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November/December 2005

## Ceremony and fanfare mark opening of student-run clinic

It's official: La Casita de la Salud is open for business. A ribbon cutting ceremony for the student-run clinic dedicated to serving the uninsured population of East Harlem was held on September 24.

College administration and faculty were on hand for the festivities. Guest speakers included Ralph A. O'Connell, M.D., provost and dean of the School of Medicine, Louis Martir, executive director of Metropolitan Hospital Center, and Anjali Talwalker, M.D., M.P.H., director of program development for the asthma initiative program of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg sent his best wishes to the students in a congratulatory letter. "An Arabian proverb says, 'He who has health has hope and he who has hope has everything.' La Casita de la Salud's mission is of the highest importance: to improve health outcomes by providing high quality, culturally sensitive care to its patrons, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, nationality or ability to pay. The clinic's focus on both efficiency and altruism signals an exciting new development in our city's healthcare system," the Mayor wrote.

La Casita de la Salud operates in La Clinica del Barrio, located at 413 East 120th Street, an existing satellite clinic of Metropolitan Hospital. On Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon, volunteer medical students and physicians staff the clinic which provides them with a unique opportunity for hands-on experience in clinical skills, public health and clinic administration for the students.

"After two years of preparation, all of us at La Casita de la Salud are extremely excited to finally be opening our doors. It would not have been possible without the tremendous generosity and support of the administration, faculty, Metropolitan Hospital, and the students. The opening ceremony was our way of acknowledging that," said Andrew A. Chang, an M.D./M.P.H. Class of 2008 candidate who serves as one of the clinic's co-director.



Medical student co-directors of the La Casita de la Salud clinic in East Harlem, had much to celebrate at the clinic's grand opening on September 24. From left were: Steven Leoniak, Jessica Safra, Andrew A. Chang, Elissa Lapide and Megan Veresh. After two years of hard work and determination, added to the rigors of medical school, their altruistic vision of a student-run clinic is finally a reality.

With cultural competence a priority at La Casita de la Salud, there is a paid Spanish-speaking professional medical interpreter on site at all times. Clinical care teams consisting of medical students and at least one volunteer attending physician are responsible for patient histories, physical exams, diagnoses and treatment plans. A patient education team made up of medical student volunteers, educates patients about health issues important to the East Harlem community they serve, such as asthma, diabetes, obesity, cancer, and heart disease. The medical student social service team refers patients to other community organizations for more specialized support and care when necessary and evaluates patient eligibility for insurance programs.

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For more information on the clinic, please visit [www.nymc.edu/student\\_clinic/](http://www.nymc.edu/student_clinic/) or read about it in the June 2005 issue of *InTouch* available online at [www.nymc.edu/pubs/intouch.asp](http://www.nymc.edu/pubs/intouch.asp).