

summer 2004

Scholar of the Month Students Honored at Dinner Ceremony

A hundred Hartford high school students were surveyed and the top five answers are on the board. Here is your question: "What advice, that you have received, will you pass on to your children?" Steve Balcanoff, member of SINA's education committee and Manager of Non-Medical Community Programs for Connecticut Children's Medical Center, asked in SINA's version of Family Feud, then handed the microphone to one of SINA's Scholars of the Month. Without hesitation the young man replied "Stay in School." The crowd erupted in applause as the number one answer was revealed on the screen: *Education is the key to success.*

The game was part of SINA's 22nd Annual Scholar of the Month Dinner, created to recognize high school students who achieve academic merit. On May 26th SINA, along with University of Hartford, sponsored an evening of food, fun, and acknowledgments at Trinity College's Vernon Social Center. With a catered dinner, words of encouragement, and personalized plaques SINA honored the achievements of thirty-four students who made education a priority in their lives. Parents, teachers, elected officials, community leaders and friends of the students attended the event, demonstrating their support and celebrating with the scholars.

"Education is vital to success in life, therefore, SINA is extremely proud to have been fostering and honoring accomplished and dedicated students for the past twenty-two years," said Luis Cabán, executive director, SINA. "The Scholar of the Month program serves as an important support to encourage students to attain their academic objectives."

SINA hopes that recognition such as this will help motivate other students to study diligently and attain similar academic merits.

"My daughter has always been a high achiever. She has always made the honor roll, but there has never been anything like this, a ceremony where we can go out and appreciate the fact that she is a high achiever. She has never been able to stand out this way," Carla Canty described her reaction to the recognition given her daughter, Caleisha Canty, a Junior at Weaver High School. "They need this kind of encouragement. She did a good job; worked hard for it. We should have more programs like this to encourage kids to succeed, and to shine a light on the positive things that happen in our community."

SINA's Education and Volunteer Committee worked together with guidance counselors at each of the high schools to select the winners. Students were chosen based on the highest Quality Point Average.

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Roberto Clemente Little League Swings into Action



Los Samaritanos, a team sponsored by SINA, joined the baseball fun at the Roberto Clemente Little League season opening.

Celebrating our scholars



"I was grateful because it was such an honor, and I was shocked because I didn't think there was such an award for just doing my work"

Caleisha Canty described her response to being honored as one of SINA's Scholars of the Month. Caleisha, a junior at Weaver High School plans to attend Cornell University to become an entertainment lawyer.

(Photo by Carolyn Christmann)

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Executive Director's Message

SINA is making significant strides down the long road of neighborhood revitalization. We recognize the importance of each step and look forward to the milestones that lay ahead. Around the corner, we see the completion of new Cityscape Apartments, the affordable units that are being renovated to help meet the rental housing needs of our community. As well, we anticipate the fulfillment of a new streetscape on Jefferson and Hudson Streets.

Further down the road, our sights are set on the transformation of entire blocks and neighborhoods. By engaging in neighborhood planning, SINA can examine the physical state of properties and houses, identifying opportunities for ourselves and others to revitalize these areas. Our goal is to ensure that every property that needs restoration is repaired, so that when people drive through our community they will not see a dilapidated building, but rather the process of restoration.

Recently, SINA received a \$250,000 economic development initiative grant from Congress. Administered by HUD, these funds will enable us to continue and expand our neighborhood revitalization efforts. We extend a special thanks to our Congressional Delegation, Sens. Dodd and Lieberman and Rep. Larson who helped make the funds available.

As we look toward the future of our community, we recognize that lasting transformation depends on the involvement of subsequent generations. Today, one of SINA's most significant and enduring contributions is helping create tomorrow's leaders. Through our Ivan A. Backer Scholarship and Scholar of the Month Awards, we promote and invest in the education of our youth. We assist and encourage these students to achieve another level in their education. Our hope is that many of these youth, after pursuing university degrees, will return to our community, make a life here and contribute to the work we are doing.

We look forward to the months ahead, working in the neighborhood from our new offices at 207 Washington Street. Although we only relocated a short distance, the move marks a significant occasion. Ever since SINA started 27 years ago, our offices have been on the campus of one of our member institutions. Our new facilities offer more public accessibility and interaction. We now have a physical face in the heart of the community. The offices are located just one block south of all the hustle and bustle on Park Street.

With growth and the passage of time comes inevitable changes. SINA has restructured as one of our members physically moves and two others merge. We see this as organizational evolution. It is the ability to adapt to change that makes us a solid member of the community. SINA congratulates Connecticut Public Broadcasting on its new facility on Woodland Street. Our three remaining member institutions will now be represented by an additional member on SINA's Board of Directors. We welcome Benjamin Diaz of Hartford Hospital, Jane Baird of Connecticut Children's Medical Center, and Debra Borrero of Trinity College to SINA's Board.

We hope you'll continue to join us as we work with some new and some old friends in bringing vitality and opportunity to our community. While our destination and goals are in front of us, our focus is as sharp as it has ever been, our optimism abounds, and our path is clear.

SINA Hosts Open House

"It's spectacular." "I love the facility." "It's great that you're right down the block." "It's so comfortable."

SINA's open house attracted a diverse group of colleagues, community members, and friends to its new offices at 207 Washington Street, but all the guests' responses rang with similar approval and delight as they toured the building.

The house's history and restoration process was a common theme of conversations, as well as praise for the large windows and light soaked rooms. One of SINA's staff noted, "you can even see the Capitol from the conference room!"

"We had a very good turn out," Luis Cabán observed. "It gave us a greater sense of being out in the community." More than 60 people attended the open house, which was catered by TL Catering.

"This is beautiful, and right in the middle of the community. It's very comfortable and it gives SINA more visibility."

- Joan Jacobs - Senator Lieberman's office



SINA's Executive Director Luis Cabán gives a tour to Bob Rath, Executive Director of Southend Community Services. (Photo by Carolyn Christmann)

"It's good for them to be in the community, in the heart of all of it."

- Patricia McIntosh, member of SINA's education committee and Manager for the Child & Family Support Services at Connecticut Children's Medical Center.



Joan Jacobs, Senator Lieberman's Office, speaking with SINA's Executive Director Luis Cabán. (Photo by Carolyn Christmann)

SINA's mission is to work cooperatively with the community to develop leadership and improve the economic, physical and social characteristics of Hartford's Frog Hollow, Barry Square and South Green Neighborhoods.

LUIS C. CABAN - Executive Director • JOHN M. BAILEY - Special Assistant To The Executive Director

IVETTE QUIROS - Administrative Assistant • LUZ CONDE - Assistant Director • KEITH HEDMAN - Fiscal Officer

Publisher: American View Productions LLC

Today's Dreamers, Tomorrow's Leaders

Eight Bulkeley High School students are now one step closer to becoming tomorrow's leaders. On June 12th these students were honored as awardees of \$17,600 in college scholarships and scholastic awards at a gala dinner/dance at The Learning Corridor.

The event marked the second year of the jointly celebrated SINA/Ivan A. Backer and Melanie Rosado Scholarships. Along with Ivan A. Backer and members of Melanie Rosado's family, more than 100 educators, community leaders and family members took part in the celebration which personified the vision and work of the sponsors of these awards. The Honorable Mayor Eddie Perez greeted the group, lauding the organizations for working together to provide deserving students financial aid opportunities for their college education.

"This is a remarkable event," said Luis C. Cabán, executive director of SINA. "The partnership enhances the goal of both scholarship programs to fulfill the ambitions of high school students to attend college. It allows us to combine resources, maximize fundraising and ultimately increase scholarship awards for the benefit of deserving students."

Ramon Rosado, father of Melanie Rosado reflected, "As we gather to honor my daughter's memory and achievements, I'm grateful that this partnership continues because it provides a tremendous financial support for those students who are eager to attend college but lack the financial resources."

The SINA/Backer Scholarship makes three annual awards of \$3,200 each to graduating seniors continuing their education in a post-secondary program. The scholarships are awarded at \$800 per academic year for up to four years, provided the student remains in good standing. The Backer Scholarship program, established in 1997, is an outgrowth of SINA's "Bulkeley Connection" program. The program gives students a chance to explore possible future careers at SINA member institutions. Awarded the three SINA/Backer Scholarships were Laura Camacho, Thu Thi Xuan Nguyen and John Szpyt.

The Rosado Scholarship makes five annual awards of \$1,000 each. Receiving the five Rosado Scholarships were Isaac Cruz, Yessenia Guzman, Analisa Mejia, Liza Ramirez and Kristina Rodriguez.

One of the evening's highlights was a presentation on the lives of scholarships' namesakes Ivan A. Backer and Melanie Rosado.

The SINA/Ivan A. Backer Scholarship recognizes the contributions of Ivan Backer, who served as president of SINA for nearly 18 years and is one of the driving forces behind the revival of Hartford's Southside neighborhood. For more than three decades, Mr. Backer worked in Hartford as an educator, organizer and executive with most of that time spent at Trinity College. Ivan Backer dedicated his personal and professional career to implementing social justice by creating opportunities for communities.

The Rosado Scholarship is named in honor of Melanie Rosado, a Hartford resident and Bulkeley senior who lost her life tragically at age 18 in April 1999 shortly before her scheduled graduation. Melanie, a four-year honor roll student at Bulkeley and four-year varsity letter winner in soccer, basketball and softball, was preparing for



*This year's scholarship recipients are seen here with Ivan Backer and Luis C. Cabán.
(Photo by Maurice D. Robertson)*

enrollment at the University of Connecticut at the time of her death. She had dreams of becoming a veterinarian.

The Rosado Scholarship honors Melanie's contributions to society, her school and her community. The award winners exemplify Melanie's high academic standards and commitment to community. The Melanie Rosado Scholarship Award is cosponsored by Bulkeley High School, Lambda Theta Alpha, Latin Sorority, Inc. and the Hartford Medical Group.

Graduating seniors at Bulkeley High School are eligible to apply for the annual scholarships. Winners are chosen based on service to community, school and family; academic achievement; and financial need. A committee consisting of representatives from SINA, the community and Bulkeley High School reviews all applications, interviews chosen candidates and makes the awards.



*Ivan Backer with scholarship winner Thu Thi Xuan Nguyen
(Photo by Maurice D. Robertson)*



*Ivan Backer with scholarship winner John Szpyt
(Photo by Maurice D. Robertson)*

SINA's Scholar of the Month students for the 2003-2004 academic year: - continued from page 1

A.I. Prince Technical School: Troy Arnold, Cristian Herbie, Issac T. Hopkins, Malvin King, Andre Mantilla, Danny Martinez, Shanay M. Smith and Joel Terrero. **Bulkeley High School:** Shanice Billington, Christina Brijmohan, Sueleidy Cruz, Owen Deutsch, Yuk-Shan Li, Krizia Malave, Amanda Prashad and Jasmin Torres. **Hartford Public High School:** Jonathan Appenwhite, Kara Boucher, Priscilla Corales, Jenelle Howard, Adam Reyes, Nordia Savage, O'Rayan Velarde and Min Zhang. **Sports Science Academy:** Janice Perez and Jessica Walker. **Weaver High School:** Sade Bennett, Caleisha Canty, Alva Ceden, Oprah Ellis, Whitley A. Hall, Jericha Hatten, Lesa Jones and Concha Lawrence.

The Learning Corridor Presents a Family Multicultural Celebration, Featuring Spanish Harlem Orchestra



Spanish Harlem Orchestra

Welcoming summer, the hot salsa sounds of the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, filled the Learning Corridor campus. Led by Hartford native Ray de la Paz, the band had the crowds moving and cheering at the Learning Corridor's 2nd Annual Family Multicultural Celebration. The celebration attracted nearly 1000 people of all ages and ethnicities. The Learning Corridor, in association with the YMCA, opened its pool to the public for a family swim time, and the Hartford Police Department distributed bike helmets and safety tips. In addition, more than a dozen health and community organizations provided valuable information on their services. Local vendors displayed multicultural arts and crafts and foods of many flavors. As well, local entertainers had a chance to shine on stage. The event was organized by the Aetna Center for Families, Capitol Region Education Council, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Connecticut Innovations, Learning Corridor, Luna Productions, and the YMCA Urban Initiatives.



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Community Leaders Hit the Street, Helping Kids Keep their Summer Safe

This summer, kids hanging out in some of Hartford's targeted "hot spots" may have an unexpected encounter that saves them from probable trouble. Spearheaded by the Hartford Police Department's Community Resource Division, Neighborhood Enforcement Stabilization Teams (NEST), is a new citywide initiative that sends small teams of community leaders, social workers, and Community Service Officers (CSOs) to locations where youth loiter and sometimes result in disruptions or crimes.

"The NEST concept complements nicely with the mission of SINA," SINA's Special Assistant to the Director John Bailey explains. "Both share a desire to offer youth choices and opportunities that they would otherwise not be aware of. In addition, HPD has designated a number of areas in SINA's neighborhood as "Hot Spots." Finally, the NEST initiative is based on a collaborative effort of public, private, and nonprofit organizations which is similar to the model SINA has used to change the landscape of its target neighborhoods."

NEST's aim is to talk with kids and intervene before problems occur. Community leaders serving on the teams will utilize their preexisting relationships with the kids to start conversations and refer at-risk youth to agencies like Mi Casa Family Service & Educational Center. NEST is expected to act like a bridge between those youth who typically do not utilize community-based services and the neighborhood organizations that offer youth-oriented programming.

Mustered by Maria Negron, Community Capacity Building Coordinator for the Aetna Center for Families, the NEST committee is comprised of 23 members. SINA's John Bailey provides technical support as the committee's co-chair, along with Lt. Merit of the Hartford Police Department. NEST began by identifying existing agencies and community resources, then, on July 1, began biweekly patrols by pairing up committee members and neighborhood leaders with CSOs.

The NEST team operating in South Hartford will be riding along with Officer Carlos Colon and Officer Hector Robles. These CSOs will accompany NEST team members to areas in the neighborhoods that are frequented by at risk youth between the ages of 11-16.

Renovations Progress for Cityscape Apartments



*Front elevation of 32-34
Madison Street, which is
being rehabilitated into a
six unit apartment
building.*



*Interior apartment
under construction in
160 Affleck Street.*

Cityscape Apartments are beginning to take shape. After a long winter, SINA and Broad-Park Development Corporation passed a milestone on April 28th when they closed on construction financing from CHFA (Connecticut Housing Finance Authority). In addition, Alliant Capital purchased the Cityscape Apartment's historic and low income housing tax credits, enabling the partnership to proceed with its transformation of a dozen dilapidated buildings into 74 units of quality affordable rental apartments.

"Cityscape Apartments, in concert with Cityscape Homes, is making a major impact of revitalization in the community by providing affordable rental and homeownership opportunities," explains Broad-Park's Director of Real Estate Development David Mesite.

In May, contractors commenced renovations and construction on all 12 properties, the majority being located in the Frog Hollow neighborhood. The work has consisted of environmental abatement and both interior and exterior demolition. Currently, framing is in progress. The first completed units will be available in late summer, and units will continue to be completed and occupied through December of 2005.