

NYCHA CHAIR JOHN B. RHEA  
HARLEM RBI'S BIDS FOR KIDS ANNUAL DINNER & AUCTION  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2010  
6:15 PM (COCKTAILS & SILENT AUCTION); 7:30 PM (DINNER & LIVE AUCTION)  
CIPRIANI, 42<sup>ND</sup> STREET, NEW YORK CITY

Thank you, Reischea for that very gracious introduction.

Good evening, everyone. To the Bids for Kids Event Committee, the Harlem RBI Board of Directors and the Home Run Leadership Council, thank you. It is indeed a pleasure to be with you this evening and it is an honor to accept this award on behalf of the 12,000 men and women who have committed their careers to serving the more than 600,000 people who count on the New York City Housing Authority every day. I gratefully receive it in recognition of the shared hopes and shared goals of Harlem RBI and NYCHA: service to families and children who—with an opportunity, a hand up, and a strong foundation—can transform their lives and re-make their communities.

I am proud to share the spotlight this evening with my fellow honoree, Donald Truesdale. As many of you know, Donald is a visionary leader, respected and emulated throughout the world of finance for his ability to discover—and his willingness to invest in—areas that don't promise an immediate payoff, but have extraordinary potential for long-term results.

Some call it taking the long-view. For organizations like Harlem RBI and NYCHA, it is our matter of course. Fulfilling our commitment to preserve, strengthen and secure public housing for future generations; and investing in the physical, mental, and social well-being of East Harlem's most precious resource—our children—are not investments to be made overnight, or over a year, or over ten years. It is a lifelong endeavor, a long, noble undertaking to which Harlem RBI is committed, to which NYCHA is committed, and to which I am honored to contribute.

I feel I am among friends tonight, because I know the passion to make our neighborhoods stronger, one child and one family at a time, is shared by each of us. I've seen it time and time again in the work of my friend of 20 years, Colbert Narcisse, who also serves on NYCHA's Audit Board; I've seen that passion in Tim Brosnan; I've seen it in Howard Lutnick; and I know it burns in the first baseman of the first order, New York Yankee Mark Teixeira.

This is truly a big league group if there ever was one. But greater than our accomplishments in board rooms or on baseball fields is our drive to ensure that in our City and in our Country every child is valued, every child is encouraged to dream big, and every child has a fair shot to make those dreams a reality.

Tonight, we have come to do our part to lift our children and our communities—to join hands to make sure that every girl and boy knows that they have immense worth and immense potential, and to make certain that each child understands that with hard work, resolve, dedication and a commitment to serve, the future belongs to them. So this evening's awards are as much a celebration of each of you as they are a recognition, and an encouragement, of the work Donald, I and our organizations do.

Together we represent the hope that this vital work will continue and we stand united to make sure that it does. We celebrate not only the 19 years of service through sports and education to the families of East Harlem that is Harlem RBI's history, but also the bright future in this community and across this City that will be your enduring legacy.

I believe it is more than appropriate that you have transformed the baseball diamond into a classroom and the dugout into a sanctuary. Baseball is to New York City what apple pie is to America. Just two other cities have two Major League Baseball teams—and Los Angeles only makes the cut because we sent them the Dodgers.

Harlem RBI has adapted the principles of baseball—playing with honor; taking responsibility for the things you can control; never yielding and

never giving-up; always giving your best and never making excuses; playing the game one pitch at a time; and bringing joy and passion to the game and to life—to engaging, educating and empowering more than 800 young people in year-round, life-changing programming on and off the field.

Founded on East 100<sup>th</sup> Street in 1991, Harlem RBI remains a community-based and community-oriented service organization successfully integrating youth development with the benefits of sports activity and team participation. This year, 99 percent of Harlem RBI seniors will graduate high school. 95 percent will go on to college. And Harlem RBI is no one-hit wonder—they post those numbers, or better, year after year.

Partnering with groups like Harlem RBI, who have a history of measurable results in getting kids through high school, into college and on the road to lifelong success is vital to ensuring that public housing continues to be a force for real and lasting good in the lives of NYCHA families. Roughly half of Harlem RBI's participants live in a NYCHA development. Harlem RBI has helped 10,000 families in their 19 years—that's 5,000 NYCHA families who have benefited from Harlem RBI education and enrichment programs. Today, some 500 kids currently enrolled in Harlem RBI are NYCHA kids.

And Harlem RBI is taking their integrated programming approach and expanding it to serve students at every step of the learning process. In 2008, Harlem RBI launched the DREAM Charter School, where they educate and inspire 150 students in grades K through Two. I, for one, am excited about the DREAM School and particularly heartened that DREAM will grow each year until they serve 450 students in grades K through Eight—each child learning, growing and preparing to become one of tomorrow’s leaders.

As a former athlete and the father of two young athletes, I can attest to the power of sports to help build confidence and character in our children. Both my son and daughter played for the Harlem Little League. And my daughter has played on a boys’—that’s right, boys’—baseball team for three years. She’s an agile catcher, pitcher and one of the best third base-women around. I’ll also have you know, young Miss Rhea made the All-Star team. So Mark can take a little comfort that for now she’s playing third base. But just a little.

She didn’t get it from me, because I never could hit a curve ball. But I made up for it by learning about team work, commitment and mentorship. Because at the end of the day, mentorship defines the Harlem RBI mission—adults engaging and empowering kids.

That's what it's about—engaging our youth from their earliest days, to give them a sense of community, of belonging, and of empowerment. Harlem RBI is doing this for the children of East Harlem every day, and we look forward to working with you to make sure that our young people have their turn at bat, and the training and skills to make it safely home.

Thank you very much.