

New Seguin group home opens in Lombard

Lombard has six new residents, thanks to Seguin Services, a Cicero-based non-profit organization that works with individuals who have developmental disabilities.

The newly built home, located at 708 E. Berkshire, is called the Nakroshis House, after Tony and Estelle Nakroshis of Homer Glen—whose son T.J. has been a Seguin client for over 26 years—made a donation of an undisclosed sum of money toward the home's construction.

At a dedication of the home on Thursday, May 16, the Nakroshises were in attendance, along with families of the six men who call the Berkshire Avenue residents home. Also in attendance was a representative for the late Dolores Nowicki who, through her estate, made a \$50,000 donation that helped purchase the land where the house was built.

According to Seguin, Nowicki was a frugal woman who never married, had no children and cared for her aging parents, as well as spent time volunteering to help others.

John Voit, chairman and CEO of Seguin Services, related at the



Photos by Jane Charmelo

SEGUIN SERVICES OPENED the Nakroshis House in Lombard for six developmentally disabled adults. In the top photo, James Haptonstahl, senior vice president of the Seguin Foundation, presents Tony and Estelle Nakroshis with a portrait of the house, named in honor of their donation, as Seguin Board of Directors President and Treasurer Joseph Pedersen looks on. The lower left photo shows the home's living room. There is a significant need for housing and residential support for individuals with developmental disabilities—roughly 2,000 persons in DuPage County alone are awaiting essential services.

dedication how the agency spent some \$420,000 on the house, and that in

addition to the donation from the Nakroshises, the agency received a loan from United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago, as well as proceeds from fundraisers and donations.

Joseph Pedersen, president and treasurer of the Seguin Services Board of Directors, publicly thanked Nowicki's representative and the Nakroshises as well, saying that there is "a tremendous need for this kind of housing," because of the number of aging baby boomers who need to know their adult children with developmental disabilities will be cared for when they are not able to do so anymore.

The Nakroshis family, he added, "represents families across America."

According to James Haptonstahl, senior vice president of the Seguin Foundation, it costs as much as \$190,000 annually to care for a developmentally disabled adult living in an institution, whereas it costs as much as 40 percent less to house them in a residential group home.

The state pays as much as 80 percent of those costs to Seguin Services, he continued, and the residents—who typically receive Supplemental Security Income, or SSI—pay all but \$50 toward their room and board. Proceeds from fundraisers, as well as grants and donations, pay the difference.

The six men who live in the house had been part of a state waiting list, Haptonstahl related, adding that choosing the residents for the new home was "an arduous process."

In building the Lombard house, "We were looking for an opportunity to expand our services," he continued, adding that the location was ideal in part because it is in "a warm and welcoming community like Lombard," and also because the residents receive day services at nearby Seguin Climb, housed in Villa Park's Easter Seals building, where they participate in life skills training, enrichment activities and other training.

"The families want them to be active," Haptonstahl emphasized.

The state-of-the-art home—which is staffed in rotating shifts—has three bedrooms on each floor, and has been adapted to fit the needs of the residents, such as lower countertops and wider hallways and doorways to allow for

wheelchair accessibility.

A track that runs along the ceilings on the main floor helps those with mobility issues, the appliances are designed for ease of use and a sprinkler system is installed throughout the house. According to Haptonstahl, Seguin Services has three other homes with a similar design.

Right now, the residents are "getting to know each other," he mentioned, adding, "We found that the people tend to adjust."

Diane Stone of Naperville was helping her son Eric, 20, move in, and said of Seguin Services that she found them to be "very like-minded" with her vision of care for adults with developmental disabilities. Her son's room looks like a typical young adult's room, with photos of trains on the walls and personal items adorning his dresser.

"This is something I always wanted for Eric," she said, especially his being able to live with others his own age.

It took "lots of planning, lots of questions" to make sure Eric would have a chance to live in a group home, added Stone.

"We really appreciate having family involved," Haptonstahl emphasized, "more for the person moving in."

Of the Nakroshis house, he said it is "a dream become reality for the young men who are residents here and their families."

Seguin Services serves 628 clients, and has a number of programs that serve to "integrate, enrich and empower" their lives. Located at 3100 S. Central Ave., Cicero, information is available at www.seguin.org or 708-863-3803 (TTY 708-863-7653).

