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OUT AND ABOUT

'Home is where the heart is'...in Lombard

The Lombard community will be getting some new neighbors this year, thanks to a non-profit organization that chose the Lilac Village in which to plant some new roots.

Seguin Services Inc. is building a house at 708 E. Berkshire that will become home to six individuals with developmental disabilities, where they can be part of the community at large and live as independently as possible.

John Voit, president and CEO of Seguin Services Inc., the headquarters of which is located in Cicero, said that there is a growing need for such residential facilities for developmentally disabled adults, citing that there are as many as 22,000 people on a waiting list for services across the state—while only some 800 individuals out of that total have begun to receive services.

In DuPage County alone, he continued, figures compiled as of the end of 2011 show that there are over 2,000 persons waiting to receive services, whether it be 24-hour care, in-home care or day services.

The foundation of organizations such as Seguin Services Inc. can be traced back to the late 1940s, the CEO related, when parents looking for educational opportunities "created small school programs" for their children with developmental disabilities.

At the same time, though, these parents worried about what would become of their children once they became unable to care for them at home, so they began to address the need for work programs and day services. Day classes were held in a church basement and a sheltered workshop was opened (it closed in 1989).

Taking those needs a step further, the need for residential services became apparent, and a movement toward finding apartments and homes for these individuals began to take hold. Seguin Services began



Photo courtesy of Dawneen Suriano

708 E. BERKSHIRE, Lombard, will be the new location of a Community Integrated Living Arrangement, or CILA, for up to six developmentally disabled adults. Once the home is up and running, it will cost about \$45,000 a year per individual for the residential support system, according to Seguin Services Inc. President/CEO John Voit, who said that some of those resources come from each resident's Social Security Disability (SSD) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) check, along with funding from the state's Department of Human Resources (DHS). By comparison, the Arc of Illinois indicates that as of March 2011, if these same individuals were institutionalized, it would have cost as much as \$192,000 annually per resident.

offering residential services in 1979.

In fact, Voit noted, the organization is named after Eduard Seguin, a French psychiatrist who, in the 1880s, was instrumental in working to create non-institutional living alternatives for developmentally disabled adults and he was "an innovator of the time," he added, describing how Seguin believed that the persons in question deserved a chance to contribute to, and be a part of, society.

The CEO said the need for housing has increased over time, citing a number of factors such as the demographics of baby boomer parents who will be qualifying for Social Security benefits. He also said that the closing of institutions, as well as a "consent decree" lawsuit giving a number of individuals the choice of living in an institutional or residential setting, further added to

the need for residential services.

"The Ligas lawsuit was filed on behalf of adults with developmental disabilities residing in ICFs/DD who choose to move to community-based services or settings and on behalf of adults with developmental disabilities residing at home who are seeking community-based services or settings," according to a statement by the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS).

The focus for Seguin Services Inc., in particular, Voit said, is on DuPage County residents who have low income status and became disabled prior to their 22nd birthday, and who are currently on the Prioritization of Urgency Need for Services (PUNS) waiting list.

With the construction of the new home in Lombard, Seguin Services will have 62 residences in 22 municipalities, called Community Integrated Living Arrangements, or CILAs, Voit outlined,

adding that between two and eight individuals live in the homes, depending on their size.

The residents of these CILAs receive support services based on their individual needs, and case managers also help these individuals enjoy as much independence and community inclusion as possible.

Those persons who will live in the Lombard home will be chosen from a list created by PACT Inc. and the director emphasized, "We are accepting applications that will be organized through PACT."

PACT Inc. is a non-profit organization that helps link people with disabilities to services and support.

Up to six residents—some of whom may have multiple disabilities—will be able to live in the two-story, state-of-the-art house, with the first floor being completely wheelchair-accessible. Each floor has three bedrooms and there will be a staff member on the premises at all times.

While he doesn't know yet if the individuals will be of mixed gender, Voit said that currently there is "a higher need for male [residences]."

The home under construction received assistance from United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago, with a 30-year \$250,000 mortgage, a bequest of \$50,000 from a generous benefactor named Dolores Nowicki, a \$10,000 contribution from the Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE) and "a substantial gift" from Anthony and Estelle Nakroshis.

The house will be named after the Nakroshises, whose son T.J. was born with multiple disabilities. His parents advocated for people with disabilities: Anthony helped secure legislation to create a school for the deaf and blind (the Phillip J. Rock Center) and as an administrative dean at Reavis High School in Burbank, worked to provide inclusion for children with

disabilities. Estelle Nakroshis became certified to teach special needs children.

All told, Seguin Services Inc. will need some \$420,000 in capital funding to get the home built and furnished, including installing a sprinkler system and a wheelchair lift, among other specialized equipment.

That's why Seguin Services Inc. is embarking on a "Home is Where the Heart Is" campaign, a raffle to help augment funds needed for completing the home. The raffle includes a chance to win a donated red 1990 Mazda Miata convertible, a men's Rolex watch and \$1,000 in cash.

Tickets are \$20 each or \$100 for six tickets, which can be purchased by calling 708-222-5143 or at https://seguinorg.presencehost.net/news_resources/miata_raffle.html. The winning tickets will be drawn at Seguin's Carr Center on Wednesday, Sept. 26, at 7 p.m.

Seguin Services, in its mission to "integrate, enrich and empower," offers a number of other services, including adult day services, community employment, an earned income initiative and work alternative, foster care for medically fragile or developmentally disabled children, adoption services, in-home and weekend respite, life skills training and enrichment, and a residential home for seniors with memory impairments, among others.

Seguin Services Inc. also operates Seguin Garden and Gifts at 5621 W. 31st St., Cicero.

For more information on Seguin Services Inc., located at 3110 S. Central Ave., Cicero, call 708-863-3803 or visit www.seguin.org.

For more information on help with developmental disabilities, visit www.dhs.state.il.us and follow the links on disabilities. For more information on PACT Inc., visit www.pactinc.net.