George Castiblanco with his daughter Mia, 5, at a Ciencia@CMEE (Science at CMEE) celebration. Mia attends this after-school program for families who speak Spanish at home.
As New York expects students to meet the new Common Core standards, many public schools are spending more time and money on preparing for tests. That means less attention to the arts and field trips, even though many studies show that the arts and experiential learning are linked to greater achievement.

Long Island’s museums are filling this gap. With funding from generous donors, the Long Island Community Foundation has granted more than $150,000 to museums for arts education programs. Some highlights:

**A Science Fiesta**
**Children’s Museum of the East End**
**$32,500 (3 years)**

Many of the East End’s immigrant children have limited opportunities to learn after school. With our grant, the Children’s Museum expanded Ciencia@CMEE, a program for immigrant families with kids ages 4 to 8. The program, translated as Science@CMEE, involve hands-on projects, such as building a bird’s nest, all meant to strengthen skills in science and English literacy.

**Traveling the World — Artifact by Artifact**
**Hofstra University Museum**
**$50,000 (2 years)**

With Hofstra University Museum educators, third graders from Nassau County school districts Westbury, Roosevelt, and Elmont, explored Nigeria, the Himalayas, and Mexico without leaving the museum. Using the museum’s galleries and collections, students connected artifacts to cultures and history. The Art Travelers program was created to support New York State’s learning standards in arts, social studies, science, and language.

“Museums and schools are natural partners,” says Nancy Richner, the museum’s education director. “Working with classroom teachers, the program engages students in new ways of thinking and problem-solving.”

“Teachers are discovering new ways to make science appealing. Through a partnership between Westbury schools and the Long Island Children’s Museum in Garden City, students use museum exhibits to learn about physics, chemistry, and the environment. First and second grade teachers are trained to help take advantage of museum resources as kids learn about science and math concepts. For example, children participate in the “Adaptations” program, which focuses on how creatures adapt to their environments. Through interactive galleries and studies of live animals, students find out about different habitats.

In addition to museum visits, students attend a science-themed theater production and end with their own production. “We try to engage children as early as possible, when their minds are open and their curiosity is in full bloom,” says the museum’s president, Suzanne LeBlanc.

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“All young people should have access to a well-rounded education,” says Sol Marie Alfonso Jones, senior program officer at the Long Island Community Foundation. “Thanks to our donors, children are able to take advantage of the Island’s great cultural resources.”

**Science Learning in Westbury**
**Long Island Children’s Museum**
**$20,000**

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Long Island’s First STEM Pipeline Yields Results

Even as Long Islanders struggle to find jobs, employers can’t find skilled workers for openings that demand science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills. With a 2011 grant of $45,000 from the Long Island Community Foundation, Friends of the Long Island Matrix of Science and Technology (LIMSAT) worked with Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) to create a Long Island regional STEM hub, as part of the Empire State STEM Learning Network. Bringing together academic, business, government, and nonprofit sectors from both counties, it provides students and teachers with STEM experiences in and out of school.

“Business leaders, teachers, and the science community understand the correlation between improving science education and keeping the U.S. workforce competitive,” says LICF executive director, David Okorn. “This initiative is philanthropy at its best.”

In its first year, a newly formed Regional Industry Councils — led by leaders in health care, energy, aviation, information technology, engineering, and manufacturing created partnerships between school districts and industry professionals. LIMSAT, after research and gap analysis, then created a website that aggregates all STEM programs and opportunities for schools, students, and parents.

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Our grants, totaling $125,000 in recent years, helped strengthen Long Island’s Kindergarten to career STEM pipeline and helped start programs such as the STEM-Prep Summer Institute, which offers lab experiments and lectures by BNL scientists to ninth-graders whose schools lack extensive science programs. Seventy percent of those students went on to take part in the Brookhaven National Lab’s Summer Science Exploration, a highly competitive program, where 10th grade students hone their lab skills. In addition, teachers from five high-need school districts produced lesson plans as they went through the Regional Industry Council Teachers Fellows Program, then shared the lesson plans with colleagues.

Finally, LIMSAT launched “STEM Island,” a month-long series of competitions and events across Long Island.
Pearl and Erwin Staller wanted to give locally. They started a scholarship fund in 1987 at the Long Island Community Foundation. Building on a family tradition, which includes support for the Staller Center at Stony Brook University, Pearl and Erwin decided to help graduating students from their alma mater, Hempstead High School. The criteria: solid academic achievements, a strong desire to get a college degree, and financial need.

Twenty seven years later, the Staller Scholarship Fund has distributed 52 scholarships totaling more than $106,000 to grateful students, many of whom have gone on to graduate studies and successful careers.

Yong Lin ’07, a graduate of Purdue University, is now an engineer at Texas Instruments. He says, “I offer my sincerest thanks for the Stallers’ generosity. They not only provided me with financial support for college, they also gave me a great life lesson about the importance of giving back.” Describing his own volunteering with children in Jamaica, he adds, “I try to pay it forward every day.”

Jonathan A. Nino, class of 2010, is in the Aerospace program at the University of Pennsylvania. He writes, “I hope to be able to design airplanes. Your scholarship has helped me move closer to that goal and helped eased the burden of tuition.”