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 as the site for their new homes.

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 Glen Ellyn, 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 8,000 individuals out of that total have begun to receive services.

In DuPage County alone, he said, figures compiled as of the end of 2010 show that there are over 1,000 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 noted, 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 offering services in 1979.

In 1980, Voit noted, the organization was named after Edward Seguin, a French psychiatrist who, in the 1880s, was instrumental in working to create non-institutional living alternatives for developmentally disabled adults. He was an innovator of the time, Voit added, helping to bring the concept of community living to the forefront.

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 are now reaching the age of retirement and the need 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 Ligan lawsuit was filed on behalf of adults with developmental disabilities residing in ICF/DDs who choose to move to community-based services or 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 a higher need for supportive services.

The house will be named after the organization’s son T.J., who was born with multiple disabilities. His parents advocated for children with disabilities. Anthony helped to secure legislation to create a school for the deaf and blind (the Philip J. Rock Center) and as an administrative assistant at Ravenswood High School in Burbank, worked to provide inclusion for children with disabilities. Estelle Nakroth, who was catalyst of the work of these, was also noted for her contributions to the field.

The house will become home to six residents in 22 residential apartments, called Community Integrated Living Arrangements, or CILA’s. Voit outlined the benefits of the apartments, including the independence they provide for residents, allowing them to live as they choose.

Up to six residents—one of whom may have multiple disabilities—will be able to live in the apartment, Voit said, with a fully wheelchair-accessible bathroom. 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 residents.

The house under construction received assistance from United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago, with a $20,000 mortgage, a $250,000 mortgage, a $5,000,000 mortgage, a $10,000,000 contribution to the Chicago Board Options Exchange (CBOE), and a “substantial gift” from Anthony and Estelle Nakroths.

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