The Staten Island Foundation

Highlights 1997-2019

1997 SISB Community Foundation is founded in December by the board of Staten Island Savings Bank, with the approval of its depositors, when the Bank converted to a public company. Bank Chairman Harry P. Doherty establishes a foundation board and becomes Chairman. Foundation assets: $20 million. There was no legal requirement to establish a foundation; it was created with pride, excitement and a vision of what could be accomplished by the community sharing in the success of the Bank.

1998 The Foundation’s Board of Directors determines areas of focus and hires Executive Director, Betsy Dubovsky. Foundation supports “Meet the Grantmakers” for local nonprofits.

1999 Foundation assets top $37 million, and total giving exceeds $2.8 million in response to more than 700 requests from over 300 different organizations.

2000 The Foundation launches the Initiative for School Success, to improve the academic performance of a school in a low-income community through support from services of community-based organizations.

2001 The Foundation changes name to SI Bank & Trust Foundation as Bank expands into Brooklyn and New Jersey. In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Foundation matches over $500,000 in grants to local nonprofits, and later establishes the Nonprofit Emergency Fund with over $670,000 to address the economic downturn, decreased government funding and individual giving, and increased service needs facing local nonprofits.

2002 The Foundation funds technical/management assistance through partnerships with Community Resource Exchange, National Executive Service Corps, Neighborhood Technical Assistance and the Nonprofit Connection. Support is provided to community networks—the Partnership for After School Education and the Staten Island Interagency Council on Aging—to strengthen their capacity to deliver services.

2003 In fiscal years 2002 & 2003, grants awarded total $5.8 million. Foundation assets exceed $72 million and nearly $13 million in total giving.

2004 SI Bank & Trust Foundation becomes an independent private foundation focused entirely on Staten Island after bank merger. Editorial in the Staten Island Advance entitled “Money Well Spent” states the Foundation “has proven that it is and will continue to be... a friend to the Staten Island community.” Noting the Foundation’s “pristine reputation,” the editorial commends the “commitment to community, giving and service to those who not only are in need, but are the most deserving, [at] the heart of their mission.” Having outgrown its former space, the Foundation moves to 260 Christopher Lane.

2005 A study of Staten Island’s immigrant community leads the Foundation to establish a network of immigrant service providers.

2006 The Foundation funds the College of Staten Island to study quality of life issues. The Foundation officially changes its name to The Staten Island Foundation and begins a strategic planning process to set the direction of future giving.

2007 The Foundation approves its first strategic plan and adopts results-oriented approach. The Board allocates up to $1 million for The Staten Island Foundation Children’s Literacy Project. Foundation assets top $95 million, with total Foundation giving at over $30 million. The Staten Island Foundation celebrates its 10th Anniversary.

2008 Allan Weissglass elected Chairman of the Board of Directors upon the passing of founding Chairman Harry P. Doherty.
2009 To address economic downturn, the Foundation hosts a Town Hall assisted by Community Resource Exchange, bringing together grantees to assess damage and needs and establishes Emergency Matching Grants for Core Support fund to address the emergency financial needs of grantees. $750,000 is allocated for two-to-one matching grants; $500,000 for health and human services, and $250,000 for arts.

2010 The Board agrees to expand the Foundation’s work in health. Betsy Dubovsky co-chairs the Health Policy Committee of Philanthropy New York with the CEO of NYS Health Foundation, to connect Staten Island’s nonprofits to Manhattan funders.

2011 The first article on Collective Impact appears in the Stanford Social Innovation Review, inspiring the Foundation to introduce this approach to Staten Island. The first meeting of what would later become the Tackling Youth Substance Abuse initiative meets in the Foundation’s newly-renovated conference room.

2012 Superstorm Sandy devastates Staten Island and is among the most severely impacted areas in the mid-Atlantic region.

2013 The Foundation raises over $1.8 million (including $1 million from the American Red Cross) and provides matching funds of $518,000, delivering a total of approximately $2.3 million to the recovery needs of Staten Island. With the Staten Island NFP Association, the Foundation convenes a Town Hall to “build greater understanding about the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Staten Island-based nonprofits, with a focus on their infrastructure and capacity.” A grant awarded by New York State Health Foundation to The Staten Island Foundation for consultancy support of its Superstorm Sandy work—with consultant Dara Major—is named a “Best Of” achievement, representing the best work of the Foundation and its partners.

2014 The Foundation is awarded an additional $250,000 by the American Red Cross to support its Superstorm Sandy recovery work with Staten Island nonprofits.

2015 Philanthropy New York cites Betsy Dubovsky’s article “Frontier Thinking: Staten Island as Innovation Lab” as one of its top three philanthropic insights published this year. At the annual Staten Island Mental Health Council legislative breakfast, New York City’s First Lady Chirlane McCray singles out the borough’s collective impact work on substance abuse as a model.

2016 Harvard University’s School of Public Health invites the Foundation to be subject of a case study on the Foundation-initiated Tackling Youth Substance Abuse initiative. The Foundation offers workshops in Results Based Leadership, Accountability and Facilitation for local nonprofits engaged in collective impact work.

2017 Betsy Dubovsky honored by City & State NY Media Company as one of the 25 most influential people in Staten Island. Grantmakers in the Arts partners with the Foundation in their visit to local arts organizations. New York Community Trust and the Altman Foundation partner with the Foundation to support Staten Island arts organizations focused on diverse audience development. The Foundation celebrates its 20th anniversary, with deep appreciation for its many community partners and a renewed commitment to making a difference for Staten Island.

2017 The Foundation partners with the Carnegie Corporation and District 31 to support the consulting firm FSG to bring Collective Impact, Systems Thinking by the Systems Leadership Institute and Equity thinking from the Promise Neighborhood Institute to District 31. With first year implementation support from the Foundation, this initiative evolves into the Equity Alliance of Staten Island.

2017 The Foundation funds NYU College of Global Public Health for research and planning for sustainable financing for a community health funding hub for the work of Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness.
2018 The Foundation affirms its collective impact approach for systems change in addressing root causes of serious community problems in health and education, with an equity lens. Concerned about rising inequality and its impact on the borough’s children, the Foundation commissions Citizens’ Committee for Children of NY to develop a report on SI’s Community District 1, which is published as *The North Shore of SI: Community Driven Solutions to Improve Child & Family Well-Being*.

2018 Betsy Dubovsky celebrates 20 years as the Foundation’s founding Executive Director and is profiled in the Staten Island Advance, expressing her admiration for “our local nonprofit and community leaders whose passion and dedication to the people they serve inspires and strengthens my commitment to their success.”

2018 Building on multiple collective impact efforts it has catalyzed, the Foundation develops a Collective Impact Proposal Guidance document for organizations leading or contributing to the goals of collective efforts to improve outcomes for the least advantaged SI children and families from cradle to career. Additionally, at the urging of community leaders, cross-initiative alignment work is initiated to leverage strengths across the collective impact projects.

2019 With Foundation support, Peter Senge and the Systems Leadership Institute introduce systems thinking and leadership, and offer workshops in the Compassionate Systems Framework to Staten Island’s Equity Alliance and District 31 with a goal of establishing a training hub in the borough for this innovative education framework.

2019 Allan Weissglass, devoted community leader and Chair of the Board of The Staten Island Foundation, passed away on February 22, 2019. He was 84.