

## MORAVIAN OPEN DOOR

### *A Ministry of the Eastern District*

There are exciting new developments at Moravian Open Door (MOD), the transitional housing program in Manhattan for older homeless adults. The only urban ministry of the Moravian Church in the Eastern District, MOD provides safe, substance-free, and affordable housing for 41 residents and provides them with supportive services to rebuild their lives and obtain permanent independent housing. Each time a resident leaves MOD for independent living, there are many others waiting to fill that place.

At the beginning of this year, MOD welcomed a new caseworker, Desiree Barrett. She replaced caseworker Janell Martin, who changed positions in order to work closer to her home. Desiree works directly with clients to develop their individual service plans, obtain benefits, help with job search, and obtain section 8 housing vouchers. These vouchers are difficult to obtain, and prized by those who are granted them. They provide subsidies for rent in privately managed housing in New York. Darryl Williams, Executive Director of MOD, also works directly with clients on a day-to-

day basis, even accompanying them on interviews for an apartment.

In late 2008, MOD was the recipient of two grants — one from the private foundation IGH (In God's Hands) and one from the Guardian Life Insurance grant program for affordable housing. With this funding, MOD has established an on-site Life Skills Center. It is equipped with four computers and educational materials and will provide classes on such topics as financial literacy, healthy living, computer skills, preparing a resume, preparing for and keeping a job. For the first time, MOD's residents have internet access and email accounts. MOD is grateful for the many hours of work by volunteers and

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*Doris Schattschneider is a member of Advent Moravian Church, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and is Vice President of the Board of Directors of Moravian Open Door located at 347 East 18th Street, New York, New York, 10003. Photo above: Desiree Barrett works with a MOD client.*

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dedicated workers to transform an ordinary room into a special place. John Egerton did most of the physical installations (counter for computers, lighting, air conditioning, electrical work) and Allan Cole (Bethlehem) carried out the technical work of network and computer installations.

In March, a North East Moravian Disaster Response (NEMDR) team led a maintenance workshop at MOD for staff, interns, and some residents. As part of the instructional event, several repairs were carried out. Also, members of the NEMDR team did the initial cleanup and painting of the room that was to become the Life Skills Center.

In April, the Karpas Health Information Center (a branch of Beth Israel Medical Center) gave its free services for basic health screening of all MOD's residents; they are following up on an individual basis to assist residents with health issues. The Health Center is located across the street from MOD and frequently provides classes that address health issues. MOD looks forward to continued cooperation with them.

MOD has also been blessed with visits by several church groups for special meals, special gifts, and volunteer painting and minor repairs. Just in time for Christmas, the Schoeneck Moravian Church youth group brought a new Christmas tree; later they also brought books for residents. Castleton Hill Moravian Church brought individual Christmas gifts for residents at the annual Christmas party, and many churches have sent donations of personal supplies for residents, bedding, linens, and for maintenance of the building. These gifts in kind are very much appreciated and always welcome.

Every day we encounter discouraging news of the current economy, news of persons losing their jobs. Residents of MOD have been especially vulnerable; several have lost their jobs. To help these residents who often do not have enough to meet expenses and also buy food, MOD has established a food pantry. Several churches have responded to this need by providing special donations to buy non-perishable food items, or collecting and delivering such items.

In addition to these day-to-day challenges, MOD now faces the challenge of repair and replacement of original installations in the building that date from 1986. Last fall MOD's boiler had to be replaced; this unexpected large expense was met almost entirely by a generous grant from the United Brethren's Church on Staten Island and several other gifts from churches and individuals. Now all hall carpeting and stair treads need replacing, and the elevator needs upgrading.

MOD receives no government funding. Residents pay a modest monthly fee for housing and services, but MOD depends on contributions from individuals and congregations for almost one-third of its operating expenses. The annual appeal to members of Eastern District Moravian Churches and the special "No Room at the Inn" offerings by congregations during the Advent season as well as other special offerings and financial contributions make this important ministry possible. MOD's web site [www.moravianhouse.org](http://www.moravianhouse.org) has information about MOD's work, its current needs, information on visiting, and lots more. MOD is grateful to all those who support this ministry to help end homelessness and poverty, to rebuild dignity and self-sufficiency, one person at a time.