



Saint Dominic's Home
Bettering Lives Since 1878



Community Based Services • TORCH • Developmental Disabilities • Family Foster Care • Mental Health • St. Dominic's School

VOICES

Saint Dominic's Home
Newsletter

Inside this Issue

Page Contents

- 2 SDH Adds to Board of Directors
- 3 Profile on Hector A. May
- 3 TORCH and St. Dominic's School Graduations
- 4 Picture Worth a Thousand Words
- 4 Ken Gruber named CFO
- 4 NFL Star Visits St. Dominic's School
- 4 Fraternity Donations for Prom
- 4 Six Years to Citizenship

Save the Date

Longwood Avenue Dedication
Fall 2010

Self-Advocating in Albany – A Capital Effort to Restore Cutbacks

When it is that important sometimes you have to take it directly to the legislators. This was the case in May for Saint Dominic's Home Developmental Disabilities (DD) Department staff members and consumers who traveled from Rockland County to the New York State Capitol in Albany. Shirlene, Kelvin, Digna, Jimmy, Christine and Yolanda, pictured right, met with NY State Senator Bill Larkin and NY State Assembly Members Nancy Calhoun and Ellen Jaffee. As part of the Inter Agency Council (IAC) of DD Agencies' "Inclusive Democracy in Action" campaign, the Saint Dominic's Home group spoke about the importance of their services and urged the legislators to help restore recent cuts to New York State's Office for People With Developmental Disabilities funding, which Saint Dominic's Home Developmental Disabilities Department is dependent upon for its services.



In one word: "wow." That describes a busy spring and start to summer at Saint Dominic's Home. I am purposely keeping my comments short to make room for the numerous stories in this issue.

I would like to personally and officially welcome Ken Gruber as our new Chief Financial Officer, and I am pleased to have Kevin T. Conway, Esq. and Robert "Paul" Mackey join our Board of Saint Dominic's Home. Please read more about them in this edition as well as 10 other articles, including a profile on our Supported Housing.

I want to mention that many of these stories are also featured on our website www.stdominicshome.org. We have many more photos online and a few stories that didn't make it into the printed edition. Our Google analytics tell us that we are getting more than 1,400 visitors to the site each week, which is very exciting and encouraging. Please visit the site and let me know what you think. Enjoy!

Respectfully yours,

Judith D. Kydon
Executive Director

A Message from Judy Kydon



McHale House Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Staff and residents of McHale Residence in the Bronx threw an open house party in the spring for families and friends to celebrate its 10th Anniversary. McHale Residence is one of 23 homes operated by Saint Dominic's Home Developmental Disabilities Department under the direction of Judy Sabater-James and is home to eight men, a few who have lived in the home since it opened in 2000.



A Celebration of 'Bettering Lives' Annual Staff Appreciation Event Recognizes Retirees, Service Milestones & Exemplary Work

Judy Kydon, Executive Director of Saint Dominic's Home, opened Staff Appreciation Day on May 25 with a heartfelt thank-you and praise to all of the agency's 800 employees and the 100-plus who were in attendance to receive in-person recognition and accolades for their hard work and dedication to helping those less fortunate.



The grand ballroom at the Hilton Pearl River was abuzz with Saint Dominic's Home staff from every department in the Bronx, Orange and Rockland Counties. Enthusiastic applause and even standing ovations were the order of the day for those retiring from Saint Dominic's Home; celebrating five years to 40 years of service, and to those receiving special awards for their superior job performance nominated by their peers.

Human Resources Director Heather Waitman and Beverly Warwick, Assistant Director of Human Resources, planned and hosted the annual event which drew more than 300 staff members for a delicious lunch and program.

Department Profile: Supported Housing

For Robert Kovalik his love for music and playing the bass guitar is one way he copes with his mental illness. Robert, who is working on his college degree and is eagerly looking for work as a certified substance abuse counselor, lives in a nicely appointed one-bedroom apartment in Haverstraw, N.Y. that is supervised by Saint Dominic's Home Mental Health Department's Supported Housing Program.

Robert's mental illness developed after the death of his father. He managed the illness with medication and was able to hold various jobs and care for his ailing mother. Upon her death in 2004, Robert slipped into major depression. In 2005 Robert was referred to Saint Dominic's Home and was placed in a group residence. With counseling, medication and

continued on page 4

continued on page 2

Department Profile: Supported Housing

Continued from Page 1

proper support and care, Robert progressed from living in the Lakewood apartments to his independent supported housing apartment two years ago.



"I couldn't be where I am today without Saint Dominic's," said Robert. "The program is excellent and the staff is very helpful with what I need so that I can take care of myself."

Robert is very proud of his electric and acoustic bass guitar collection, and is excited to be part of his newest band called "Eclectic Horizons." The five-member jazz fusion band plays locally and has recorded original music which Robert invites people to sample at

<http://www.myspace.com/eclectichorizons>.

Lonnie Stafford, MSW and LCSW, Program Administrator of Saint Dominic's Home Mental Health Adult Programs, said Robert's story is typical of many of the people that Saint Dominic's Home serves in his program.



"Mental illness is more common than you might think," said Lonnie. "In New York State alone programs under the New York State Office of Mental Health serve more than 500,000 people with various levels of mental illness."

The National Institute of Mental Health reports that an estimated 26.2 percent of Americans ages 18 and older — about one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year, and about 6 percent or 1 in 17 suffer from a serious mental illness.

Lonnie said Robert's progress is what the Saint Dominic's Home Mental Health Department is all about, transitioning people from a supervised level of care requiring 24-hour staff supervision to supported apartments and independence.

"Our ultimate goal is to help people get back into the mainstream of society where they are fully independent and self-sufficient without the help of Saint Dominic's Home. I think Robert is on his way," said Lonnie.

The Saint Dominic's Home Mental Health Department currently serves 90 adults with mental illness in Rockland County, which includes three group living residences and 25 supported housing apartments.

Residents participate in day treatment programs, attend school or work part-time or full-time. The goal of the program is to integrate residents into the community and establish the greatest level of independence. The core values of the program are: Encouragement, Hope, Self Advocacy, Family and Community Integration and Individual Empowerment.

Roommates Christine Hodges and Shannon Pirnie epitomize these core values. They are an energetic duo who have a zest for life and are proud of their lovely two-bedroom garden apartment in Haverstraw. They both hold full-time jobs: Christine is a dietary aide at the nearby Northern Riverview Senior Assisted Living Center, and Shannon provides house care at Jawonio's Fisher Assisted Living Center in New City.

Christine has been under the care of Saint Dominic's Home since 1983, and Shannon for about 14 years. Both women transitioned out of group residence living to supported apartment living two years ago.

Christine and Shannon both agreed that Saint Dominic's Home has been wonderful to them and are comforted that they look out for them and provide the opportunity for independence.

"I am free to live my life how I want to," said Shannon. "This includes going for walks, working and seeing my boyfriend Jose on the weekends."

Christine encourages other adults with mental illness to seek the kind of help Saint Dominic's Home provides. "My mother was nervous at first when I moved out. But she knew I was in a safe place with Saint Dominic's Home and after all these years she knows I made the right decision."



Socials Are Super

Every month adults in Saint Dominic's Home Supported Housing Program gather for social activities such as holiday parties and barbecues. Every other month the gatherings include an education seminar on various topics, which have included medication safety, fire safety and money management.

One of the most talked about events was the Christmas party when Robert Kovalik and his bandmate broke out their bass and guitar for some terrific jazz fusion music. The well-attended socials are one of the most favorite activities that Saint Dominic's Home provides and are eagerly anticipated by all.



Saint Dominic's Home Adds Two Members to Board of Directors

Sister Margaret Flood, President of Saint Dominic's Home Board of Directors, announced that Kevin T. Conway, Esq. and Robert "Paul" Mackey have agreed to serve on the Board of Saint Dominic's Home.

Conway, an attorney who lives in West Nyack and is a lifelong Rockland resident, has his own law practice. His career has included serving as a senior assistant district attorney for Rockland County; school attorney for North Rockland



Central School District, and general counsel and later chairman of the Board of Directors of Fiduciary Insurance Company of America. Conway is involved in several community organizations including providing pro bono work for Make a Wish of Hudson Valley, serving as a trustee of Nyack Hospital and is a member of Rockland County Ancient Order of Hibernians Division 3 in Pearl River.

A resident of Rye, N.Y., Mackey brings to the Saint Dominic's Home Board 21 years of health care facilities management experience. For the past 12 years, Mackey has been facility and property manager for The Osborn (Miriam Osborn Memorial Home Association) in Rye.

Prior to his current position, he was director of engineering for New York Downtown Hospital

in Manhattan and operations supervisor for Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx.

"On behalf of the entire Board it is a pleasure to welcome Mr. Conway and Mr. Mackey," said Sr. Margaret Flood. "Their experience and expertise fit in well with the operations of Saint Dominic's Home and we look forward to taking advantage of their time and business acumen."

Judy Kydon, Executive Director of Saint Dominic's Home, said she is particularly pleased to have the addition of the two board members whose backgrounds will be beneficial to the organization.

"While they have diverse backgrounds, Kevin and Paul have in their careers dealt with some of the kinds of issues that face us today. We are grateful

Continued on Next Page

Saint Dominic's Home Adds Two Board Members

Continued from Previous Page

that they have chosen to dedicate some of their time and knowledge to Saint Dominic's Home as members of our Board."

Conway said he has been long impressed with the terrific work Saint Dominic's Home has done in the region, especially with children. "Saint Dominic's Home is an icon of children's social services and I am honored to now be a part of it in a more formal role."

Mackey echoed Conway's sentiments and added, "What interested me most in Saint Dominic's Home is its diversity of services and long history of serving those in need. I look forward to making a contribution to help ensure Saint Dominic's Home can continue its great work."



Board Member Spotlight: Hector A. May, Vice President & Treasurer

Hector A. May, Vice President & Treasurer, is founder and owner of Executive Compensation Planners, Inc., a financial planning and benefits advisory firm located in New City, N.Y.



Fifteen years ago Hector accepted the invitation to join the Board of Saint Dominic's Home, and became the first Latino to be a member of the Board of Directors. He says he accepted the position because of his belief in the mission of Saint Dominic's Home and wanted to be part of an organization that helps people that often cannot help themselves, especially the many children Saint Dominic's Home serves.

"Children are our future, and every child deserves the best possible future," Hector says. "Saint Dominic's Home ensures that the best of one's ability is achieved and does it with high quality care."

Over the past decade and a half Hector says he has experienced mostly can-do attitudes and positive outlooks from the people of Saint Dominic's Home. "I am always so impressed with what Saint Dominic's Home does with so little for so many. I think people should know that while Saint Dominic's Home is a Catholic organization that it does not discriminate regarding religion, race or gender when helping those in need."

Hector was born in New York City in 1941 to Mexican immigrant parents, and worked hard to get into college. He received his Bachelor of Accounting degree from the City University of New York and did his graduate work at PACE University. Hector received his Certified Pension Actuary Designation in 1984, while on the Actuarial Staff of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. He is a member of the Association of Certified Financial Planners and has addressed many business and professional groups, including CPA firms, law firms and stock brokerage firms throughout the U.S.

Hector is married and has two children and three grandchildren. His daughter, Vania, enjoys a working relationship with him as an associate in his firm. His resume of professional and community service reads like a who's-who. Among his many positions and titles: Winner of Forbes Magazine Hispanic Businessman Award; Recipient of National Estate Planners Award; Member Hispanic Business Round Table; People to People, Inc. Board Member; Keep Rockland Beautiful, Inc. Board Member; President of Rockland Country Club; Rockland Business Association, Vice Chairperson, and Commissioner of Rockland Economic Development Corp.

Hector's favorite motto is the Republican benevolent, "Truth will set you free." In his spare time, he enjoys being home with his wife and visiting with his two daughters and three grandchildren. Hector says he loves living in Rockland County and takes great pleasure in golfing, going out with good friends and dining at his favorite restaurants.

CAPS & CLAPS

Saint Dominic's Home Education Department put its best and brightest center stage as preschoolers attending the award-winning national accredited TORCH program (To Reach Children) in the Bronx graduated to kindergarten and others moved up a year and students attending New York State certified St. Dominic's School in Blauvelt received their official graduation from the K - 9th grade school.

Under the direction of Ethel Rosally, the TORCH ceremony was filled with animated songs by the children and each received a diploma and special gift bag. Proud parents and family packed the school's auditorium and cameras clicked to capture beautiful wide smiles of their children dressed in their best.

Big hugs, tears, smiles and choked up voices dominated the tenor of the eighth grade graduation under the leadership of school principal Sue La Due. Each student, well appointed in a light blue cap and gown, heard personal comments from their teachers and or counselors read aloud directly to the student right before receiving their graduation certificate. A number of graduates performed a live musical number and a video show captured the memories of their time at St. Dominic's School, which for some of the students go back seven or eight years. Students, families and staff were treated to a catered lunch at the nearby Rosary Hall across from the school.



Class of 2010

A Picture is Worth A Thousand Words

One of the joys of Saint Dominic's Home Family Foster Care is bringing together a loving and caring family with children in need of a home. The drawing below brought tears and smiles to both staff members and new foster parent Luisa. Titled "Our Blended Family," it was drawn and colored by her 10-year-old foster child Sasha within days of arriving in her new home.



"Our Blended Family," by Sasha, Age 10

Luisa and her family became certified foster parents with Saint Dominic's Home on March 1, 2010. On March 17, she received three children ages three to ten. The drawing captures the essence of Saint Dominic's Home's vision for Family Foster Care: To enable each person to live and thrive in a permanent family centered environment that will nurture individual growth and maximize independence and the achievement of one's potential.

Ken Gruber Named CFO

Judy Kydon, Executive Director of Saint Dominic's Home, welcomes Ken Gruber as the agency's new Chief Financial Officer. Ken joins Saint Dominic's Home from the New York City office of Tatum LLC, where he was a partner of the nation's largest executive services firm.

As CFO, Ken is a member of Saint Dominic's Home senior management team and supervises the agency's fiscal department.



"Ken is a seasoned hands-on executive who brings to Saint Dominic's Home 35 years of extensive experience in financial and operations management in public, private and not-for-profit organizations," said Judy. "We are very fortunate to have Ken at the helm of our fiscal operations and know he will be a tremendous asset to the success of Saint Dominic's Home."

While with Tatum, Ken was instrumental in helping companies resolve business, financial and technology issues. This included directing organizations on restructuring their financial operations to enable them to meet the challenges of significant growth as well as implement technological solutions to business problems. Ken holds a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Ithaca College and is a Certified Public Accountant. He lives in North Caldwell, N.J.

Six Years to Citizenship



Stars and stripes were served up at a celebratory breakfast for John Kaleekkal as he became an official American citizen earlier this year. John is the Vehicle Coordinator in the Plant Operations Department at Saint Dominic's Home. He and his wife Aleyamma, who also received her American citizenship and is an on-call staff member in the Developmental Disabilities Department, emigrated with their Green cards from India in 2004.

John brings with him 40 years of distinction in the military where he specialized in logistics and vehicle administration. He served 19 years with the Indian Army and 21 years with the Royal Army of Oman. John's service to the Sultanate of Oman occurred at the American Embassy in Oman. This July John celebrates his five year anniversary in his position with Saint Dominic's Home, and he and his wife are elated with their U.S. citizenship and enjoy contributing to the agency's mission.

A Celebration of 'Bettering Lives'

continued from page 1

This year's retirees included Liz Brazaitis, Joan Carrozza, Virginia Choice, Devora Jones and Agnes Williams. Sr. Joseph Mary Mahoney, President of Friends of Saint Dominic's, was recognized for her 40 years of service; Roberta Bentley celebrated 35 years; Robert Conant, Nellie Gonzalez, Ellen Rice and Joseph Trzasko each were honored for 30 years; 25-year celebrants were Virginia Brestolli and Maria Capretta, and those marking 20 years of service include Frank Jones Jr., Brunilda Robles and Diko Taktajian. Staff celebrating 5, 10 and 15 years of service is listed on the website.



Employees receiving colleague-nominated awards for their exceptional work and dedication include the following: "Going the Extra Mile" Awards: Serah Bellot, Service Coordinator/SW, DD, and Sue Bryant, Employment Specialist from the HR Department; "A Caring Heart" Award: Gracie Easterling, Resident Counselor of Murphy Residence, DD. "Star Performer" Award: Carol McLeod, Payroll Assistant, Fiscal Department; "Team Performance" Awards: Staff of the Cox Residence, DD, and Staff of McHale House, DD; "Making a Difference" Awards: Dr. Michael Bray, Coordinator of Mental Health, FFC;



Geneva Green, Resident Counselor, DD, and Damon Sumter, Maintenance Skills Worker, Plant Operations; and Ethel Rosally, Principal and Director of TORCH, picked up two awards: "Lead by Example" Award and "Innovative Thinker" Award. For more photos visit our website stdominicshome.org.

ZTA Fraternity 'Dressed to Thrill'

There was no hesitation when Mike Uszenski, Controller of Saint Dominic's Home, asked his college daughter Jenna to help in obtaining gently used prom dresses to donate to young girls in need for their special evenings. Jenna, the former president of The Zeta Tau Alpha (ZTA) Chapter, Kappa Nu at Monmouth University in New Jersey, quickly went into action by rallying her ZTA sisters to fulfill the request.

Within days they secured 20 prom dresses as well as a few men's suits to deliver to the young women and men served by Saint Dominic's Home. Inspired by Jenna's efforts, the following Saint Dominic's Home employees also donated dresses to the cause: Grisselle Coles, Nellie Gonzalez, Judy Sabater-James and Ken Gruber.



Zeta Tau Alpha is the nation's third largest women's fraternity that shapes young collegiate female students into well rounded young women, which includes encouraging them to support philanthropic causes.

NFL Star Ryan Grant Visits St. Dominic's School for 'Spirit Week'

"Hard work and believing in yourself," was the message Ryan Grant of the Greenbay Packers delivered to 78 students and 26 staff members at St. Dominic's School in Blauvelt. Grant, a six-year NFL veteran running back and former Nyack resident, visited the school on May 21 as a culmination of "Spirit Week."



His grandmother Patricia Gallwey is the school nurse and she asked Ryan to pay a visit to deliver a pep talk, answer questions and sign autographs. Student Raymond Amato challenged Grant to an arm-wrestling contest and Amy Estrella tried to steal the ball from his



grip. Saint Dominic's Home operates the school that serves children in grades kindergarten to ninth who have social-emotional needs, neurological impairments and learning disabilities. Several local newspapers carried the story and News 12 Hudson Valley visited the school and ran the story on its evening cable news on May 21.

SAINT DOMINIC'S HOME 2010 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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