



NOTRE DAME EDUCATION CENTER COMES OF AGE

By Rick Winterson

Recently, there have been two very significant happenings at South Boston's Notre Dame Education Center (the NDEC). The NDEC opened its doors in mid-1992, so it has just turned 25 years of age - its Silver Anniversary. Equally as important, the NDEC now owns its current premises at 200 Old Colony Avenue - papers were passed on the property August 10. That means NDEC - in a sense- is both 25 years and two months old (as of yesterday).

Perhaps the only organization on Earth that could pull all that off would be the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, founded in 1804 by St. Julie Billiart. So here's a bit of their history: St. Julie had herself fled the oppression of the French Revolution to Namur, Belgium. She founded her order to educate others who also had fled the Revolution, especially women who had no marketable skills.

And then, the New World beckoned. Small groups of the Sisters of Notre Dame traveled to Willamette (now Oregon), and later to Cincinnati by way of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Shortly before the Civil War, Fr. John McElroy, who later founded Boston College, brought six Sisters of Notre Dame to Boston from Cincinnati to set up a Catholic school. Over the next 130 years, that school morphed into Cardinal Cushing High at 50 West Broadway. When "Cahd'n'l Cushin'" closed, the good Sisters founded the NDEC. The rest - and everything before it - is history. And like St. Julie, their founder, the good sisters are all still smiling.

The most striking aspect of acquiring the 200 Old Colobny building is the permanence it lends to NDEC and its continued presence in South Boston. For the last nine years, this building had been home of the NDEC programs, which had expanded greatly during that time. However, time and real estate - especially in South Boston - changed rapidly, so there was always the question, "What's next?"

Well, there's nothing "next," except for NDEC continuing its educational mission, while growing it to meet the need for Adult Education in South Boston out to 2020 and beyond. This school year saw 500 students pass through the doors at 200 Old Colony Ave. With the building in their possession, the NDEC has now begun to develop a long-term master plan - a formal, detailed program that will fit the third decade in the 21st Century. As an initial step, NDEC has already set up a Building Committee.



The premises of the Notre Dame Education Center at 200 Old Colony Avenue were recently purchased by the Center. You're encouraged to apply for their varied Adult Education offerings.

NDEC offers four basic programs:

- The very important HiSET (high school equivalent), both for 18-22 year-olds, and adults of any age. It is important to note here that NDEC willingly admits students who test at low grade levels.
- A complete High School Diploma Program. For example, when Seton Academy closed, NDEC stepped up and helped a half-dozen students obtain their full high school diplomas, as well as their college acceptances.
- English as a Second Language Studies (ESL).
- Newer programs in college and career pathways, which include topics like Medical Terminology and the basics, such as job resume preparation. These will continue to expand.

If you feel you can benefit from Adult Education, you would be well-advised to contact NDEC (617-268-1912). NDEC is open to all, and is focused on developing new, job-related programs for the rapidly changing Boston job scene. All of its Adult Education programs are either free or cost very little. NDEC's location is convenient to any student from South Boston. As Executive Director Mary Rose Durante puts it, "We are here to stay."

Well spoken!