

CEO'S MESSAGE
Donna Colonna



This year our nation is celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act. There is no question that ADA advanced the independence of people with disabilities. It afforded similar protections against discrimination to Americans with disabilities as did the the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin, and other characteristics illegal.

As many minority groups can testify, the President's signature affixed to congressional legislation does not mean the immediate eradication of barriers to equality. Today, twenty years later, people with disabilities do not earn equal wages for like jobs, they are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed, and for many housing and

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**CONSUMERS RESPOND TO
 URBAN AGRICULTURE AT SUS**

The SUS Urban Agriculture Program is a multi-divisional program directed at consumer employment and volunteerism in growing vegetables. The program began in mid-June with the creation of vertical edible gardens at three of our residences. Dan Lohaus, SUS Director, Green Initiatives, reports on the program's progress and shares some of his thoughts and those of SUS consumers and staff participating in the program.

THE KNICKERBOCKER GARDEN

The vertical garden at Knickerbocker, a residence for formerly homeless Veterans, is SUS' largest and has produced tomatoes and basil this summer. Consumers at Knickerbocker have enjoyed picking fresh tomatoes from the garden to use in their own kitchens and have delivered pounds of fresh basil to the kitchens at SUS' Brooklyn Clubhouse and Avenue J Residence.

But beyond producing fresh vegetables and feeding SUS consumers, the Urban Agriculture Program seems to be having a positive effect on those who have been involved.

"The garden at Knickerbocker has been great for Wellness and it's been a form of harm reduction," says Program Director Lindra Ware, "It's been a distraction from using substances and a really positive distraction overall. The guys who work in the garden feel responsible and accountable. They've been doing it with pride and quality, and they are seeing the fruits of their labor – something they've achieved."

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CEO'S MESSAGE

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accessible public transportation are in short supply. Children with intellectual and developmental disabilities still lack equal opportunities to succeed in school and to be fully included in all childhood experiences. While ADA moved our nation's assertion of social equality forward, we are not there yet in terms of daily truths.

What, therefore, can we do to speed the pace of change promised two decades ago? We must reinvigorate the history of social action that gave rise to ADA. We must challenge social barriers in housing, transportation, employment, and technology access. Parents of children with disabilities must be supported in their fight against exclusion and segregation of their children. Members of the general public must lend their voice to local groups that advocate for the rights of people with disability, as many recently did in the fight to eliminate the "R-word" in everyday speech.

ADA was a landmark achievement in the independent living movement, helping people with disabilities achieve greater self-reliance and be accorded their personal dignity. Still, there are those who argue that government-funded services provided are too costly. People with disabilities should first be seen as citizens and only secondarily as consumers of healthcare, rehabilitation or social services. As citizens, persons with disabilities have the same right to participation, opportunities, freedom, and self-determination in everyday life that other citizens take for granted. We're not there yet, but we are on our way. □

HOLIDAY GIFT PROJECT

SUS is taking the annual Holiday Gift Project to the next level. Last year, we solicited 800 gift – filled stockings for our consumers, and brought them joy over the holiday period. This year, so that all 4000 SUS consumers will experience that joy, we are working to solicit 4000 gifts! SUS has partnered with J. Walter Thompson to make the 2010 Holiday Gift Project more than just a gift drive, but an opportunity to spread the word about SUS and the work that we do to the people of New York.

Drew Train, an Account Director at JWT (formerly J. Walter Thompson) and a team of JWT experts are driving this effort forward. Over the last few weeks we have been making key connections throughout the city to help us with that effort. With the support of JWT, Rubenstein & Associates PR and New York University a city wide marketing blitz was launched along with a new website, www.giftsNYC.org. We will be soliciting potential corporate sponsors and contributors in the coming weeks, as well as trying to capture the attention of the NYC media.

But even with all these volunteers and sponsors, we need help getting the word out. SUS is asking all of our friends to help in this effort by joining our Facebook page, YouTube channel, Twitter feed and/or LinkedIn group.

By joining our social media network, the SUS community will be able to stay informed of the progress of the Holiday Gift Project. The numbers of people joining SUS media channels will also help us gain corporate sponsors and media attention. In addition to our social networks, there are going to be tons of ways for you, your friends, co-workers and your company to get involved, so *please tune-in and stay tuned!* □



SUS

Services for the
UnderServed
Opening doors to independence

2010 HOLIDAY GIFT PROJECT

PLEASE TEXT "SUS" TO 20222 TO DONATE \$10 TODAY!*

*A one-time donation of \$10 will be added to your mobile phone bill or deducted from your prepaid balance. All charges are billed by and payable to your mobile service provider. Service is available on most carriers. Donations are collected for the benefit of "SERVICES FOR THE UNDERSERVED" by the Mobile Giving Foundation and subject to the terms found at www.hmgf.org/t. Messaging & Data Rates May Apply. You can unsubscribe at any time by replying **STOP** to short code "20222". Reply **HELP** to "20222" for help.

SUS TURNS ON ITS DIGITAL ENGINE



The Internet has seen many exciting trends in the last few years. Websites and services, such as Facebook and Twitter, are redefining personal and social communications. Websites have become much more complex and true showcases of design and innovation. Here at SUS, we are aware of these technological trends and are using them to spread the word about our organization.

Our Resource Development department is implementing these trends to create innovative materials. Landing pages, videos, photo albums and presentations are among the digital materials being produced. This type of content creation enhances the online presence of SUS and delivers information in a more creative and engaging way. Our Facebook fan page has seen a dramatic increase in members, and the SUS YouTube channel has proved to be very popular amongst our staff and potential constituents. The SUS blog, The Signal, provides an opportunity for people interested in SUS and the work that we do to learn more.

In addition, SUS is redesigning its website. The new website will serve as a digital multimedia portal to SUS social media channels. The design will be more user-centric and more akin to current web design styles, making information about our divisions and services quickly accessible. The home page will feature videos and other multimedia materials that will be easy to play. The color scheme and graphic content will be more up-to-date and responsive to current web design styles.

We are very confident that all of our staff and consumers will benefit from SUS' new digital initiatives. Our social media campaigns and new design implementations will place SUS at the vanguard in the digital landscape for non-profits. □

FIT PHOTO JOURNALISM

In September of 2009, SUS invited Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) students to participate as photo journalists in the SUS Independent Stories Project. The students created a documentary project sharing SUS stories that chronicle the lives of challenged individuals in New York City. The content



honors and celebrates SUS consumers, families, and staff while conveying our shared humanity. These photographic essays were hosted on SUS social media channels and exhibited at the June SUS annual gala.

A special thank you to the FIT Student Photographers, Jenna Gang, Kelsey Riordan and Jani Zubkovs and the FIT Photography Department Staff, Deborah Klesenski and Jessica Wynne for the coordination of the SUS/FIT Photography Storytelling Project partnership.

There are many stories inside of SUS and we remain dedicated to putting a human face on our mission, our achievements and our community. We look forward to expanding our partnership with FIT this coming year and adding to our growing portrait of New York life and its residents. □

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Receive our e-newsletter and save a tree.

Please provide Joe Moretti

with your email address.

jmoretti@susinc.org

MOTHER GASTON RESIDENCE OPENING



SUS CEO Donna Colonna with
Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz

On May 26th, SUS hosted the official opening of our new Mother Gaston residence. Mother Gaston provides housing for 49 adults, who were previously homeless, in the Brownsville area of Brooklyn. The residence is testament to the meaningful partnership between SUS and the Brownsville Community. The partnership was founded on the belief that when afforded with the opportunity and the right tools, the barriers of economic disadvantage, disability and social stigma can be overcome, making a full and productive life possible. □

SUS WINS DEPARTMENT OF LABOR GRANT

On July 1, 2010, SUS was awarded a Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant of \$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). This grant will support the implementation of SUS' Assertive Community Employment (ACE) program.

In cooperation with government partners and community-based social service providers, the ACE program will provide job training, counseling and placement services to expedite the integration of homeless female veterans and homeless male veterans with families into the labor force.

"Female veterans and veterans with families face special challenges when reintegrating into civilian life," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for VETS Ray Jefferson. "This important emphasis of the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program will allow us to identify and communicate the best practices for women and families in order to accelerate the successful transition for these brave veterans into meaningful employment."

"This program will significantly enhance the provision of social and employment services for homeless vets in Brooklyn and the Bronx" said Donna Colonna, CEO of SUS. "It will provide a direct, unobstructed path from the street to training-then-employment, and

provide consumer-focused and peer delivered support to address employment barriers as they arise."

In this first quarter of the grant, Bob Raphael, Project Manager, was instrumental in establishing the program infrastructure. His experience of serving tours of duty in Vietnam for the U.S. Marine Corps from 1964-1972 assisted in creating the necessary linkages and relationships with other organizations serving veterans. Bob has now handed over the project to Lamarr Wheeler.

As a 22 year veteran of the U.S. Navy, completing his active duty service in 2000, Lamarr is uniquely suited for this leadership role. As Senior Chief Petty Officer, he was responsible for integrating female sailors into the naval culture. Outside of his military service, Lamarr's experiences include a youth workforce development program, substance abuse treatment programs, vocational rehabilitation programs and most recently, a Fatherhood Program that helped fathers with emotional support, obtaining employment and financial assistance.

Bob, Lamarr and staff have been making presentations at several shelters for homeless veterans and other outreach efforts to recruit and provide information about potential employment opportunities.

It is estimated that one-third of the adult homeless population are veterans and that five percent of the homeless vets are female. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that 107,000 veterans are homeless on any given night. □

CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE

On Wednesday, June 9, 2010 SUS held its annual gala, “Celebrating Independence.” The evening was hosted by Harry Smith of CBS “The Early Show” and featured a performance by Mary Wilson of The Supremes. Over 300 guests from the worlds of business, philanthropy and government gathered at Jazz at Lincoln Center to celebrate the evening’s honoree, former Chairman and CEO of KeySpan Corporation, Bob Catell. Mr. Catell is a business and civic leader who exemplifies a strong commitment to the City of New York and to all its people. *Consumers Who Inspire Us* awards were presented to Charles Sitton, Ronald Casanova and James Fludd for inspiring us with their resilience, their personal achievement, their overcoming odds and their advocacy for themselves and others.



*SUS Consumer James Fludd (left) with
NYS Office of Mental Health Commissioner Michael F. Hogan*

President Bill Clinton was awarded the first ever SUS Humanitarian Award in recognition of his tireless work in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. President Clinton was unable to accept his award in person but did provide a moving video message.



During the evening a special appeal was made, asking guests to assist the work of SUS by providing financial assistance to cover the costs of the Peer Training Program for 2011. As a testament to the generosity of our guests, by evenings end, we secured nearly 100% of the funding for that program.

An After Party, including desserts, dancing and a silent auction was a great finish to a truly memorable evening.

Thanks to our Benefit supporters the event raised a record high of \$350,000. □

Become a Fan of SUS!

FaceBook: www.facebook.com/ServicesfortheUnderServed

The Signal blog: www.signal.susinc.org

YouTube: www.youtube.com/susincorg

SUS Website: www.susinc.org



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HOMELESS?

*There is a nip in the air.
Halloween decorations are in the store.
And children are back in school.
It's time for the Fall/Winter clothes to come out
and for the summer shorts to be put away.*

How did people who are homeless deal with the heat of the summer? Especially this summer which was the hottest on record for New York City? During this summer, when people were taking two if not three showers a day, what do homeless people do? These were some of the questions that came up during a conversation with a few SUS consumers who were formerly homeless.

Where do you store your Fall/Winter clothes?

- “Duh. There are no clothes to store.”
- “I travelled light, meaning a plastic bag with a change of clothes.”
- “Sometimes you have a “cat spot” or a “holdout” where you camouflage your stuff in the woods or some other safe place.”

So what do you do when it gets cold?

- “There are a lot of places that provide winter clothing and sleeping bags.”
- “People think New Yorkers are mean but they are really generous. Once I was on the subway platform in a T-shirt and a woman said, “You need something more to wear” and she gave me a sweater.”

How did you spend your time?

- “A lot of walking. I would walk all day.”
- “Riding the subways. My train was the #6.”
- “My train was the D – the Bronx to Coney Island. But they kick you off after seeing you 2-3 times at the last stop.”
- “Reading in the libraries. You will find a lot of homeless people in the libraries, studying, checking out resources.”
- “You don’t realize that there is a whole other world – there are those who live in box communities, in the parks, in the subway tunnels, and the roofies.”

What are roofies?

- “People live up on the roofs. You have to get your own roof.”

With that one change of clothes, how did you do laundry?

- “Oh, I would change maybe every 9-10 days.”
- “Sadly, you get used to your smell and don’t realize that you reek. Once you are clean, you realize it. It takes 2-3 days of being clean before you get the smell out of your nose.”

What about showering and taking care of other personal needs?

- “Sometimes I showered at my cousin’s or at the YMCA.”
- “In one building, the Super, Pete, was a really good guy. He used to be homeless and would let me shower and store my stuff there.”
- “Remember when you’re homeless, you are usually depressed, probably using drugs or alcohol, and don’t care about those kinds of things.”

You mentioned a cousin would allow you to shower at his place occasionally; did you ever stay with family and friends for a while?

- “A friend let me stay at his apartment for 8 months until he moved to California.”
- “My family had their own family and kids and there was no space. They would feed me but no bunking.”
- “Trust was also an issue with family. I was using drugs and alcohol and they didn’t trust me anymore. I was an embarrassment.”
- “They were showing ‘tough love’ and wanted me to get my act together, ‘be a man.’”

What did you do for food?

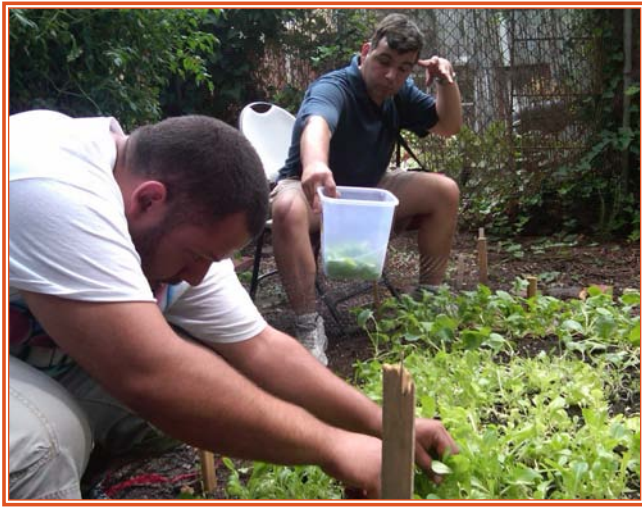
- “There was a store that would give me coffee or a pastry.”
- “You get into a schedule of where to get a meal.”

It seems like the activities and needs don’t change that much based on the season. How is the summer different than the winter?

- “Oh no, it’s much better in the summer. You can sleep in the parks. People are more generous; they have more time. People can’t be bothered in the winter. I guess people are happier in the summer.” □

CONSUMERS RESPOND TO URBAN AGRICULTURE AT SUS

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SUS Consumers Tending the Hicks Day Hab Garden

“It gives us something positive to do,” says Fred, Knickerbocker resident and head-gardener, “And personally, I’d rather have something positive to do because when you don’t, the negative finds you.”

Lindra adds, “Our neighbors are looking at us differently now – like we are people doing something really constructive in the community.”

THE HICKS DAY HAB GARDEN

When I first arrived at the Hicks Day Hab for individuals with developmental disabilities to help create a garden, I was impressed with the excitement and energy that the consumers there had for the project. After installing a “green wall” and planting tomatoes and basil, they wanted to expand the garden

and plant other vegetables in their back courtyard. Over the next few weeks, we created a large garden bed and planted lettuces, mustard greens, collard greens, radishes, and beets.

At a recent Labor Day BBQ at Hicks, consumers harvested and made a great salad with lettuces, greens, and basil that they had grown. I asked them what they thought about gardening.

“It makes you feel good about yourself,” said consumer Valerie, “if you get frustrated and you do your planting, it refreshes your mind and puts you at ease.”

Noel, a Hicks consumer who is responsible for daily watering, added, “When I feel mad, I come and do the garden and it helps calm me down. When I focus on the garden, I don’t think about the bad stuff, I think about the future.”

“I think the garden at Hicks has made them really proud,” says Hicks Program Supervisor Yvette McBean. “Knowing that they planted the seeds which developed into food that they could eat gives them a real sense of accomplishment.”

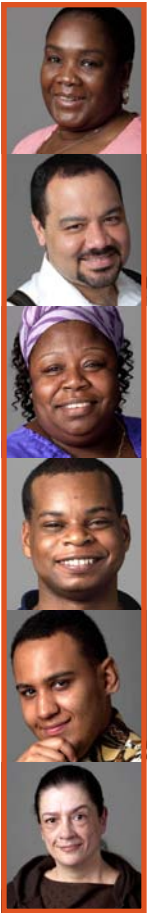
THE MOTHER GASTON GARDEN

In early August, Hicks gardener Noel joined Knickerbocker gardeners Fred and Miguel to help consumers at the Mother Gaston Residence create a garden of their own.

After preparing a garden space in their courtyard, consumers at Mother Gaston planted a lettuce mix of arugula, spinach, chard, collard greens, kale, and Asian greens, as well as radishes and beets. In late September, they enjoyed their first harvest.

“When I plant seeds and watch the plants grow, it’s like a piece of my soul is cleansed and I’m contributing” says Mother Gaston resident Paul, “...it makes me feel alive, it gives me inspiration, and it gives me hope to keep being alive.”

For more information on the SUS Urban Agriculture Program contact Dan Lohaus, Director, Green Initiatives at dlohaus@susinc.org 



ABOUT SUS

SUS is a non-profit organization that provides housing and supportive services to New Yorkers with special needs to live with dignity in the community, direct their own lives and attain personal fulfillment. Founded in 1978, today SUS serves over 4,000 of the most vulnerable among us — individuals with special needs due to a developmental, mental or physical disability often compounded by poverty, homelessness, inadequate education, substance abuse or a history of institutionalization.

For more information,
visit www.susinc.org
or contact us at
info@susinc.org or 212.633.6900



UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 26, 2010 ... Macombs Residence Opening

Nov 15, 2010 ... Holiday Gift Project Collection Begins

Feb 10, 2011 ... Fire & Ice Ball

June 6, 2011 ... Annual Gala



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