



E-Newsletter

Advancement • Aspiration • Acknowledgement

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¡Muchas Gracias!

Many thanks to **The Brick Presbyterian Church** and **The Fort Washington Collegiate Church** for their generous donations to Sinergia during these troubled times. The funds will help us affirm our mission and continue the work of the Spanish speaking Support Group for parents of children with disabilities. We would welcome any additional support and if you'd like send a contribution please contact us at 212-643-2840.

EVENTS



Sinergia's Executive Director Myrta Cuadra-Lash was part of a group of

November/2009

New housing options for individuals with disabilities

The Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities' (OMRDD) 2009 Fall Housing Conference was extremely informative as organizations such as NeighborWorks America, Concepts of Independence, Dunn Development Co., The New York Association on Independent Living, USDA Rural Development and many more gathered to discuss the type of housing services and care their organizations provides.

The focus of the conference was to unify the fragmented world of available housing services provided for individuals with disabilities. The housing divisions of all of these organizations are vital to our community as many aspire to live a more independent life and ultimately attain their dream of homeownership. This dream can now become a reality through OMRDD's **Home of Your Own (HOYO)** program.

HOYO was created to not only assist our consumers in purchasing a home, but it is also designed to help income-eligible parents, legal guardians and direct support professionals that care for them to purchase a home as well.

The requirements of each classified individual vary in eligibility for the program, but some common requirements are that you must:

- 1) Be a first time homebuyer
- 2) Be a New York State resident
- 3) Meet the designated income-eligibility requirements
- 4) Complete a HUD-Certified First-Time Homebuyer training

One of the main benefits of **HOYO** is it allows you to open an Asset For Independence Individual Development Account (AFI/IDA). AFI is a federal grant program from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services that finances a five year Individual Development Account (IDA). Through these accounts OMRD and AFI will match your rate of savings 1:4, so that every dollar you place into your IDA account will be matched four times over, up to the account's allotted maximum. The mortgages for these homes will be provided through the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA). SONYMA will finance 100% of these mortgages for a term of 30 to 40 years and have a fixed interest rate of 4%. There are currently 12 counties in New York where AFI/IDA accounts will be available. For more information contact Michael Cortes

prominent women leaders that met with Senator Kirsten Guillibrand in October to discuss initiatives to improve conditions among the Latino community.

ABOUT US

Sinergia, Spanish for synergy, is a 501(c)(3) community based, multi-service organization. Since 1977 we have provided advocacy services and linked families of children with disabilities to services that matched their needs. Our mission is to enhance the well being of individuals and families through the human services delivery system(s), with particular concentration on those "special populations" that have traditionally experienced difficulty in accessing human services. Those "special populations" include, without limitation, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged, Latino, African American, Native American and or migrant. Sinergia has a reputation for decades of working with "underserved families, many with limited English proficiency, African American, homeless

at (212) 678-4700 or mcortes@siner giany.org.

The "We Are Parents Too" Quilt

Parents with developmental disabilities are frequently considered unable to care adequately for their children. These children end up in foster care with little or no contact with their natural parents. In 1990 Sinergia developed the "We Are Parents Too" project to help parents with developmental disabilities preserve their families to the greatest extent possible by providing skills, training and support.



As part of this initiative, this past summer we formed a sewing circle where parents came together and expressed themselves about their children and their parenthood through the creation of a quilt. The idea for the workshop came from our Executive Director, Myrta Cuadra-Lash, and culminated in a collaborative effort between three of our divisions: the Parenting Training Program, the Residential Program, and the Day Habilitation Program.

The quilt will be comprised of squares that each mother designs by putting pictures of their children along with drawings expressing their feelings about parenthood and family. Parishioners of the Ft. Washington Collegiate Church will assist them with the sewing and completion of the quilt. The project has increasingly become a real creative outlet and therapeutic experience for its 15 participants.

The completed quilt will be displayed prominently at Sinergia's new offices in El Barrio. We invite everyone to stop by and see it!

Quilt Project Advisors: Isabel Malavet, Coordinator of the "We are Parents Too" Parenting Training Program; Carmen Mejia Boil, Recreation Therapist at Sinergia; and Maria Torres Bird, Expert Quilter and Sinergia Quality Assurance Director.

Changing Schools

Many special needs children experience school differently because they encounter basic problems such as getting down five flights of stairs in a wheelchair, having appropriate support on the bus, and receiving the necessary services to ensure a successful school experience. As caretakers we act quickly when we've identified a problem and expect, as we should, a quick response from the school to remedy the issue(s).

and families
experiencing poverty.

You can find more
information at
www.sinergiany.org.

Please visit us soon!

Let's Get Social!

We hope you visit our
blog, Sinergia's "[La
Esquinita](#)", or [Li'l
Corner](#). Let's start the
dialogue!

Are you on Facebook
yet? If you are, you
can also connect with
us at [Sinergia's
Facebook Page](#).

Become a fan and
keep up to date with
the latest happenings
at Sinergia.



Often times our response doesn't
come in a timely manner, if at all.
Some of us have found creative ways
to get schools to comply, while others
become increasingly frustrated and
resort to changing schools. Changing
schools may be a good option and
definitely something to consider.
However, problems will be
encountered with every school -- we

know because we work with many schools in Manhattan and the Bronx -- and we need to find ways to make ourselves heard in our current school. This means identifying the problem and articulating it clearly and concisely to the responsible persons. If no results are obtained, make your way over to Sinergia and talk to an educational advocate who will help you present your concerns to the school's special education team. The advocate will even accompany you to a mediation session and/or an impartial hearing if necessary.

If changing schools is still the only option, speak to Sinergia well in advance of the change so we may help you prepare appropriately. Making such a change is difficult for you and your child and preparation is the key. Acquire information about the school by visiting and talking to parents about their experiences. Refrain from changing schools during the months of September and October as it will only complicate your situations. Not only will your current school be unprepared to help you make the transition, but the new school will not be prepared to accept you. Schools need time to adjust to their schedules coming out of summer break and a little patience on your side can go a long way. Evaluate your happiness level various times during the school year and if you're ready to change schools, attend Sinergia's "selecting your school" seminar which we offer on the month of August and let us help you through this difficult process.

Save the Date!

Construction is underway at 126th Street and Lexington Avenue and we are all busy packing up in anticipation of our big move to El Barrio in December. We are so excited about our new "home" that we want throw a party and invite everyone to celebrate with us. A wonderful afternoon of food, entertainment and special guests is being planned for January. Stay tuned for more details!

