

Rockefeller Foundation *news advisory*

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Rockefeller Foundation's Jane Jacobs Medal Winners Named

New York, NY, June 25, 2007 –The Rockefeller Foundation announced today the two recipients of the inaugural Jane Jacobs Medal. Barry Benepe will receive the 2007 Jane Jacobs Medal for Lifetime Leadership, and Omar Freilla will receive the 2007 Jane Jacobs Medal for New Ideas and Activism. Along with the Medal, Benepe and Freilla will each receive \$100,000.

The Rockefeller Foundation Jane Jacobs Medal was created this year in honor of the author and activist who died in April 2006 at the age of 89. The Medal is to be awarded annually to two individuals whose actions and accomplishments exemplify "Jacobsonian" principles in New York City.

The Rockefeller Foundation's relationship to Jane Jacobs dates back to the 1950s, when the institution launched an Urban Design Studies program that helped foster the emergence of the new discipline of urban design and theory. As part of this initiative, one of the Foundation's first grants was to the then-obscure writer from Greenwich Village, for the research and writing of a book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Almost fifty years later, Jane Jacob's book is considered an urban classic.

"Jane Jacobs brought fresh thinking to the relationship between the needs of living communities and the urban environment. In addition to being known for her writing, she is remembered as a bold and dedicated activist who took her principles to the streets," said Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation. "We're proud to honor Barry Benepe and Omar Freilla, two New Yorkers who share Jane's inventiveness and dynamism."

Barry Benepe, 79, is the co-founder of Greenmarket, the largest farmer's market program in the United States, with markets in over 30 neighborhoods across the five boroughs of New York City. A West Village resident, Mr. Benepe started the program in 1975 with an \$800 grant from the America the Beautiful Fund; today, the success of the program is almost completely self-sustaining.

An architect and planner by training, Barry Benepe's pioneering program demonstrated how temporary markets could bring life back to the streets, creating community gathering places on empty lots and revitalizing neighborhoods and once under-used parks. In true Jacobsonian spirit, Mr. Benepe is an avid city cyclist who also helped found Transportation Alternatives, a non-profit citizens group that promotes bicycling, walking and public transportation, and advocates for car-free parks. Mr. Benepe's dedication to New York City has inspired many, including his son, Adrian, who serves as Commissioner for the Department of Parks & Recreation.

Omar Freilla, 33, is committed to revitalizing the streets, economy and environment of the South Bronx, an area that once exemplified urban blight. A son of the South Bronx, who returned home after earning a Master's degree in Environmental Science from Miami University in Ohio, Mr. Freilla founded Green

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Worker Cooperatives in 2003. One goal of the organization is to turn the estimated 10,000 tons of construction waste that ends up in waste transfer stations in the Bronx each year, into “green collar” jobs for local residents. The group has a fundraising goal of \$900,000 to open and operate a retail warehouse for salvaged building materials in the Bronx. Mr. Freilla is donating his Jane Jacobs Medal prize money for the project; with the \$100,000 from Rockefeller, the group now has all but \$75,000 of the total goal.

Prior to starting Green Worker Cooperatives, Omar Freilla was a program director for Sustainable South Bronx, and Transportation Justice Campaign Director for the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance. Mr. Freilla is featured in *The 11th Hour*, a documentary film co-written and produced by Leonardo DiCaprio, that was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in May.

The selection of the Jane Jacobs Medal winners and allocation of the prize money was decided by the members of a Jane Jacobs Medal Selection Jury (see complete list below). The Jury is co-chaired by George Campbell Jr., president of The Cooper Union, and arts patron and philanthropist Agnes Gund, and includes Rockefeller Foundation trustee David Rockefeller, Jr. The 2007 Jane Jacobs Medal is administered by the Municipal Art Society (MAS).

Following a public announcement this past February, nominations for the Medal were accepted through the Rockefeller Foundation’s website. During the three week open application process, the Foundation received hundreds of nominations from across the five boroughs, as well as ten states, Austria, Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

The Medals will be awarded to Barry Benepe and Omar Freilla at a dinner ceremony on September 24th, coinciding with the opening of an exhibit, *Jane Jacobs and the Future of New York*, at MAS’ Urban Center galleries. Along with public programs and dialogues, the exhibit will educate the public on the writings and activism of Jane Jacobs and make available to people the tools to become active in issues involving their own neighborhoods. An accompanying exhibit publication will include essays by architecture critics and journalists like Andrew Blum, Philip Nobel, and Robert Neuwirth and shorter pieces by Tom Wolfe, Tama Janowitz, and Richard Sennett.

MAS President Kent Barwick said, “We are honored to work with the Rockefeller Foundation on the Jane Jacobs Medal, and we greatly appreciate the Foundation’s support of our upcoming exhibit. I can’t imagine a better time to celebrate and explore the life and work of a woman who challenged the way we think about, preserve, and develop New York City. As the debate about the growth and the development of the City continues, I keep thinking to myself: ‘What would Jane say?’”

The Municipal Art Society of New York is a private, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to promote a more livable city. Since 1893, the MAS has worked to enrich the culture, neighborhoods and physical design of New York City. It advocates for excellence in urban design and planning, contemporary architecture, historic preservation and public art.

The Rockefeller Foundation was established in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller, Sr., to “promote the well-being” of humanity by addressing the root causes of serious problems. The Foundation works around the world to expand opportunities for poor or vulnerable people and to help ensure that globalization’s benefits are more widely shared. With assets of more than \$3.5 billion, it is one of the few institutions to conduct such work both within the United States and internationally.

**The Jane Jacobs Medal Jury
2007**

Bill Aguado
Executive Director, Bronx Council on the Arts

Barry Bergdoll
Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art &
professor of architectural history in the department of Art History and Archeology at
Columbia University

George Campbell, Jr. (Jury Co-Chair)
President, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art

W. Paul Farmer
Executive Director and CEO, American Planning Association

Rosalie Genevro
Executive Director, Architectural League of New York

Paul Goldberger
Architecture Critic, The New Yorker
Joseph Urban Professor of Design, The New School, New York

Agnes Gund (Jury Co-Chair)
President Emerita, Museum of Modern Art

Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer
Executive Director, Queens Council on the Arts

John T. Reddick
Director of Education, Central Park Conservancy

David Rockefeller, Jr.
Director and former Chair, Rockefeller & Co., Inc
Trustee of The Museum of Modern Art, The Rockefeller Brothers Fund & The Rockefeller Foundation

Ronald Shiffman
Director Emeritus, Pratt Center for Community Development

Marilyn J. Taylor
Partner-in-Charge of Urban Design and Planning, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill

**More information on the 2007 Jane Jacobs Medal, as well as Jane Jacobs' life, is available on
the Rockefeller Foundation website at <http://www.rockfound.org/efforts/jacobs/janejacobs.shtml>**