

## Neighbor of the Year: Sgt. Acu Rhodes, 84th Precinct, Brooklyn, NY, Neighbor of Services for the Underserved's Majestic

Any neighborhood would be lucky to have someone like Acu Rhodes patrolling their streets. He's a 10-year veteran of the NYPD, a sergeant at the 84th Precinct in Brooklyn—and an unofficial guardian angel for the tenants of the Majestic, a Services for the Underserved supportive residence for 53 adults diagnosed with serious mental illness.

The Majestic staff and tenants know him to be a respectful, enthusiastic and dedicated officer who has worked closely with the staff and consumers since the building opened in 1996. Sgt. Rhodes makes sure that emergencies and crises are handled in a timely, appropriate manner and has even personally escorted tenants to the emergency room for medical and psychiatric treatment. His charismatic personality encourages tenants to trust him, a quality that has enabled Sgt. Rhodes to convince some people to get treatment after years of resistance.

Some of the Majestic tenants feel so trusting toward Sgt. Rhodes that they personally call him to discuss their problems, personal or otherwise. One tenant who was having suicidal thoughts called Sgt. Rhodes, who came to the building, informed the staff and took the tenant to the hospital, most likely saving the tenant's life.

With all the accolades he's received, Sgt. Rhodes is humble about his work. He says, "I enjoy being a police

officer and I don't consider it going above and beyond the call of duty to do these things. I find that people really appreciate it when you listen to them and that's what I do."

The Supportive Housing Network of New York congratulates Sgt. Rhodes on his dedication and commitment to the tenants of the Majestic. We are proud to name him a Supportive Housing Neighbor of the Year.

## Neighbor of the Year: Town of Islip and the West Sayville Civic Association, Neighbors of Pollack Gardens, a project of Concern for Independent Living

In many areas, local civic associations and community boards provide the primary opposition to developing new affordable housing. But in the case of Concern for Independent Living's Pollack Gardens, an outstanding new supportive residence in West Sayville, Long Island, the project would not have moved forward without the help and support of the West Sayville Civic Association (WSCA) and the Town of Islip Community Board.

After hearing about the proposal to build Pollack Gardens, Brendan McCurdy, President of WSCA, didn't object; instead he called Concern to learn more about both the agency and the program. He brought the information back to WSCA and convinced its members to support the project, a ground up, gut rehabilitation conversion of a run-down adult home. His wife Maura updated neighbors about the progress of the project through the WSCA newsletter, expressing the view that supportive housing would be a positive addition to the community.

Equally important, the Town of Islip Community Board played a critical role in cutting through red tape to save the project's tax credit funding. Three months before the funding deadline, it was discovered that part of the property needed to be rezoned to get site plan approval. This process normally takes more than nine months.

Everyone said it was impossible to secure the necessary approvals in only three months and the project appeared doomed—everyone except Eugene Murphy, Planning Commissioner, and Hope Larson, who was then the Director of the Building Department.

The Town of Islip scheduled an emergency Town Board meeting one day before the deadline, something that had not been done in at least 25 years. Ten minutes after they unanimously passed the resolution, Hope Larson—who happened to be dressed as Wonder Woman for Halloween—issued the building permit. The very next day, Concern for Independent Living closed on the tax credit financing five minutes before the deadline.

The building opened a little over a year later, where it now provides a wonderful home to fifty individuals with psychiatric disabilities, thanks to the community leaders of West Sayville and Islip. The Network is pleased to honor Mr. McCurdy, Mr. Murphy and Ms. Larson as the Network's 2007 Neighbors of the Year.