

BRONX *Times***BRONX** *Times***GOVERNEUR PLACE APARTMENTS PROVIDES NEW SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IN MORRISANIA**

Gouverneur Place Apts. open in Morrisania



Photo by Silvio Pacifico

Elected officials, Westhab executives and their partners cut the ribbon for the grand opening of the Gouverneur Place Apartments.

By Robert Christie
Bronx Times

Bronx residents and elected officials gathered on Thursday, April 20 for a ribbon cutting to celebrate the new Gouverneur Place Apartments.

The 68-unit building, at 450 Gouverneur Place, has set aside 50 units for formerly homeless individuals who are dealing with mental health issues.

The remaining 18 units are reserved as affordable housing. According to Westhab, Inc. – a non-profit organization and owner of the Gouverneur Place Apartments – all the units are filled.

The building offers a variety of housing options starting with studios, along with 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom apartments.

In addition, there are amenities on site which include a computer lounge, community room, laundry room, bike storage, an outdoor courtyard, recreation area, and onsite support staff.

Richard Nightingale, president of Westhab, said supportive housing helps take away some of the stigma

attached to homeless people dealing with mental health issues.

“Supportive housing recognizes that a lot of people [dealing with mental health issues] can do well independently and can function in a community setting - they just need some support,” said Nightingale.

He added that he was pleased to hear stories from the some of the tenants now living in the apartments.

For example, tenant Dawn Miller lived at the Olivieri Drop-In Center in Manhattan for two years prior to moving into the Gouverneur Place Apartments.

“I was really feeling hopeless and depressed - not feeling like I could get back on my feet as far as work or housing or anything,” said Miller. “So when I got the call at the end of November it really lifted my spirit.”

Jeffrey Dantzler, who grew up in New York, was also staying at a drop-in center prior to getting his own apartment.

Dantzler said it was sometimes hard at the shelter because some of the homeless individuals would not shower and - due to state law - center employees could not force them to shower.

Prior to the drop in center, Dantzler stayed with friends and families.

He took issue with the stereotypes associated with homeless people.

“Every homeless person didn’t become homeless the same way,” he said.

Dantzler said he didn’t walk around dirty or beg people for money.

“I just didn’t have a home,” he said.

He said it’s been a “great transition” going from two chairs in the shelter to his own apartment.

“I can deal with my depression better, I’m eating better and I’m not as stressed as much,” he said.

Kristina Reed was staying at Susan’s Place - a shelter for women dealing with mental illness - before coming to the Gouverneur Place Apartments.

While there she attended the Nontraditional Employment for Women’s school and got a job in the real estate industry.

“Working in real estate made my mental illness exasperate,” said Reed. “After I graduated I just didn’t want to work anymore.”

Reed said staying at the shelter added to her problems.

“I’m just really thankful I have a place of my own,” she said.

Gouverneur Place Apartments now has a waiting list, according to Westhab.

The \$20.7 million project was funded largely through a public and private partnership between various state agencies and United Healthcare.

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Posted 12:00 am, May 3, 2017

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