

# The Boston Courant

June 19-25, 2009

SERVING BACK BAY, BEACON HILL, DOWNTOWN, BENWAY AND SOUTH END

Vol. XIV, No. 37

JUNE 19, 2009

SOUTH END

The Boston Courant 7

## Project Place Honors Partners



Project Place Executive Director Suzanne Kenney, community award winner Harriet Finkelstein and State Sen. Sonia Chang-Díaz

by Job Bobseine  
Courant News Writer

Rachel Gomes is one of Project Place's true success stories.

A graduate of Project 90, a 90-day job training program, and a former resident at Rosie's Place shelter for women, the recovering addict is now employed at

Boston University and living on her own.

"I have a simple life. It's not extraordinary. However, I have a life. ... I wake up everyday and make it better," Gomes told the crowd at Project Place's 42nd annual meeting last week.

Project Place honored Gomes with its "Graduate Partner" award at the meeting.

Continued on page 15

## Project Place

continued from page 7

after honoring South End resident Harriet Finkelstein as the group's "Community Partner" and John Cannistraro of J.C. Cannistraro LLC as its "Corporate Partner."

Cannistraro spoke of what he has seen the Washington Street nonprofit give to so many homeless and low-income individuals: a place in a classroom, a place in a work environment, and ultimately "a place in society."

Finkelstein, a volunteer for seven years, said her involvement has been made "deeper and richer" since Pine Street Inn, another South End homeless organization, purchased two buildings in her neighborhood and moved to convert them to housing for formerly homeless individuals. The resulting backlash from some of her neighbors surprised her, she said, because, "The South End has always been a welcoming community."

Gomes's concluding speech, however,

brought the crowd to its feet.

Education Specialist Sean Pierce introduced his former student as "incredibly passionate, motivated and [with] a zest for life."

Then Gomes told her story, beginning with "the lying and cheating thing" that accompanied her addiction.

"When I got here to Project Place I was homeless and helpless," she said.

Then, day by day, she learned the physical and mental skills she needed to live on her own. It took more than learning to use a computer, she said, though that helped. It took learning the importance of showing up every day, she explained, of being consistent.

A year after Gomes saw another Project Place veteran accept the "Graduate Partner" award, and wished hard that she had been up there, she received the award and, amidst some tears, thanked the group and encouraged her fellow clients to follow her example.

The crowd of Project Place employees and supporters, including state Sen. Sonia Chang-Díaz, rose to applaud.