



# PRAXIS

HOUSING INITIATIVES, INC.

**IN THE KNOW-NOW** MARCH 2010 ISSUE 28

## *Praxis Purchases Property In The Bronx*

Praxis Housing Initiatives is pleased to announce the purchase of land in the Wakefield section of the Bronx. With this property, Praxis Housing plans to own and operate purpose-built permanent supportive housing, a first for the organization. The purchase was made possible through funding from the Corporation for Supportive Housing and the NYC HPD Division of Special Needs Housing.

Permanent supportive housing is defined as long-term and community-based housing that also provides services to homeless individuals. Permanent supportive housing enables special needs populations to live as independently as possible in a permanent setting. Support services for residents can include job training, life skills training, and case management.

The site will include approximately 63 units of studio and one-bedroom apartments. Praxis anticipates acquiring further funding in order to create an environmentally friendly green space in accordance to LEED certification specifications. Cindy Harden of Harden Van Arnam is currently finalizing the design. Harden Van Arnam is an innovator of supportive housing design in New York City. Preparations for the ground floor are ongoing. Praxis management has created a Citizens Advisory Board to help devise a plan for the ground floor space that works for residents, funders and the community. Ground-breaking is anticipated to occur within 18-24 months.

In 2009, Praxis Housing purchased the Lincoln Hotel in Crown Heights Brooklyn, the first property Praxis has owned and operated. Praxis had been renting this property since 1999. It currently houses 40 residents in individual rooms sponsored by HRA (Human Resources Administration).

## *Getting Involved in Albany*



*Pictured: Praxis CAB Members*

This past month has been a busy one for Praxis CAB Members. Several CAB members have made numerous trips to Albany in support of legislation.

CAB Member and Praxis stipend worker, Ramon Valasquez met with State Senator Ruben Diaz regarding the Campaign to End Prison-Based Gerrymandering. As a formerly incarcerated person, Ramon is prepared to voice his support for this legislation.

The current census process counts incarcerated individuals as residents of the prison in which they are held, rather than their home district. This means that the census numbers for upstate are inflated with those incarcerated in those communities. And in turn, these districts receive disproportionate voting power. With the average stay for incarceration being 34 months, these people do return to their homes, and therefore it is inaccurate to count them as upstate residents in the census. While census numbers do not effect funding, it does effect democracy through voting power.

Senator Eric T. Schneiderman and Assemblyman Hakeem Jefferies are sponsors of this legislation.

The Rent Cap Bill was also on slate for the State Senate Finance Committee in February. CAB Member Michele Alexander and CAB President James Dean have also visited Albany several times to support this HIV/AIDS Housing Bill. The bill caps monthly rent payments for New York City HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA) clients at 30% of their monthly income. The bill is important to many New Yorkers living with the virus as housing is essential for people receiving treatment to live in a stable environment and maintain their health regimen.

## ***Praxis People***

In an ongoing series, we'll be highlighting the educational success of our staff. Each person profiled received five questions, which they graciously answered. This month, we meet Darnell Bennett and Jovana Liranzo from the St. Nicholas. Both Darnell and Jovana are working full time and attending university.

***Darnell Bennett is part of the overnight Residential Staff of the St. Nicholas.***

### **What is your job at Praxis and when did you start?**

My job title at Praxis is Residential Staff. I sanitize bathrooms, mop, sweep floors, paint and pull garbage. I started at Praxis on November 4, 2005.

### **What degree are you pursuing and how long before you graduate?**

The degree I'm pursuing is Health and Administration. It will give me the ability to deal with new patients intake and establish patient assessments. It is also about how to follow-up on medical records, etc. Health administration also requires how to put procedures and codes into medical software as medical billing and transaction of payments. I will finish school on May 30th.

### **Is it hard to work overnight while attending school?**

Yes, it's hard because it will take a lot of wear and tear out of the body, especially the mind. Also, the hours you may have to attend school is hard because you may need sleep.

### **Once you get your degree, what do you hope to do with it?**

#1, I will be happy that I achieved it. I will most likely pursue my career in Health Administration. After my externship, I will have a better knowledge of my skills.

### **What motivated you to go back to school?**

It's a long story. I was walking on 34th Street going to Macy's when a gentleman came up to me and asked if I wanted college information. I said no, and the gentleman kept asking. He convinced me to talk to a representative about the ASA school. So I went home and thought for days about going back to school. I realized it was the best thing to do plus I had a lot of free time. So it was best to use it wisely in furthering my education.

***Jovana Liranzo recently reached her ten year mark here at Praxis. She currently works as a Case Worker at the St. Nicholas.***

### **What is your job at Praxis and when did you start?**

My job at Praxis is a Case Worker. I was hired at Praxis on February 2, 2000 as a residential staff worker at the Riverside Hotel and was promoted a year later to Case Worker.

### **What made you decide on criminal justice and how long do you have left before you get it? Also, can you tell us a little more about studying criminal justice?**

I decided to study criminal justice because the field is interesting. I would like to assist first time offenders with learning how to interpret the law. Many first time offenders make the wrong decisions and being incarcerated without any knowledge of the system, and plead guilty to a crime. What also interests me about criminal justice is learning the law and the language of law. Also, there are many employment opportunities in the field of criminal justice. I will earn my degree on criminal justice in August 2010.

### **Is it hard work full time and go to school?**

Yes it is very difficult to work full time and attend school full time. I am also a mother of four children and that is also a full time job. I'm employed at the St. Nicholas Hotel Monday – Friday and attend the college campus Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. I also take two classes online.

### **Once you get your degree, what do you hope to do with it?**

Once I earn my degree, I will apply my new found knowledge and hopefully expand my wings in Praxis by utilizing and combining my old and new skills. My goal is to continue assisting individuals who are in need of advocacy.

### **What motivated you to go back to school?**

This is a very interesting question because what motivated me to return to school was working at Praxis. I mentioned before I have been working for the last ten at Praxis and due to the lack of credentials I haven't been able to grow within the agency. I needed to make the difference for the kids and myself. When I was transferred to the St. Nicholas Hotel from the Riverside I was welcomed into the St. Nicholas. Upon having a first supervision with Site Director Ms. Jasmin Echevarria, I was asked a very important question and that question was why are you still a Case Worker? I answered the question by telling her that I didn't have a degree and she suggested that I consider going back to school, which further motivated me. Recently, I was awarded a Monroe Scholarship of \$500 towards my next semester if I maintain a high GPA.

## ***Congratulations!***

We'd like to congratulate the following people for their dedication to Praxis. Sylvia Correa, Jovana Liranzo, and Janae Martinez have now been with Praxis for 10 years. Thank you all for your hard work!

## ***HR FYI...***

The Employee Assistance Program provided by AETNA is available to all employees and is confidential. Please contact 1-888-238-6232 for information.