

# THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY.

The Newspaper of the Nonprofit World

July 21, 2005 • \$4



## **THE FACE OF PHILANTHROPY**

### Anchors Aweigh

**A**S AFTERNOON RUSH HOUR builds on the highway that parallels the Bronx River, commuters can sometimes glimpse a calmer scene on the murky water: a group of teenagers rowing. They are there as part of a nonprofit effort known as Rocking the Boat.

The charity was started in 1998 and teaches young people how to build wooden boats from scratch as well as maritime skills and how to conserve New York City's Bronx River.

Students can receive academic credit by participating in the group, but that is not Rocking the Boat's primary goal, says Adam Green, who founded the organization two years after graduating from college. "We are not trying to turn kids into boat builders or marine biologists or sea captains," he says. "We are trying to use all these things as mediums to really just turn them on to life's possibilities and opportunities and give them a sense of empowerment."

About 300 people, ages 14 to 18, have participated in the group's after-school and summer programs. The classes, which meet several days a week and one weekend

a month, are taught in part by recent graduates of the program, called apprentices. The charity also employs a social worker, who meets with students to discuss life's next steps, providing advice on careers, colleges, and money, among other topics.

In addition to the after-school programs—which are open to anyone of high-school age but draw mainly students from the Bronx—the charity offers half-day environmental education sessions on the river for schools, camps, and other local groups using the 13 boats it has built so far.

Foundation grants cover three-quarters of the group's \$600,000 annual budget, including a \$65,000 grant from the Levitt Foundation, in New York, which pays for apprentice salaries of \$6 to \$10 an hour. Gifts from individuals and corporations make up the remainder.

Here, Rocking the Boat participants complete work on a Whitehall, a 16-foot boat crafted of cedar and oak that was commonly used in waters around New York City during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

—NICOLE LEWIS

*Photograph by Joaquin Cotten*