

SINERGIA

E-Newsletter



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We Need You!

Please help Sinergia extend its mission to serve persons with disabilities and their families. We need your contributions more than ever!

January/2010

The staff and Board of Directors of Sinergia wish everyone a New Year filled with good health and happiness. We are pleased to announce that at the end of January we will relocate our offices to 2082 Lexington Avenue at 126th Street in East Harlem. We look forward to a fresh start in our new location, closer to the individuals and families we serve. To mark the occasion, we are planning an open house and ribbon cutting event in early Spring. Once we've set the date we'll let everyone know.

We are very fortunate that we will celebrate and beautify our new space with a loan from the works of Samuel Lind, a noted Puerto Rican artist whose creative force captures the African based experience of the island. The exhibit, entitled: **Aires de Loiza: Culture & Nature: A Retrospective of the Work of Samuel Lind**, is made possible through the generosity of the artist and the [Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute](#). A very special thank you goes to Marta Moreno Vega, Executive Director of the Caribbean Cultural Center and to Dianne Smith, artist and Board member of Sinergia who will shepherd our gallery space as a place which honors our rich, cultural and artistic heritage and celebrates artists with disabilities as well as community artists.



(Photo: Samuel Lind)

FAST Project

Join us in our efforts by sending a tax deductible donation. Call 212-643-2840 or visit our [website](#).

H1N1 News Alert

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has released a new statement announcing that people with certain disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, are at risk of contracting the 2009 H1N1 flu and should be considered in the priority group to receive the H1N1 vaccine. In addition, the announcement also clarified that direct support professionals and "others" in constant contact with individuals with disabilities -- including parent caregivers -- are in the priority group to receive the vaccine as well.

Useful links:
[Information from the CDC on prevention and treatment specifically for people with disabilities.](#)

The latest updates on the H1N1 flu, the CDC hotline (which offers information in English and Spanish) and even a "Myths & Facts" column that separates H1N1 truths from rumors from [The New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council](#)

www.flu.gov

2010 Census - Be Counted!

Every ten years the U.S. government conducts a

Sinergia, in collaboration with the [PACER Center](#), recently launched the FAST Initiative, a Project of National Significance with funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD). It will focus on the development of culturally competent "Family Leadership and Systems Change" and "Family Supports and the Transition to Adulthood" training modules to increase the capacity of families and their children to become self-advocates. The first phase of the collaboration took place in December. It involved conducting focus group discussions with five parent support groups at Sinergia for feedback from underserved and underrepresented families of children with disabilities.



Each focus group was conducted in Spanish, and facilitated by a Sinergia staff person that was familiar to and had the trust of the participants. The groups were held on weekdays at different times of the day and lasted for two hours. Facilitators were provided with a set of open ended questions that were asked of each focus group and recorded.

The question categories were:

Outreach/Communication Strategies

Goal: effectively inform on the availability of training and involve families

Follow-up

Goal: participation in follow-up survey 3 months after training

Employment

Goal: Understand how cultural issues may influence expectations for employment for persons with disabilities

Sexuality

Goal: Understand how sexuality or puberty is addressed in the family and what specific concerns or considerations families have related to their son or daughter's disability

Advocating for Your Own Family & Strategies for System Change

Goal: Understand comfort level, reservations, and knowledge families have about advocating and systems change

[Sample questions and answers from focus groups held at Sinergia:](#)

census of how many people live in the country. The government also collects information about where people live, what jobs they do, education level, etc. The census will be used to determine how much funding the state and local communities get from the federal government for important federal, state, and local programs and services. For example, in 2006 New York State and its localities received over \$31 Billion from the federal government which came to over \$1,600 per resident. This money goes to programs supporting a wide range of community needs such as firefighters, education, and food and housing for the poor. Getting an accurate count is the only way to ensure that we receive the level of services our tax dollars are going to pay for and that we have the proper level of representation in government. The census forms will be mailed out in March 2010 and it is important for everyone to do their part by filling them out accurately once they are received.

For more info visit:

[New York State Data Center](#)
and
[US Census 2010](#)

[Special Ed Mediation](#)

Special education mediation is a process in which parents of children with disabilities and school districts meet with a neutral person, a mediator to work out

Question: What type of trainings appeal to you?

"A workshop to prepare parents for their children's independence - for those parents having difficulty letting go"

Question: What would be the most successful way of gaining your participation in a survey 3 months after training to find out if the information was helpful?

"Internet - we need to know how to use the internet because our children know how to use it and we must be able to supervise them and we need to get the knowledge"

Question: What do you think your son or daughter will be doing as an adult?

"My daughter will be an artist or dancer because she is talented artistically"

Question: Have you seen or known of people with disabilities who are in relationships?

"I have seen normal people in a relationship, the thought of my child being in a relationship concerns me because I don't want him being taken advantage of"

Question: Have you ever needed to speak on your child's behalf to an educator or professional?

"Yes"

Please email us at information@sinergiany.org if you're interested in participating in upcoming focus group sessions.

Preparing for the IEP Review

Every student who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must have an annual review. Annual reviews are typically held at the school level between **March** and **May** and are convened to determine if the annual goals for your student are being achieved, and to plan for the upcoming school year. As a parent you should be well prepared to attend and to actively participate in your son or daughter's annual review.

Why should I attend the IEP Meeting?

Parent attendance at the IEP meeting is important because decisions will be made about the special education, placement, classification and related services your son/daughter will receive as a part of their individualized education program. These decisions should not be made without your participation. If you don't attend the meeting, these decisions will be made without your input. Remember as a parent you are an equal partner of the IEP team and your concerns and information about your child must be considered, so your attendance is vital.

What do I need to do to prepare for the annual IEP meeting?

differences in a collaborative way. Disputes may arise relating to the identification, evaluation, educational placement or the provision of a free appropriate public education to a student with a disability. The mediator helps the participants listen to each other's views, and then assists in developing mutually satisfactory solutions. Both parties are involved in finding a workable solution. Mediation is a confidential voluntary process where the focus is on collaboration and communication, with emphasis on the student's needs. Mediation is a highly effective process to resolve issues relating to special education. In 2008-09, of those cases that proceeded to the mediation session, 96% resulted in agreement between parents and school districts. For more information on the mediation process, visit the [New York State Dispute Resolution Association](#).

NY Disabilities Film Festival



REAL ABILITIES
NY DISABILITIES
FILM FESTIVAL

The 2nd annual ReelAbilities: NY Disabilities Film Festival

is dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of the lives, stories and artistic expressions of people living with different disabilities. This year the festival will present award

A. Collect and review the following information:

- a. Current IEP
- b. Report card
- c. State assessment information
- d. Medical or educational evaluations within the last year
- e. Other information important to the education of your student

B. Determine what your educational goals are for your son/daughter

C. Know your child's strengths

D. Know how your son/daughter's disability impacts their learning and functioning at school

How will I know when the meeting is scheduled?

As a parent you must be informed of the meeting in writing at least five days in advance.

What do I do when I receive the meeting notice?

Read the notice carefully, it will have the meeting date, time and location along with other information.

What if I can't attend the meeting the date and time it is scheduled?

Immediately contact the school to reschedule a convenient date and time.

Can I participate in the meeting by phone?

Yes, but you must inform the school you want to participate by phone prior to the meeting date.

Our January, February and March newsletters will include information and tips to support parents in participating in their child's annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) review. In February we will discuss:

- What you should expect at the IEP meeting
- Important sections of the IEP that must be reviewed

Early Childhood Resources

winning films in various locations throughout the NY metropolitan area.

Discussions and other engaging programs will bring together the community to explore, discuss and celebrate the diversity of our shared human experience.

Please visit www.reelabilities.org for full festival schedule and ticket purchase information. Mention Sinergia and get a **discounted rate of \$8 per ticket.**

Call 646-505-5708 for the box office.

Aid for Students

If you're interested in obtaining information regarding the availability of colleges and financial aid resources, take a look at "[Disability-Friendly Colleges: A Guide for Students with Physical Disabilities.](#)" This online resource contains interactive charts and profiles of the colleges that provide services necessary for students with physical disabilities to live on campus.

For information on financial aid and scholarships, visit the [New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council's Monthly Update.](#)

Many Thanks!

As a parent, you are your child's very first and favorite playmate. Your baby needs you to help him/her learn to play and develop social skills to connect and build friendships with others. Playtime is special. Playing together with your child is not only fun, but a critical time to support your baby or toddler's healthy development. [Click here for a list of play skills appropriate for each age](#) from The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at Vanderbilt University.



Developmental Disabilities Services Update



On September 24, 2009, the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (NYS OMRDD) received approval from the Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to continue to operate the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver for another five-year renewal period, through September 30, 2014. In addition, OMRDD is planning to increase the types and amounts of services that can take place in the homes of individuals rather than in residential facilities. This effort will help to make it possible for individuals with disabilities to remain in their own homes while still receiving the benefit of some services that, to this point, had only been available to individuals living in OMRDD certified residential settings. As always, the initiatives are designed to foster an individual's independence and to help them become more active and participatory members of their communities.

To read the full article on the new waiver services offered [visit our blog.](#)

For more information about the new waiver initiatives please feel free to call Michael Mitchell at Sinergia (212-643-2840, ext, 335) or visit the [OMRDD website.](#)

Congrats to Dr. Torres!

Sinergia is so proud to announce the induction of Dr. Len Torres, Vice President of Sinergia's Board of Directors, as the **first Latino city council member to serve on the Long Beach City Council** in the city's 87-year history. Several board members, the executive Director and friends of Sinergia were very pleased to attend his inauguration on Sunday, January 3, 2010.



Dr. Torres has demonstrated a deep and abiding commitment to the mission of Sinergia. He is a distinguished educator who has been a classroom teacher, principal, dean of students, coordinator of



Our deepest appreciation to our sponsors the NYS Sanitation Department M7, the John Catsimitidis Family and Broadview Networks for a wonderful Children's Christmas Party. More than 250 gifts were given away, over 300 people attended and we had great food and entertainment. [Click here](#) to see a video clip and photo album. Many thanks to all who attended and made it such a special evening!

bilingual/ESL programs, superintendent and Deputy Superintendent in Puerto Rico, the Bronx, Roosevelt and Hempstead.

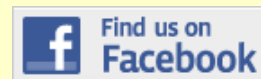
The city of Long Beach is very fortunate to have someone of the caliber of Len Torres. His character, knowledge and dedication to quality education for children is exemplary. To coin a phrase from one of our sister agencies, "*Len es lo mejor de nuestra comunidad*".

(Photo: Newsday)

Let's Get Social!

Visit our blog, Sinergia's "[La Esquinita](#)", or [Li'l Corner](#) and let's start the dialogue!

Also connect with us at [Sinergia's Facebook Page](#). Become a fan and keep up to date with the latest happenings.



About Us

Sinergia, Spanish for synergy, is a 501(c)(3) community based, multi-service organization. Since 1977 we have provided advocacy services and linked families of children with disabilities to services that matched their needs. Our mission is to enhance the well being of individuals and families through the human services delivery system(s), with particular concentration on those "special populations" that have traditionally experienced difficulty in accessing human services. Those "special populations" include, without limitation, persons with disabilities, disadvantaged, Latino, African American, Native American and or migrant. Sinergia has a reputation for decades of working with "underserved families, many with limited English proficiency, African American, homeless and families experiencing poverty.

You can find more information at www.sinergiany.org.

Please visit us soon!