

Project Self-Sufficiency Community Heroes—Linda Pinto



A large group gathered on the grounds of Project Self-Sufficiency's campus recently to dedicate a large sculpture to Linda Pinto, a task force member during Project Self-Sufficiency's early days as a program of the Sussex County Board of Social Services. The 8' foot tall, rusted steel piece was commissioned to commemorate Linda Pinto's years of service as the Executive Director at Knoll Properties, and to recognize her continued support of Project Self-Sufficiency, a non-profit agency which offers services for low-income families in northwestern New Jersey.

"I am the most difficult of people when it comes to being the center of attention," remarked Linda. When she learned that the Board of Directors at Knoll Properties intended to honor her for her years of service, she suggested that they donate the funds earmarked for a tribute to her to Project Self-Sufficiency instead. As one of the Project Self-Sufficiency's original Board Members during the 1980's, Linda noted, "There is not another non-profit in all-of-the-world who uses their resources for direct service that truly impacts the lives of their constituency more than Project Self-Sufficiency. My husband and I served on the original Board of Directors for Project Self-Sufficiency by virtue of the fact that we both worked for the Department of Community Affairs. I could see immediately that this was a very creative venture which brought the resources of the community together to support the entire person, and to be able to help them to stand on their own two feet. That's what Project Self-Sufficiency continues to do today."

The sculpture, which has been entitled "Lifting Each Other", depicts a family whose members are perched on each other's shoulders. "I am a former Franciscan nun, and when I saw the sculpture I was immediately reminded of the spirit of St. Francis in all of its aspects, because it lifts you up," commented Linda. "When the courageous men and women walk through those doors at Project Self-Sufficiency it will give them some sense that there is hope and that a better day is coming."

Jay Dunn, Board Member at Knoll Properties, noted that the sculpture was perfectly suited for display on the Project Self-Sufficiency campus, "We had seen this sculpture and thought it was representative of Project

Self-Sufficiency's mission, because it was so evocative of Project Self-Sufficiency and its family-oriented approach."

"Project Self-Sufficiency is honored to be the recipient of this beautiful piece of artwork," noted Project Self-Sufficiency's Executive Director Deborah Berry-Toon during the dedication ceremony. "But more importantly, we are delighted to have been on the receiving end of Linda's dedication to our mission of promoting family stability and economic self-sufficiency for low-income families for all of these years. Linda's presence in this community has been a gift to everyone who has come in contact with her, as a Board member at Project Self-Sufficiency, as Executive Director at Knoll Properties, and through her years as Chairman of the Human Services Advisory Committee in our area. We are honored to be here to dedicate this statue to her, and we hope that it will serve as a guiding light for our participants as they walk through our doors."

To volunteer, or to find out more about the programs and services offered at Project Self-Sufficiency, call 973-940-3500, or visit the agency's website, www.projectsselfsufficiency.org.



Family, friends and members of the staff and Board of Directors at Knoll Heights help to commemorate the "Lifting Each Other" sculpture dedicated to former Project Self-Sufficiency Board Member Linda Pinto on the Project Self-Sufficiency campus in Newton.

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