

### Christmas at Sinergia



On December 20, 2007 the NYC Department of Sanitation, M-7 sponsored Sinergia’s annual Christmas party for children with disabilities and their families. Once again it was held at the Julliard School at Lincoln Center. The ambiance was lovely and the best Latin food was served. There was plenty of rice, beans, chicken, and of course, “pernil”. The Department of Sanitation as always supplemented the menu with franks, and sodas- a favorite of the children. This year we had a special entertainment- Choco Orta- Puerto Rico’s Salsa Queen. Members of the audience accompanied Choco on the conga and a great time was had by all. Sinergia thanks Choco Orta for generously contributing to the festivities. Carmen Mejia also invited audience members to participate in a fun dance segment. Finally, Santa Claus arrived with bags full of toys, which culminated the joyful event that has become a hallmark of the year at Sinergia. We especially want to thank businessman, John Catsimatidis and the staff of the NYC Sanitation Department for their generosity and support of this annual Christmas event that brings such happiness and cheer to the children and families served by Sinergia.

### Sinergia Goes Hollywood



Ed Asner pictured under the umbrella

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, the motion picture Gigantic, which is now in production, filmed a scene at Sinergia’s Residential & Housing Services office at 902 Amsterdam Ave. The film stars Paul Dano, John Goodman, Ed Asner (pictured in the photo on the right) and Jane Alexander

Visit our website at [www.sinergiany.org](http://www.sinergiany.org)

**Sinergia, Inc.**  
134 West 29th Street, 4th Fl.  
New York, NY 10001

# SINERGIA

News/Noticias

Spring/Primavera 2008

## A Message from our Executive Director

Sinergia’s 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was marked by several special events, which are covered in this Spring edition of our Newsletter. However, I will touch on some of the highlights:

- The dedication of the Richard M. Lash Resource Library was very meaningful to the colleagues, family and friends who joined together in remembrances and celebration of this beloved, remarkable visionary founder of Sinergia.
- We completed and translated our educational curriculum to include the new amendments to the Individualized Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Kudos to Godfrey Rivera, Sinergia’s Director of Education and Training for completing this massive task. The Spanish translation included 78,308 words.
- Thanks again to Godfrey Rivera for conducting 64 on site and off site trainings for parents of children with disabilities. Over 89 hours of oral interpretation was used in conjunction with the simultaneous interpretation equipment.
- Our Neighborhood Preservation Program conducted eight housing related training sessions during February through May.
- Sinergia’s SHORE Project, a partner of the NYC Resource Consortium developed Individualized Support Services for seven individuals and employed three interns with developmental disabilities.

- The Participants of the Day Habilitation, Residential and Family Care Programs celebrated the second Dinner dance at the Julia de Burgos Center on Three Kings Day.
- We are most appreciative to John Vogelsang, from the Support Center for Nonprofit Management for facilitating and hosting Sinergia’s Strategic Planning last summer, which included 35 employees, consumers and members of the board of directors
- Our search for a new home is progressing and I hope to provide further details in the following Newsletter.
- We welcome a new board member Melissa Toribio-Boughner and the many new employees that have joined Sinergia since our last edition.

We look forward to finalizing our 30-year festivities with a glorious Gala at the New York Botanical Garden on June 16. Please see the information on page 3. Lastly, meet us at Central Park on July 25 for our Annual Sinergia Picnic. Raindate: August 1.

Thank you to all who make it possible for Sinergia to serve children, adults with disabilities and families. Support our work - **See you at the GALA!**

*Myrta Cuadra-Lash*

## The Richard M. Lash Library Dedication

On September 26, 2007, Sinergia held a dedication of the Richard M. Lash Library located at our main office site at 29<sup>th</sup> Street. Family, friends, consumers, employees and special guests Katherine Broderick, Associate Commissioner of OMRDD, Kathryn Cappella, Director of the NYS Disabilities Advocacy Assoc, and our own Board Chair, Sally Romero, fondly remembered Dick’s dedication and commitment to people with disabilities and their families.

Donald Lash presented an archival album, a gift from the Lash family and noted that his father was a prodigious reader and naming the library in his honor was a very fitting tribute. A luncheon followed the ceremony.



From L to R:  
Kathy Broderick, Associate Commissioner of OMRDD, Myrta Cuadra-Lash, Donald Lash

## Mother’s Day Sunshine

By Michael Clark, Intern and Day Habilitation Participant



My Mother Is So Warm Like The Sun Heating The Earth.  
My Mother Is Very Hard Working Like A Energizer Bunny Rabbit.  
My Mother Is Very Smart It’s Like Living With A Computer.  
My Mother Is So Caring Like A Fluffy Teddy Bear.  
My Mother Is So Happy Like A Dolphin.  
My Mother Takes Good Care Of Me That She Warms My Heart And Soul.

**EDUCATION CORNER**

**The New, Revised Curriculum for the “Education Advocacy for Parents” Intensive Workshop Series**

The parent manual that accompanies the Education Advocacy intensive series has been revised to reflect the new amendments to the Individualized Disabilities Education Act and information of interest to parents, families of children with disabilities and professionals who work with families and children. It is entitled “Special Education in the City: A Guide for Parent Advocacy in New York City.” This comprehensive three-week workshop series is designed to help parents understand their rights, learn about special education issues and learn how to navigate the special education system in New York City.

The manual has new chapters on “Parental and Family Involvement” in their children’s education and school, the recent changes in the

New York City’s Department of Education regarding special education policies and practices, and dispute resolution methods and strategies.

The manual includes a special education glossary and acronym list and special education resources for parents. The manual has been translated into Spanish in order to make the information accessible for Spanish reading families. A new chapter will be completed in June relative to Autism spectrum disorders.

**Autism Spectrum Disorder**

The New York City Council adopted an initiative under the sponsorship of David I. Weprin, Council Member 23rd District to provide services to children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Sinergia was awarded one of the grants to provide outreach, increase awareness and disseminate information regarding Autism Spectrum Disorders in young children and infants.

The outreach will be conducted through contacts in Day Care Centers and organizations and early intervention centers. Outreach will also be conducted in schools where we conduct educational workshops for parents with children that have special needs.

A workshop took place in March on “How to Identify Autism.” Other workshops provided an introduction on Autism and programs and

services for pre-school and school aged children.

In addition the trainings will focus on educational advocacy for parents with children entering the educational system and on strategies that a parent can implement at home to assist their child in learning how to develop socialization skills. The last workshop will be in July and it will focus on parent involvement and the home school connection. A new chapter on Autism Spectrum Disorders will be added in June to our comprehensive curriculum Special Ed in the City: A guide to Parent Advocacy in New York City. The entire curriculum is translated into Spanish.

This particular initiative has and will provide outreach efforts to underserved communities in New York City. We are most appreciative to Council Member Weprin for sponsoring this worthy initiative.

**Spring 2008 Education Advocacy for Parents Series**

**May 6, 8, 13, 15, 20 & 22**  
(workshops occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10 AM-1 PM)

This comprehensive three-week workshop series will help parents to understand their rights, learn about special education issues and learn how to navigate the special education system in New York City. The six workshops will discuss: Parent and Family Involvement in their Child’s Education, the changes in IDEA, No Child Left Behind and special education, the recent NYC Dept. of Education changes and other important issues.

The series is free of charge to parents of children with disabilities. Simultaneous interpretation into Spanish is available upon request.

**Metropolitan Parent Center Workshops**

The following are “special topics” workshops offered this Spring by the Metropolitan Parent Center. These workshops featured speakers with expertise regarding the workshop topics.

**May: Guardianship, Medical and Legal Issues Workshop**  
**Wednesday, May 28 :**

Speaker: Mr. Bernard Krooks, of Littman Krooks LLP, Guardianship Attorney

**June: Stress Relief Strategies for Parents of Children with Disabilities –**  
**Thursday, June 5 :**

Speaker and Trainer: William Forteza

**Sinergia a Partner in NYC Resource Consortium**

In recognition of the formidable issues facing people with disabilities in their search for decent, affordable housing, The New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council awarded grants to four organizations to develop a NYC Resource Consortium. The Consortium’s partners include Project SHORE (Sinergia’s Housing Opportunities and Resources Enhancement), HeartShare, C P of NYS and AHRC-NYC. This multi-agency consortium is working to provide information and guidance to individuals, families’ advocates on the development and implementation of small-individualized living environments in New York City.

An important element in the project included the employment of interns with developmental disabilities. Sinergia is very pleased at the performance of our three interns; Edith Caicedo, Michael Clark and James Flagler. They have very readily adapted to working at the Residential and Housing site, as well as the main office and are very enthused at the opportunity to acquire new skills and obtain gainful employment. In addition, Sinergia has made considerable progress in developing housing with support opportunities mandated by the project. The project already housed a mother with developmental disabilities and her two children in a beautiful apartment, and a couple, both with developmental disabilities were able to move to more independent community living.

The paper work is processed for four other persons with developmental disabilities who are awaiting approval of additional supports so they can be maintained in their present living environments. Sinergia also supplemented its housing and training curriculum and completed eight training sessions in the months of February through May.

The workshop “Home of Your Own” will complete the housing training cycle on June 3rd. “Home of Your Own” is an OMRDD Program for individuals with developmental disabilities, parents and legal guardians. Come and learn the process and procedures to achieve the American dream of home ownership. This presentation will be conducted by Lucinda Grant Griffin, Ph.D., and Director of the Office of Housing Initiatives & Supports at OMRDD at 134 W. 29 St., 4<sup>th</sup> floor from 10-12 noon.

The NYC Resource Consortium has provided Sinergia with a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with other organizations to improve and enhance affordable housing with supports for people with developmental disabilities. More information about the New York City Resource Consortium and Sinergia’s Project SHORE can be found on our website at [www.sinergiany.org](http://www.sinergiany.org) or by calling Sinergia at 212-643-2840.

**The New York State Disabilities Advocacy Association and Network**

The New York State Disabilities Advocacy Association and Network (NYSDAAN) is a new statewide organization designed to provide a clearinghouse of information to support advocacy services for people with disabilities and their families in New York State. In addition, NYSDAAN will assist advocates, advocacy groups and organizations in finding up-to-date, useful information, increase access to advocacy groups and organizations, training and support, and collect and share advocacy stories and best practices. NYSDAAN held its annual conference, a two-day event in Albany, NY on April 7 and 8, 2008.

The conference featured cross-system training opportunities and offer practical methods and effective strategies for advocacy organizations regarding how to deal with day-to-day situations and challenges that these advocacy organizations confront. For more information about NYSDAAN and to become a member please visit their website at: <http://www.nysdaan.org/>.

**From the Desk of the Nursing Department**

**Changes...Changes... and current Updates:**

In the beginning of the year 2008, a significant change took place in Medicare Part-D. For those who are not familiar with the terminology Part D refers to Drugs/ and or Medications. Medicaid Service Coordinators, Residential Managers, Respite Coordinator, Fiscal and the Nursing Team deal directly with consumers who are affected by these major changes.

All Residents enrolled in Sinergia’s Residential services have dual eligibility- Medicaid and Medicare coverage, however due to the changes, the Nursing Coordinator had to coordinate services with Chem Rx in the selection of a benchmarked plan that will benefit consumers with dual eligibility. This coverage applies to most of their medications and is now more affordable with a minimal amount of co-payment required. Consumers are now enrolled in the benchmarked plan called RX AMERICA (Advantage Star Plan). For those who are still in the process of enrollment you can call the hot line 1-800-429-6686 or go online [www.rxamerica.com/meds4medicare/](http://www.rxamerica.com/meds4medicare/). If the consumer was previously enrolled in another plan, you are allowed to switch plans on a monthly basis.

**Transportation!!!!  
Free for Medical Appointments!!!**

New York City Transportation Prior Approval Program

Residential consumers who are New York City Medicaid recipients can avail themselves of a Free Transportation Program. Sinergia has started the first phase of enrollment of resident consumers. Our goal is for consumers to have free transportation in order to attend all scheduled clinical appointments; this service will also be available to all rehabilitation staff that escort consumers. To qualify for this program the following requirements are needed:

- The person must be a NYC Medicaid recipient, and
- They must be living within the 5 boroughs of New York City.

For enrollment you can call the hotline 1-800-243-7842 and press option #3. The Medical Doctor will have to provide his/ her Medicaid Provider Identification Number upon calling for the enrollment of the consumer.

Sinergia, Inc.  
134 West 29th Street, 4th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
[www.sinergiany.org](http://www.sinergiany.org)



Myrta Cuadra-Lash, Executive Director

Editors

Janice Cruz-Marin, Isabel Malavet

Contributing Writers:

Michael Mitchell, Azución Muyaide, RN, Godfrey Rivera

Phone: 212-643-2840  
Fax: 212-643-2871  
Email: [information@sinergiany.org](mailto:information@sinergiany.org)