



More than 400 residents, family, friends, and staff enjoyed the 10th semi-annual "Friends and Family" luncheon at the Riverdale Manor Home for Adults. Art and writing workshops encourage personal expression that is an essential part of the recovery process and are among the case management, clinical treatment, and rehabilitation services provided by F·E·G·S

## BRINGING SERVICES HOME TO THE RESIDENTS OF RIVERDALE MANOR

### F·E·G·S ON-SITE PROGRAMS CREATE A THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS COPING WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

*"My pen is an extension of my thoughts. With it in hand and a blank page as a canvass, we create a mural in words."*

Peter P.  
Riverdale Manor Resident

That sage observation – written by Peter P., a resident of Riverdale Manor Home for Adults, a private home in the Bronx for individuals coping with serious mental health issues, for which F·E·G·S provides a range of on-site social services – reflects the feelings of many individuals who took part in an F·E·G·S-sponsored writing workshop at the home. Peter's thoughts, on a range of subjects, became part of a recently published anthology featuring works by nine members of the writing group.



The Family & Friends event encourages residents to reconnect and re-establish relationships with loved ones.

The anthology was introduced at a recent *Friends & Family* event that F·E·G·S has sponsored semi-annually for the past five years at Riverdale Manor – an event that aims to reconnect and reunite residents to family members and friends with whom they have lost touch because of their long-term illness. More than 400 people attended.

#### CREATING A THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

Both the writing group and the *Friends & Family* events are part of the comprehensive array of services that F·E·G·S brings to the facility's residents, noted Nanette McLain, Director of F·E·G·S Rehabilitation Services for Riverdale Manor. "Our aim," she continued, "is to create a culture of recovery within a therapeutic community for

residents who, because of their serious emotional problems or psychiatric disabilities, have often lived marginal lives that prevented their participation in the larger community."

F·E·G·S delivers case management, clinic treatment, and rehabilitation services to Riverdale Manor's 256 residents. A multi-disciplinary staff provides screening, evaluation, verbal and medication therapies, rehabilitation, and case management support to help residents remain psychologically stable and to develop the skills necessary for successful integration into the larger community.



Riverdale Manor residents created a special mural which encouraged team cooperation and served as the backdrop for the Family & Friends event.

The *Friends & Family* event achieves several goals, according to Sarah McMullian, Coordinator of F·E·G·S On-Site Rehabilitation Services at Riverdale Manor. "There is the obvious social benefit of residents re-establishing relationships, something that is essential to the recovery process. There are other tangible benefits, as well." McMullian explained that when a resident was reluctant to get a vital mammogram, she contacted the resident's brother, who visited and convinced his sister to go through with the procedure. "That direct family connection can prove to be life-saving in many situations," she said.



David Surface, writer-in-residence, worked one-on-one with residents to create a booklet of inspired writings which was published and shared with family and friends.

#### TREATING PARTICIPANTS LIKE REAL WRITERS

"The writing group is another special vehicle that helps residents on the road to recovery," McMullian stated.

David Surface, a well-known writer and teacher who led the group, explained that his approach was to treat group members like "real writers, rather than viewing writing as an exercise that is part of a clinical treatment plan." The result, said Surface, "is that, in addition to being a creative outlet, the writing group ultimately provided many cognitive, social, and emotional benefits to the participants."

Geraldine P., a member of the writing group, stated, "[F·E·G·S] has pushed us and brought out the best in us. It helps me say, 'Me? Did I do that?'"

"Writing takes creativity and imagination, but it also takes more than that – it takes concentration, dedication, hard work, and more than a little bit of courage," said Surface, who has worked with F·E·G·S for four years as part of an artist-in-residence program through the F·E·G·S Haym Salomon Division of the Arts. He so enjoyed working with the Riverdale Manor residents that, when the original grant ended, Surface personally sought a grant from the Readings/Workshops Program at Poets & Writers, Inc., underwritten by funds from the Literature Program of the New York State Council on the Arts, so that he could continue the writing group.

#### CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF HOPE AND RECOVERY

"Collaborating with the operators of the Riverdale Manor Home for Adults and in partnership with the New York State Office of Mental Health and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, F·E·G·S helps to create an atmosphere of hope and recovery for some of New York's most vulnerable citizens," said Amy Dorin, Senior Vice President for F·E·G·S Behavioral Health Services. "Through our on-site programs F·E·G·S helps people move on to more independent housing, connect to long lost family members and strive for independence."



The dedicated F·E·G·S staff of the Riverdale Manor assist the 256 residents on their journey to recovery.

#### MOVING FROM "WHY ME?" TO "WHY NOT ME?"

The ultimate goal is to change a resident's mindset from a sense of despair and frustration to one that embraces the possibilities of change. "It's the difference between saying "Why me?" and believing "Why not me?" In the final analysis, said McMullian, "When you start to see people, and not disease, everything changes." ■

#### VOLUNTEER – MAKE A DONATION

If you would like to volunteer at the Riverdale Manor, helping residents connect to the community, call Karen Zuckerman at F·E·G·S Volunteer Services at 212.366.8228 or click on the *Volunteer Now* button.



You can support F·E·G·S programs, such as the one at Riverdale Manor, and other services F·E·G·S offers by donating online. Your contribution is valued and needed and we pledge to continue to be here for the community to provide the highest quality of service to those most in need. To donate on the internet, click on the *Donate Now* button.



Visit [www.fegs.org](http://www.fegs.org) to learn more about F·E·G·S programs.

F·E·G·S Health and Human Services Systems, one of the largest and most diversified not-for-profit health and human service organizations in the country, serves more than 100,000 people each year at 350 locations throughout New York City and Long Island. The Agency's extensive service delivery network includes programs in the fields of behavioral health, developmental disabilities, rehabilitation, education & youth services, employment & workforce development, family services, residential & housing services and home healthcare. F·E·G·S, its subsidiaries, and infrastructure companies also provide a range of technical assistance, capacity building and management consulting services to nonprofit, public, and private sector organizations nationally and internationally.