

New York Thruway Alliance



The Power of Upstate United

Vision

The New York Thruway Alliance is a historic undertaking led by four faith-based community organizations representing more than 100 congregations in four cities across upstate. The organizations of the NY Thruway Alliance believe that our prosperity is rooted in the well-being of our families and their inclusion in the positive redevelopment of our upstate communities.

The Alliance is a powerful faith-based association that will shape the future of the region. Our mission is to rebuild upstate New York by systematically engaging our members in the public arena, where decisions are made that directly impact their lives. We accomplish our mission by building strong local organizations, identifying common concerns across the region, and engaging local and state decision makers to develop policies and invest resources that improve our communities.



Making history

This is the first time that two national faith-based organizing networks (Gamaliel Foundation & PICO National Network) have successfully partnered to take on the immense challenges of a region like upstate New York. Also, it is the first time that grassroots organizations across upstate have developed a common vision and agenda aimed at reshaping the region.

The organizations include ACTS¹ (Syracuse/ Gamaliel), ARISE² (Albany Capital Region/Gamaliel), Interfaith Action (Rochester Metropolitan Area/PICO) and Voice Buffalo (Gamaliel).

Challenges facing upstate New York

The Gamaliel Foundation and PICO National Network share a desire to create and sustain organizations that have genuine power to shape our communities' future. The networks also recognize that forces at the state level have a tremendous impact on our communities.

Upstate cities and counties have experienced a significant loss of jobs and people, spiraling crime rates, inequity in school performance and funding, and blighted housing. Fourteen counties in central and western New York are officially part of the

¹ ACTS: Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse

² ARISE: A Regional Initiative Supporting Empowerment

Appalachian region. A recent report by state Comptroller Allen Hevesi highlights the huge fiscal challenges these problems have caused for municipalities.

Together, Gamaliel Foundation and PICO National Network are uniquely positioned to act on behalf of our cities. Our organizations have proven track records and powerful constituencies who understand the challenges confronting everyday families.

Accomplishments & next steps

As an emerging alliance, we have accomplished a great deal. Our four respected organizations have: developed a common vision for their upstate communities; created strategic partnerships with two organizing networks and national funders; fashioned a strategic plan to move forward an issue organizing campaign within the coming months; and, trained over 60 grassroots leaders and staff about how Albany works. In the coming year, the Thruway Alliance will continue its intensive leadership development program, engage upstate mayors, other key leaders, and institutions, and roll out an issue campaign.



Strategic direction

This spring, the Thruway Alliance Leadership Team set out five strategic goals for the next three years: 1. Strengthen local organizations; 2. Identify common upstate concerns; 3. Research and shape policies at the state level; 4. Develop a diverse leadership and organizational structure; 5. Expand strategic partnerships. At the same time, Gamaliel Foundation and PICO National Network are growing new organizations in 2 additional counties that will eventually join the alliance.

A vital part of our development strategy is to strengthen the organizations which comprise the Thruway Alliance. Years of organizing experience within both national networks have led to an understanding that strong local organizations can identify the genuine concerns of families in upstate cities and rural communities, mobilize citizens who are directly impacted by the problems, and engage public officials to create viable solutions. Strong local organizations have a significant cadre of experienced grassroots leaders, a regional congregational base, a successful organizing track record, and recognition with the media and area decision makers.

Strategic partners

Catholic Campaign for Human Development ▪ Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Interfaith Funders ▪ Needmor Fund ▪ Center for Community Change
Gamaliel Foundation ▪ PICO National Network



New York Thruway Alliance
410 Chili Avenue • Rochester, New York 14611
(585) 752-1326 • thruwayalliance@frontiernet.net

PHOTOS: Page one – Jack Cummings (Interfaith Action) and Linda Heffley (Voice Buffalo) build a lasting relationship;
Page two - Gamaliel Territory Director Bill O'Brien conducts training in New York State Assembly Caucus Room.