

Serving All Is The Golden Rule

Local Non-Profit Seeks To Bring Aid To Own Community

A local non-profit organization is taking the old adage, "treat others as you would want to be treated" to a whole new level, providing much needed services to the community.

Based in Oak Park, Golden Rule Services is dedicated to reducing the health, education, employment and juvenile justice disparities in low-income communities and those of ethnic, racial and sexual minorities.

"There is a Healthy People report that comes out every two years. It identifies the highest health risk factors of people of color, then it sets objectives and goals for what we can do to eliminate the disparities," said founder Clarmundo Sullivan.

"Those disparities are found in health — we tend to have the highest

hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell, strokes, heart disease, and HIV certainly. Why is that so? We want to do something about that.

by GENOA BARROW
OBSERVER Senior Staff Writer

hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell, strokes, heart disease, and HIV certainly. Why is that so? We want to do something about that.

"Another disparity is in education. Why are our kids one of the lowest groups to graduate? We want to be responsive to that. We know that in order to be upwardly mobile, we have to have a good education, mama told us that," Sullivan continued.

Golden Rule Services provides a number of programs including college preparatory workshops, seminars on HIV/AIDS awareness and professional counseling for youth and adults. One of its strongest programs is its contract with the Sacramento County Superior Court to provide violence prevention programs for first-time juvenile offenders.

Created in 2000, the organization was born of frustration. After continually experiencing what he calls "poor customer service," Sullivan and a group of friends and colleagues decided to take action.

"I had to explain why I do certain things, why I believe certain things.

People didn't understand our culture. When we walked into an organization, we didn't see images or people that looked like us who could relate to our experiences.

"I said 'why don't we start our own 501 C3 non-profit so we can fill that gap,' so we can make sure from the board all the way down to the staff that not only are we reflected from the top to the bottom but we're creating our own programs, we're implementing and evaluating our own programs," Sullivan said.

The premise, he adds, is that nobody knows how to serve a community but the community itself.

"The goal is to fill a gap and to fill a need. There is a lack of service providers here in Sacramento that I believe are what we call culturally competent," Sullivan said.

"If you're serving a diverse amount of people, you have to understand the whole package, you've got to understand their history, their culture, the subtle nuances, what we call the best practices on how to reach and serve them," he said.

A Sacramento native, Sullivan has worked in the community health field for 13 years.

"A lot of non-profits, especially minority-based, community-based organizations fold, and the reason is because we don't have the infrastructure in place in order for them to be successful," he said.

"Sometimes our heart and our commitment is there, but sometimes we don't have the necessary skills and the knowledge and the resources in order to make the program successful and again we're at the mercy of being served by people who may not reflect us and may not understand who we are. It's kind of like a cycle," he continued.

While not a household name, Golden Rule Services has been quietly



Tired of being treated poorly by area agencies, Clarmundo Sullivan created Golden Rule Services to meet the needs of minority communities.

"putting all its ducks in a row" and accomplishing its goals of addressing the needs of those it serves.

"We're not claiming to be the biggest. We're not claiming to be the best, yet. But we're getting there," the proud owner said.

To learn more about Golden Rule Services call (916) 456-1111 or visit www.goldenrules.info.

OBSERVER Photos by LARRY V. DALTON



While the past three years have been spent putting the organization on solid ground, the Oak Park-area non-profit already has programs making an impact.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

E-mail Proves To Be A Strong Distribution Source For Blacks

Forty years ago, African Americans were staging sit-ins, getting on buses to D.C., and marching in order to protest racism, classism and other social ills.

In 2003, however, African Americans — along with many other ethnic groups — are increasingly choosing to organize, inform and protest through a less visible medium: the Internet.

"The African American communi-

ty has to realize that we are an information-based society and a knowledge economy, and [we] cannot afford to allow ourselves to be excluded from participating in the Internet — and that includes email, web pages, newsgroups," said Shawn Lewis, a manager for the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

"There's this concern with the digital divide, but my disposition is we can't be outside the game look-

ing in. We have to be inside the game, playing. Either you are at the table, or you're on the table."

As a service to the community, Lewis sends out dozens of e-mail messages about African American community events and issues to a distribution list every week.

Lewis has been sending out the list for about five years, and it continues to grow as the word gets out.

"I think e-mail works in our com-

munity because African Americans are pretty dispersed throughout the metro area. E-mail is nice way to connect everyone," said Lewis, who tries to send information rather than opinions.

He added, "I try to be very supportive of other people sending out information. For whatever reason for our community, people are not getting this information that I'm sending out."