**The Successful Trajectory of the “Asociación Mayagüezana de Personas con Impedimentos”**

The “Asociación Mayagüezana de Personas con Impedimentos” or AMPI, has been doing a remarkable and successful job to benefit the population with intellectual and developmental disabilities during 28 years in Puerto Rico. Directed in its beginnings by Mrs. Herenia Morales, mother of an adult with cerebral palsy, and later by Mrs. Esther Caro, AMPI obtained funds to develop a wide variety of successful service projects for the population with intellectual developmental disabilities or disabilities.

All of AMPI’s projects have met a range of needs in health, transportation, horticulture, housing, sports and recreation, special education and other skills necessary for daily living. The funds have been obtained from the Puerto Rico Developmental Disabilities Council, United Funds, the Legislative Donations Commission and other sources such as Baxter Foundation.

AMPI was created on October of 1983 when a group of parents of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities were incorporated to look for funds to offer services for the population.

The first project established by AMPI was CEMECAV or Centro de Mejoramiento de Calidad de Vida (Center for the Improvement of Quality of Life). This project was sponsored by the P.R. Developmental Disabilities Council and it offered services of horticulture, recreation, special education, and other skills to prepare the participants for employment. In 1985 an employment training workshop was developed in the facilities of the association.

During the ‘90s AMPI submitted to the P.R. Developmental Disabilities Council Project PUEDO (I CAN) with the purpose of developing a program to look for competitive jobs for the participants that were ready for work. Twenty individuals were employed, of which currently 10 are still employed.

In 1990, AMPI initiated Project CAMPAR, (CAMP),which consisted of a residential summer camp of one week duration, sponsored by private donors. The camp was offered during 17 years and served hundreds of participants Islandwide.

Then AMPI established Project CAMPAR y ALGO MAS,(CAMP AND SOMETHING MORE), funded by the P.R. Developmental Disabilities Council. This consisted of sports and recreational activities to promote sports competitions to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. During four years competitions were held in basketball, volleyball, track and field, talent shows, and a dance festival was also celebrated.

In addition, in 2000, Project LLAME Y VIAJE, (CALL AND TRAVEL)funded by the Developmental Disabilities Council, offered transportation for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the western part of the Island, for medical appointments, shopping, and other activities, through this door to door service.

In 2004 AMPI obtained the support of Americorps Vista Program to develop sustainable programs to increase the services for the population with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Later with the Project SERVICIOS INTEGRALES DE SALUD (HEALTH INTEGRATED SERVICES), AMPI offered health services at home for the population including medical services, transportation to medical appointments with a companion, and dental services, among others.

Mrs. Esther Caro, Executive Director of AMPI, continued with her goal of improving the services for the population with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and identified a major need that was never address, and this was housing. So she made the necessary arrangements and presented three proposals to the Federal Housing Department, Section 811, for assisted living housing for persons with developmental disabilities, and the proposals were approved. In addition to the help of the Federal Housing Department, AMPI obtained the economic assistance of the P.R. Developmental Disabilities Council in the area of support services, and the first program of assisted living housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities was created in Puerto Rico. The project was composed of three houses for permanent living for 18 adults with intellectual disabilities , with the necessary support services to promote their independence.

Also the P.R. Developmental Disabilities Council funded for AMPI PROJECT HOGAR, DULCE HOGAR (HOME, SWEET HOME), in which the residents of the houses received case management services, personal assistants, a teacher of independent living, recreational activities, transportation, and other services to help them achieve integration and inclusion in the community.

In 2010 AMPI presented a proposal to the Comisión de Voluntariado de Puerto Rico and Americorps State Program, under the municipality of Mayagüez, to develop a program of collaborative services among five organizations that offer services in Mayaguez. The proposal was approved.

In 2011, with the support of several foundations and of the P.R. Developmental Disabilities Council , AMPI established the CENTRO DE ESTIMULACIÖN SENSORIAL PARA ADULTOS CON DEFICIENCIAS EN EL DESARROLLO ( CENTER FOR SENSORY STIMULATION FOR ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES) that served initially 20 adults with severe developmental disabilities of the western part of the Island. The purpose of the project is to improve the quality of life of the participants as well as that of their families, to offer recreational activities, and support the families.

Currently AMPI offers services to hundreds of participants through their diverse programs , coordinates the participation of individuals with developmental disabilities in Special Olympics, locally and internationally, administers three assisted houses and develops an annual residential summer camp Islandwide, among many other services.

In an interviewed with Mrs. Esther Caro, Executive Director of AMPI, she said that “AMPI recognizes what it has achieved for the population with developmental disabilities, but there’s much more to do. Also we recognize that without the help and constant support of our sponsors, and the Municipality of Mayagüez, our services wouldn’t have been a reality. This population continues to increase and the needs also. It’s time to give them a space in our community and value them adequately. Only then we will have a complete society, with inclusion and integration, for the benefit of all, with equality.”

Mrs. Esther Caro was appointed Mother of the Community of Puerto Rico by the Mothers Association of Puerto Rico, and as part of this she participated in the National Competition for the Mother of the National Community held in Washington, D.C.

AMPI is located in Parque Industrial Guanajibo, Mayagüez, and to request services or provide volunteer services or any other assistance the person can call phone numbers 787-832-7460, 787-464-1337, 787-640-2922.