



# WSFSSH Highlights 2013

*“The ache for home lives in all of us”—Maya Angelou*

## STEWARDS OF OUR BUILDINGS

As owner and operator of 26 buildings, WSFSSH is committed to safe and affordable housing today and for the future. Part of that commitment involves maintaining and upgrading our physical buildings.

**RENOVATIONS** This year two major renovation projects near completion, a total rehab of our newest building, Borinquen Court in the Bronx and moderate rehab of the Westbourne, a building WSFSSH began to occupy in 1987. In both projects, tenant living spaces and common areas were upgraded, with new windows, boiler upgrades, and significant redesign of key areas.



*Facade detail at the Marseilles*

The exteriors of Marseilles, Red Oak, Kowal House, Euclid Hall, Fleming House, and 129th Street have been inspected, repaired and repointed; interior upgrades took place at these buildings and at The Center @ the Red Oak and 74th Street.

## TWENTY-FOUR SEVEN BUILDING SUPPORT

The daily maintenance and upkeep of each building is vitally important. At right is a photo of WSFSSH supers who assure the daily safety and operation of all 26 WSFSSH buildings. At right, the supers and one building manager, with certificates of completion for a series of classes in preparation for FDNY certification.



## BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY AND LIVING GREEN

In addition to infrastructure upgrades (more efficient boilers, energy efficient lighting, green roofs at several buildings and a solar roof at one building), tenants at WSFSSH are planting gardens, reducing and recycling trash, and conserving electricity and water.

## THREE SPECIAL ANNIVERSARIES



We celebrated three important milestones at WSFSSH this year. In May, Valley Lodge, WSFSSH’s transitional shelter for 92 homeless older persons had their 25th anniversary. In August, Fania Gersham House marked 25 years of welcoming people home to its 28 senior apartments. In November, John and Carroll Kowal House and the 72 tenants celebrated its 25th anniversary as one of the first models of how SRO housing can be done right!

## SOCIAL SERVICES & HEALTH CARE CHANGES

Social services have been part of every WSFSSH building since our first building, the Marseilles, opened in 1980. In the current climate of health care reform most of the gravest social service challenges come from the health care system.

For many of our residents, connecting to health care has always been a challenge. However, now it is even more difficult to negotiate the maze of insurance choices (from managed care to Medicare Part D), the radically reduced access to home care, and increasingly crowded and complicated clinic systems.

WSFSSH seasoned social workers and caseworkers advocate for and with residents. “We need these services, we need these medications!” They help residents connect to needed services, and to cope with the anxiety that these new systems engender.

Nina Kimchi, Euclid tenant of blessed memory, painted the tree that is our masthead.

*The Center @ the Red Oak Director Micki Navarro with artist and Center member Jose Bonfantino and the portrait he painted. Sr. Bonfantino mentors other Center artists.*



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## A POIGNANT ANNIVERSARY

On May 3rd, we celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Valley Lodge. **In these 25 years, 1,617 persons have come through the Valley Lodge doors and left us for permanent housing.** Alumni know that if they are in any kind of trouble, even though they are no longer residents of Valley Lodge, they have a place to return, for help in figuring out whatever new problem or challenge they are facing.



When the WSFSSH Board of Directors created Valley Lodge, they decided that it would be the only shelter that WSFSSH would operate. This is based on the firm conviction that WSFSSH wanted to be in the business of providing permanent housing and that shelter, while extremely important, is not a solution to the problem of homelessness. All of our housing since 1988 has been informed by the experiences and the lessons we have learned from our Valley Lodge residents.

This is a poignant anniversary as well. In 1988, we never dreamed that 25 years later we would still be operating a shelter for older adults who are homeless. And yet, today, 25 years later, we find ourselves with an even greater challenge and even more persons homeless than we could have ever imagined. Today there are 57,000 children, women and men in New York City who do not have permanent homes.

We continue to work to house as many people as we can and to do so in interdependent community settings in safety and in dignity. And we continue to advocate for more housing that will meet the needs of the many who today are homeless. This is why WSFSSH is part of a new coalition: ***United to End Homelessness***. It is a coalition of coalitions and organizations which have been at the forefront of providing services and advocacy for those who are without a stable safe place to call home. As we daily assure the well-being of the tenants in our WSFSSH buildings, we must also work to allay the life-threatening circumstances of all those who remain unhoused. Direct services and advocacy must go hand in hand.



Part of the group from WSFSSH and Valley Lodge who attended the **United to End Homelessness** rally on the steps of City Hall in April.

Together with the 2000 people who are WSFSSH, we thank you for your support .

Sheldon J. Fine, President

Laura R. Jervis, Executive Director

## CURRENT EVENTS GROUP AT 129TH STREET

The Current Events Group has been a vibrant part of 129th St. Residence since August, 1999.

The group learns about issues within our local communities, country, and the world through active discussions, newspapers and documentaries.

In addition to learning about issues,

they also act.

Locally they visit residents in the hospital and keep them up to date on what's happening at home. Internationally, in concern about hunger, members contribute money so the group can be a regular sponsor of the Feed The Children.

