



**Main Story / 02.14.08**

## **NY State OASAS Awards Unity House's G.R.A.C.E. House Additional Funding**



Michele Leonello

**AUBURN** – The N.Y. State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) has awarded Unity House's G.R.A.C.E. House \$20,417 in additional state aid that the agency's chemical dependency recovery program and services will use to refurbish its community residence.

OASAS and the state awarded G.R.A.C.E. House the extra money at the end of 2007 after the program's director, Michele Leonello, submitted a funding request in November of that year to the Central NY OASAS Field Office, to replace a majority of the furniture at the 56

Osborne Street residential location in Auburn.

"We really needed to get new furniture throughout the residence," said Leonello, who recently celebrated her first year as G.R.A.C.E. House Director. "We started inventorying what we had and what we needed in September 2007. With the help of our Finance Department, I gathered some bids from some furniture vendors and wrote up a proposal with prices from one of those businesses and sent it on to the OASAS Syracuse office. It's great that we received the money, because we needed it so badly. It will go to replacing bedroom and living room sets in our individual and community living areas. A benefit of being able to get new furniture is we'll be able to retain some of what we're replacing in our residence and use it to replace other furniture needing replacement in our supportive apartments program."

Tom Davis, program specialist at the Central NY OASAS Field Office in Syracuse, said that the money awarded G.R.A.C.E. House was from a pool of unspent state aid that OASAS allocates to its provider community.

"Each year, the amount of this aid varies, and usually not all of it gets used," said Davis. "So, in November of each year, depending on what aid remains available, we ask providers to identify any one-time expenditures they could use the money for. Michele and Unity House identified furnishings that the G.R.A.C.E. House program needed.

"The awards process starts with the agency itself, and the program and service," he explained. "It has to meet certain standards to qualify. Our field office reviews agencies' requests, balances them against unspent money available, and sends recommendations to OASAS's central office in Albany. That office then confirms the funds are there for the purposes stated in the requests. We then notify the agencies that submitted the requests and they generate and send along their program budget change requests, then get the awards."

Davis added that every year OASAS encourages each of its providers to assess what its program and services need and whether it has the funding to provide them, and to petition their field office for any funding it needs.

“We want the programs and services to run well, and this is one way to help achieve that,” he said.

Leonello said the new furnishings, which arrived and were arranged at the community residence February 8, were part of her and her staff’s never-ending efforts to keep and maintain the clean, home-like atmosphere essential to the recovery of G.R.A.C.E. House consumers.

“Together with the entire interior of the residence being painted by Unity House’s maintenance department, the new furniture will ensure we have available to those recovering from chemical dependencies a superior, first-rate facility,” she said.