mutual Aid Kitchen Project

Sixth Street’s Mutual Aid Kitchen Project provides space for Mutual Aid groups to cook and provide free meals for food insecure New Yorkers.

At the onset of the COVID19 crisis, Sixth Street Community Center witnessed a steep increase in food insecurity in our community and across the city. We responded by launching an Emergency Food Distribution and Pantry, a Free Community Fridge and opened up our kitchen and cafe space as a Mutual Aid Kitchen. Since June 2020, we have been operating our kitchen and cafe exclusively as a Mutual Aid Kitchen, partnering mainly with East Village Loves NYC, a local mutual aid group. EV Loves NYC has engaged over 1,000 volunteers at Sixth Street Community Center to cook and prepare free meals for food insecure families and individuals who are unable to prepare their own meals.

Our Mutual Aid Kitchen Project operates weekly and prepares around 2,000 meals per week. In September EV Loves NYC hit a milestone making the 300,000th meal via this project.

Meals are packaged and distributed to other community based organizations and local community fridges across the city particularly in neighborhoods that have been hit hardest by the pandemic. This past year, thousands of meals have been distributed to asylum seekers that were bussed up from states like Texas and Florida.

To date, EV Loves NYC has made and distributed a total of 332,870 meals through our Mutual Aid Kitchen Project.
Community Organizing & Advocacy

Climate Jobs and Justice with NY Renews

This past year, Sixth Street Community Center was awarded a $20,000 grant from statewide climate coalition NY Renews. The grant enabled us to increase our capacity to organize for climate justice and bring on Hennessy Garcia as our Climate Justice Organizer.

SSC is a proud member of NY Renews alongside 300+ statewide community-based climate organizations. We participated in weekly planning calls for the Climate, Jobs and Justice Campaign launch and routinely involved the Teens in our Teen Climate Justice Program.

SSC Staff and Teens joined NY Renews and dozens of other NYC based climate organizations in Union Square for the CJJP launch rally. Teens designed and painted the signs they brought and through her collaboration with artist Lilli Janney, SSC Deputy Director, Jen Chantartranapichate unveiled a massive inflatable earth on fire. The globe was inspired by Scabby, the inflatable labor protest rat, as a way to bring broader attention to the climate crisis.

To cap off the year, both SSCC kids and teens participated in a letter writing campaign to New York Governor Kathy Hochul to ask her to support the Climate Jobs and Justice Package.

Building Public Renewables and Demanding Climate Action with Public Power

Throughout 2022 and the few years prior to SSCC has been involved in the statewide campaign for Public Power. Public Power is a campaign to rapidly scale up our state’s production of renewable energy through expanding the New York Power Authority (NYPA). The coalition has been advocating for the passage of the Build Public Renewables Act (BPRA) for the past year, which will propel our state’s transition to renewables and move us away from fossil fuels.

We believe that private companies shouldn’t continue to profit at the expense of our public health and increase our public dependence on fossil fuels when our planet is rapidly deteriorating.

Lower East Side residents, who are neighbors to a large Con Edison facility, are subject to unexpected heat, gas and electricity shut offs. Almost every moment of our day is reliant on energy. Many of our neighbors too often have to choose between paying their electricity bill (which is often unreasonably high) and their rent or between their utility bills and nourishing food for their families.
Organizing and Advocacy (cont.)

We believe that all New Yorkers should feel stable in their access to energy and that this energy should be collected from renewables like solar and wind. We believe that we can transition to renewable energy in a just and more democratic way. Public Power’s just energy system centers four core values: decarbonize, de commodify, democratize and decolonize (we should never forget we are on stolen land). Unfortunately, in our modern times, we must organize and build community power to demand that our government also see beyond the financial land value to recognize the fragile health of our people, environment and earth.

The Sixth Street Teens attended multiple BPRA rallies including one in January at Governor Hochul’s office and one in July at Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie’s office. Leading up to both events, the teens learned about Public Power, New York State’s feasibility of transitioning to renewables and the Build Public Renewables Act.

Fighting the Climate Crisis and Opposing New Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

Across the East River lies our neighboring community of North Brooklyn, where for-profit, private energy utility National Grid has constructed 4 out of 5 phases of a new fracked gas pipeline. The brand new fossil fuel infrastructure carries fracked gas through primarily poor, working-class BIPOC communities in North Brooklyn. In November 2019, SSCC joined the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition. In November of 2020, SSCC Deputy Director, Jen Chantrtranapichate, was arrested in a series of direct actions alongside 11 other water and land protectors for putting her body on the line to stop construction of the pipeline. We know that if we want to address the root causes of the climate crisis, save our planet from climate destruction and preserve the future for our people and the planet, we can’t continue to permit and build new fossil fuel infrastructure.

We believe that all New Yorkers should feel stable in their access to energy and that this energy should be collected from renewables like solar and wind. We believe that we can transition to renewable energy in a just and more democratic way. Public Power’s just energy system centers four core values: decarbonize, de commodify, democratize and decolonize (we should never forget we are on stolen land). Unfortunately, in our modern times, we must organize and build community power to demand that our government also see beyond the financial land value to recognize the fragile health of our people, environment and earth.

The Sixth Street Teens have been learning about the North Brooklyn Pipeline and the NYC resistance to fossil fuels. This fall they made art and graphic designs for a digital campaign against National Grid’s fracked gas vaporizers. Their art has been featured regularly on the coalition’s social media as a tool to encourage people to submit a public comment in protest of the infrastructure. Just last month, our Teen Climate Justice Program held a No North Brooklyn Pipeline Art Build at the center where they got to connect with and learn from other activists in the coalition.

The Sixth Street Teens have been learning about the North Brooklyn Pipeline and the NYC resistance to fossil fuels. This fall they made art and graphic designs for a digital campaign against National Grid’s fracked gas vaporizers. Their art has been featured regularly on the coalition’s social media as a tool to encourage people to submit a public comment in protest of the infrastructure. Just last month, our Teen Climate Justice Program held a No North Brooklyn Pipeline Art Build at the center where they got to connect with and learn from other activists in the coalition.
Organizing & Advocacy (cont.)

This Land is Ours Community Land Trust (CLT)

In 2022 Sixth Street staff continued organizing This Land Is Ours Community Land Trust (CLT) on East 5th and 6th Streets in partnership with Cooper Square Committee. Our goal is to build a movement for a radically transformative vision of community that addresses critical issues around food and agriculture, renewable energy and labor and tenants rights along with construction of permanently affordable housing for people of working class and low-income households. As part of this we remained active in the struggle against privatization of public resources and support for social and public housing.

See our vision statement and other information at http://www.sixthstreetcenter.org/community-land-trust---e-6th-street.html

This fall, in collaboration with Cooper Square and other neighborhood partners, we held a CLT forum at la Plaza Cultural Garden with 75 attendees in September and a march for affordable housing in November to gather support and participation from the wider community. Hundreds of neighborhood residents participated in these events which drew media coverage by the Indypendent.

Fighting Displacement, Supporting Workers and Small Businesses

Sixth Street Community Center continues to be a supporting member of the Coalition to Protect Chinatown and the Lower East Side. The Coalition actively organizes against the city's upzoning of Lower East Side and Chinatown and against the racist displacement of our communities, particularly low-income and working-class BIPOC. The coalition has also been fighting for the passage of the Chinatown Working Group Plan which will control luxury and commercial overdevelopment and mandate construction of affordable housing in the neighborhoods south of Houston Street.

This past year, SSCC supported home attendant workers who for years experienced abuse, exploitation and labor violence. These home attendant workers were working 24-hour shifts but were only getting paid for 12.

In January, Assembly Member Ron Kim released a damning report outlining the case for nearly $90 million of wages that were collectively withheld from the home attendants. SSCC's Deputy Director spoke in support at the January press conference to express support of the home attendants and the wages they deserve.

Press conference in support of home attendant workers who are owed $90 million in stolen wages on the steps of the Flushing Queens Library in January.
Sixth Street Community Center
Expresses deep gratitude to all of our 2022 Funders and Supporters

THANK YOU!

- $70,000 New York Community Trust. Teen Climate Justice Program
- $55,000 Hulu. General Operating
- $30,000 Assembly Member Harvey Epstein. Sixth Street Youth Program
- $20,000 NY Renews Regrant. Climate Justice Organizing
- $10,000 NYC Civic Impact Fund. Emergency Food Volunteer Program
- $10,000 American Endowment Foundation K-Dish Fund. General Operating
- $ 5,000 NY Renews Regrant. Teen Climate Justice Program
- $ 5,000 Rainbow Sandals Foundation. Emergency Food Distribution
- $ 2,787 In Our Back Yards, Matching Funds. Teen Climate Justice Program

AND THANK YOU to all who supported us through individual contributions!

Special thanks to: Liz Kurtz, Mark Levy, Alicia House, Alice Choi and Tay Shing/Purvey'd, The People's Bodega, Benham Jones, Max Marinoff, EV Loves NYC, Mammad Mahmoodi & Sasha Allenby, Wide Rainbow, Believe NY, Mishou Mag, Trader Joes and Two Boots Pizza

From Top Left Clockwise: SSYP kids on their last day of after school before summer break. Anna Tsomo, SSCC Teen Director with SSYP Educator Sara Morales and teens from our Teen Climate Justice Program. The line at one of our Emergency Food Distributions. SSCC Teen Climate Justice Program meeting in 6BC Botanical Garden