



Serving over 1200 Westchester County residents per year

WESTCARES: Housing First That Works For Less

It is not unusual that we report to you on these pages how HDSW housing services help persons with mental illness live more comfortable, productive lives while simultaneously saving us all tax dollars. WestCARES is one such program, but it is uniquely different from all our other housing services.



Andrea Kocsis

WestCARES is **both a mobile treatment team and a housing program**, a collaboration among St. Vincent's Hospital clinical outpatient services and two Westchester housing providers, HDSW and The Sharing Community, located in Yonkers. WestCARES offers comprehensive community support, integrating psychiatric treatment, housing, case management, and social and vocational services to persons who are homeless and living with serious mental illness.

The program began in 2000, when the Westchester County Department of Social Services (DSS) was looking for new ways to solve a difficult and chronic problem. At the time, there were numerous persons living in DSS shelters, whose life issues and psychiatric illnesses were so serious that they were unable to live on their own, or with family, or even in one of the many supportive residential programs in the county. It was also difficult for them to tolerate living in the shelter for any length of time – they would repeatedly stay for a while and then suddenly leave for a while. They were in pain, in turmoil, and unable to remain in shelter long enough to receive consistent service. Whatever help the mental health service system had to offer them was just not helpful enough.

When DSS and the Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) partnered to address this concern, DSS agreed to provide funding and DCMH agreed to oversee a new model of ser-

vice. To attract clients to enter this new low-demand WestCARES program, they only needed to agree to meet with our Case Managers at least two times a month in their homes, and to permit the housing agencies to become their representative payee, so that rents would always be paid on time, assuring that clients were able to retain their apartments. Clients are encouraged, but not required, to engage in treatment, and may choose to receive their psychiatric services from St. Vincent's Hospital or from any other provider in the county. When and if the client is unable to come in for treatment, St. Vincent's treatment staff – psychiatrist, nurse practitioner, licensed social worker – will bring medications, medical assessment, crisis intervention assistance, etc., right to the client in his/her home. In addition, the HDSW Supervisor of our case management staff, a licensed, clinical Social Worker, will often engage clients herself, adding her considerable expertise to the mix.

This combination of the low-demand model, the capacity to bring treatment directly to the clients' homes, the assurance of rent payments, and the outstanding quality of case management services delivered by our HDSW staff, have contributed to a housing success rate of 78% for our WestCARES clients compared to 0% prior to their entry into our program. This is an amazing outcome for persons who had previously experienced such turmoil in their lives. It also represents a huge savings of tax dollars, as supported housing of this kind (about \$20,000 per year) costs us all about one-half to one-twentieth of what it costs to provide care for persons in shelters (about \$40,000), jail (about \$75,000) or hospitals (about \$1500 per day).

Congratulations to all the men and women who are successfully living in WestCARES housing, and to the staff who serve them with such care and competence! ■

–Andrea Kocsis, LCSW Executive Director

Message From The President



Human Development Services of Westchester has joined a number of agencies throughout the state to implement a new initiative being sponsored by the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH). Wellness Self management (WSM) is a curriculum-based clinical practice designed to assist people to manage serious mental health problems. The initiative addresses recovery, mental health wellness and relapse prevention. It also includes material emphasizing the connection between physical and mental health.

The curriculum is designed to support staff and peer specialists in providing WSM services individually or in groups. There is a personal workbook which has been created for consumers that underscores the recovery principles of shared decision making, informed choice, involvement and hope. Staff and peer specialists are trained to run groups via a regional learning collaborative, a variety of training DVD's and guided web-based supports which are made available by OMH.

HDSW staff has received their training and is preparing to institute WSM in two locations this spring. The adult home case management staff will begin working with the residents of Mohegan Park Adult Home. HOPE House will begin WSM at the club as well. As these classes are instituted, work will begin to implement Wellness Self Management throughout all HDSW programs.

■ Marjorie Zeidner, President

Michael Sicular Joins the HDSW Board

HDWSW is pleased to welcome **Michael Sicular** of Port Chester as the newest member of the HDSW Board of Directors. Michael, now age 48, has been a resident-consumer with Human Development Services for 14 years. He has found the agency's flexible and trusting structure good for him. He currently shares an apartment with one roommate; he is also a member of HOPE House. Michael finds the other HDSW residents interesting and stimulating. According to Michael, his own life experience in many different treatment situations provides a broad context and background that he brings to the Board. In his own words: "Each person HDSW serves is so different. I think I can understand and appreciate that diversity." Michael volunteers at the Sarah Newman Center for Healthcare & Rehabilitation in Mamaroneck twice weekly with higher functioning older adults who are long-term residents. He is a strong tennis player, an able writer, good with people, and politically aware. He is a graduate of Yale University, where he majored in political science. On the Board, Michael is already busy at work on the Development Committee, and active on the Klezmer in June Planning Committee. As he said: "I meet my commitments, and attend all meetings."

Welcome, Michael!



Non Profit Board Member of the Year

HDWSW congratulates long time board member, friend and supporter, Isobel Perry, HDSW Board of Directors Co-Secretary, who was honored by the Association of Development Officers (ADO) at their 2007 National Day of Philanthropy.

Pictured below are some of the HDSW staff and board members who joined Isobel and her daughter, Lisa Hellerstein, at the ADO breakfast celebration. Back row left to right: Cynthia Ott, HDSW Director of Finance; Donna Cribari, HDSW Medicaid Billing Specialist; Herb Heller, HDSW Board Treasurer. Front row left to right: Nada Beth Glick, HDSW Director of Development; Beatrice Emory; Isobel Perry; Lisa Hellerstein.



Neighborhood Preservation Company Advocacy at Work

On Tuesday, February 26, HDSW's Neighborhood Preservation Company (NPC) joined forces with NPCs statewide and gathered in Albany, New York for the annual NPC Advocacy Day. The Port Chester NPC, one of seven NPCs in Westchester County, led a sizable group of supporters to Albany, made up of seniors, children, and parents.

While in Albany, NPC staff and the supporters met with state lawmakers to discuss the positive impact that local NPCs have in their communities and the different types of assistance that NPCs give to those in need. In addition to discussing the services offered, staff and supporters also reminded state representatives that NPCs need more funding to continue their mission of creating and maintaining affordable housing for and providing housing services to New Yorkers. The state increased funding for this program from \$65,000 to \$87,000 per NPC program in 2007, and to \$88,400 in 2008, thanks to legislators who restored the increase after it was cut by Governor Spitzer.

The annual trip to Albany is one of many activities that the NPC participates in throughout the year. In addition to the housing counseling and eviction prevention services the program provides, the NPC recently launched a new program titled, "U.S. Civics for English Language Learners," in partnership with Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County, Inc., thanks to a grant from the Westchester Community Foundation*.

Furthermore, the NPC is currently in its third year of offering financial literacy classes to the community. ■

• Blanca P. López, Director of the Neighborhood Preservation Company

*The Westchester Community Foundation (WCF) is a non-profit community endowment for the benefit of Westchester County. Its mission is to develop and manage philanthropic resources, and to distribute them in a way that is responsive to donor interests and community needs. The Foundation actively promotes charitable giving on behalf of the area's non-profit organizations. WCF is a division of The New York Community Trust, the largest community foundation in the country with assets of approximately \$1.8 billion dollars.



Assemblyman George Latimer meets with the HDSW-NPC staff and supporters.



Liza Szpylka, HDSW Director of Supported Housing and Case Management Services, was honored at the 2007 Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health Family Network Recognition Breakfast for her outstanding service to the community. Congratulations Liza!

Philly Cheese Steak All Around

A group of consumers accompanied by HDSW staff traveled to historical Philadelphia on Labor Day. We started our tour of Philadelphia with a panoramic view which helped us to map out the many places to visit. There was so much to see and do in such a short period of time.

Our first stop was the National Constitution Center. "It was the story of we, the people." It echoed the revolution, followed by the signers of the document which followed. Bronze statues of these important figures still remain intact in this multi-museum.



Philadelphia skyline as seen from the Adventure Aquarions in Camden, N.J.

On our second day we went to the U.S. Mint. It was made up of 2 huge warehouses containing all kinds of machines, loading baskets, and other apparatus. It was fun to watch all the copper pennies being boxed and

carted into rows for distribution. We received a silver dollar coin as a souvenir.

That afternoon was the "Ride the Ducks" bus tour. We all received duck whistles and went inside Philadelphia proper with a bus tour guide who was so funny with all his jokes along the way. The bus turned into a boat. Splash! Splash! We went into the Delaware River.



Hunger led us to the Bourse Food and Specialty shops. The famous "Cheese Philly Steak" didn't really appease us, but we gave it a try anyway.

Our last stop that day was to the "Liberty Bell." Its history was traced and all of a sudden, it was hanging there before our very eyes. Flashes were going off everywhere. It was a moment in time for all of us.

Our last day was just as much fun as the previous ones. We went to the Eastern State Penitentiary. Yes, we saw the prison cell of Al Capone and the gargoyles outside the prison wall. We took an audio tour which portrayed a solitary life, haunted white cat statues, like those in a massive haunted house, and other dreary, lifeless, cells.

Independence Visitor's Hall was a place to buy souvenirs, have a bite to eat in its small café, and get ready for our final stop.

Adventure Aquarium was an exhibition of hippos, African penguins, fishes, sharks, a sole seahorse, and sand crabs to name just a few. There was a brown seal basking in the sun and I wanted to take his place at the end of my day too.

All in all, it was a wonderful trip with such a fine staff. Thanks so much for making this a happy time to remember. ■



The Philadelphia Ducktours

A Great Greek Taverna Evening!

On Wednesday evening, September 26th, 181 friends, supporters, staff, administrators, and members of HDSW gathered at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in New Rochelle, NY, for “A Greek Taverna Evening,” to benefit HDSW’s psychosocial clubhouse, HOPE House, and to honor the agency’s Deputy Director, Kathy Pandekakes on her 20th anniversary at HDSW. The social hall of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church was transformed for the evening into a Greek Taverna with beautiful floral table centerpieces by Bruce Freyer Designs, and posters of Greece courtesy of the Greek National Tourist Organization. The lively music of My Greek Wedding Band with band leader George Stathos on the clarinet, Vasilis Sideris playing guitar, and Gabe Kontos playing the bouzouke, filled the air; dancing filled the aisles; abundant and scrumptious Greek food filled our stomachs, beginning with “mezedes” (appetizers) and concluding with baklava, thanks to the culinary talents of our Honoree Kathy and her many helpers, including: Carol Maruschek, Penny Pandekakes, Irene O’Donnell, Dorothy Psaltos, and Elizabeth Psaltos. The evening would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the HOPE House members and the following HDSW employees to prepare for and manage the event: Shelley Bender, Juan Rodriguez, Irene Argerakis, Maureen Lahey, Anna Kobelka, Debbie Rosado, Donna Cappelli, Sid Hecker, Donna Rosado, Carolyn Seewaldt, Robert Clark, La’Mour Davis, Evelyn Valentine, Lisa Carino, Doni Cribari and Development Director Nada Glick.



Fr. Nick Anchl leads the first dance of the evening. Joining him are (pictured left to right) Mary Sotos; Peggy Yuelys, Sue Larsen and Michelle Petrino.

Our special thanks to Father Nicholas Anchl, Pastor of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church for his spirited participation in and support of the evening. Many thanks to the donors of our Silent Auction items. We were especially pleased to welcome the many members of the professional community from “sister” agencies, and all those who attended from the Greek Orthodox community, whose presence helped us to recognize Kathy, her contributions to HDSW and the field, and to celebrate her 20th anniversary milestone. \$20,306 was raised to benefit the HOPE House Endowment Fund.



Kathy with her niece Katie O’Donnell (who sang during the event).



Standing left to right: Ruthanne Abramovich, MHA of Westchester; Kelly Darrow, MHA of Westchester; Charlotte Alexander, Phelps Memorial Hospital Case Management. Seated left to right: Frank Ali, St. Vincent’s Hospital Case Management and Barbara McKenna, Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health.



Kathy and Georgia Kuhen, Options for Community Living



Daphne Smith, HDSW Supervisor-Supported Housing and Elsie During, HDSW ShelterPlus Case Manager.

HDSW Gratefully Acknowledges These Generous Contributors To A Greek Taverna Evening

Olympians

Barbara & Daniel Bock Richard Gassner Linda LaMaire Katrin Tazza/A.G. Edwards

Oracles

Bruce & Dana Freyer Lilian Sicular MDIC Investment Company/Daniel S. MacDonald

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Philosophers

*Father Nick & Presbytera Cyndi Anctil · Kelly Anastos · Irene Argerakis · Dawn Bargamian · Bessie Bartzos ·
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Kathy Pandekakes · Penelope Pandekakes · Cornelia Pappas · John Peebles · Phelps Intensive/Supportive Case Management
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*Assemblyman George
Latner and Kathy
Pandekakes.*



*Steve Wolf, Interior Resources, Creighton Drury,
Cardinal McCloskey Services and Larry Cain,
Interior Resources*



My Greek Wedding Band.

Six Grants Awarded to HDSW in Support of the Port Chester Neighborhood Preservation Company (NPC)

Many thanks to the following organizations, foundations, or agencies for their recent support of the NPC and its programs: the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the Westchester Community Foundation, The Elias Foundation, the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA), and The Wyman Foundation.

The Westchester Community Foundation grant of \$12,300 has enabled the NPC to introduce “Civics for Immigrants,” a 12-module, 24-session English Language/Civics Education curriculum, in collaboration with Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County. The course, which meets twice weekly for 12 weeks, will be offered twice during the grant year. The first sequence, meeting mornings at Summerfield Church, is currently in progress. The second sequence will meet during the evening, and will be offered this summer. Said NPC Director, Blanca Lopez, “We are most excited to launch a collaborative venture with Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County, and grateful for the recognition by the Westchester Community Foundation of the important link between English competency for non-native speakers and civic participation.”

The Elias Foundation grant of \$15,000 enables the NPC to introduce a Leadership Development and Community Building Training Pilot Program during 2008. The NPC endeavors, with the ongoing support of a leadership trainer/community developer consultant, to assist emerging leaders within the Port Chester community to self-identify and develop their own voices, forum, and leadership skills.

The Elias Foundation earlier this year awarded HDSW a \$2,700 grant for NPC staff to attend training in community organizing and leadership development. Said HDSW Executive Director, Andrea Kocsis: “The Elias Foundation is an important voice in encouraging self-directed advocacy among disenfranchised or marginalized groups. With the help of The Elias Foundation, the NPC will be at the forefront locally of encouraging and supporting indigenous leadership in Port Chester.”

The JPMorgan Chase Foundation grant of \$10,000 has enabled the NPC to continue its Financial Literacy Outreach Program. Two series of financial literacy workshops will be offered during the grant year; one is currently in progress. The workshops, taught in Spanish, will introduce and reinforce English terms and concepts related to finance. Said Blanca Lopez, “We are so pleased by JPMorgan Chase

Foundation support for these important workshops, and to partner with Chase Bank in presenting the workshops.”

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has awarded HDSW a grant of \$40,600 to conduct a comprehensive housing counseling program. In October, 2006, HDSW became an approved HUD Housing Counseling Agency, providing housing counseling through the Neighborhood Preservation Company for renters, homeowners, prospective homeowners, and persons needing housing. The grant supports an expansion of the NPC housing counseling program, to serve individuals or families throughout Westchester seeking housing-related assistance, especially those with low-to-moderate income, residing in Port Chester and neighboring Sound Shore communities.

State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA), National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program, through NeighborWorks America. This grant of \$7,834.24 will enable the NPC to expand foreclosure prevention counseling in 2008.

The Wyman Foundation has donated \$15,000 to HDSW for NPC general support. ■



Betty Lahmann, Edgemont House Supervisor, was honored for her work by the Mental Health Association of Westchester Crossroads Program at their recent awards breakfast. **Congratulations Betty!**

Left to right: Annette Peters, Program Director MHA of Westchester; Ruth Theaman, HDSW Director of Residential Services; Honoree, Betty Lahmann, Edgemont House Supervisor; Denise Molloy, MHA Program Coordinator; and Samuel Lamb, MHA Case Manager.

The Values of Education

The benefits of learning extend far beyond the mere accumulation of information or the ability to get a better job. "Education," in the words of one philosopher, "teaches you how to live." Enrichment comes not just in economic terms but in psychological and emotional areas as well.

That is why HOPE House encourages members to learn not just job skills but values that enhance their lives in many different ways. One student majoring in business administration at Lehman College also takes courses in psychology and history. When he speaks, he impresses others as a well rounded, intelligent person, not just someone who can buy and sell merchandise.

And in very practical terms, the more we learn, the more we earn and the less likely we will be unemployed. Worthwhile knowledge is available through reading and through free courses at libraries and other venues. HOPE House has assisted members to secure employment in various areas including sales, food preparation, and cosmetology to name a few.

In today's world education is a must, whether for economic values or a desire to live a richer, fuller life.

New Grants Awarded for HOPE House

HDSW gratefully acknowledges the following organizations and foundations for their ongoing support of HOPE House, its members and its programs.

The Mary A. and John M. McCarthy Foundation has awarded \$15,000 to HOPE House for general support.

The Wyman Foundation has awarded \$7,500 to HOPE House for 2008 general support. HDSW also thanks the foundation for its \$10,000 2007 grant for HOPE House member transportation services.

United Way of the Town of Rye/Port Chester/Rye Brook has awarded a Local Presence grant of \$500 for the HOPE House Employment Initiative, specifically for members to purchase job interview attire and, once employed, to purchase clothing for work.

The Social Action Fund of Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester granted \$500 to help fund the HOPE House 2007 annual member summer vacation program.

The Women's Association of Rye Presbyterian Church, awarded an Outreach Grant of \$1,000 also to help fund the HOPE House 2007 annual member summer vacation program.

STILL HOPE-ING

The Wall of HOPE is a vehicle through which friends and family may support HOPE House. A \$100 donation or more provides a customized engraved plaque on the Wall of HOPE. Each plaque is engraved with personalized memorials, tributes and messages of support. Throughout the last year the wall has grown with additional plaques. If you would like to support HOPE House in meeting its goal to complete the last six plaques by December 31, 2008, make your check payable to HDSW, Wall of HOPE and include the message to be engraved. (Limit of three lines, 20 spaces per line.) Thank you for your support!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS

HDSW gratefully acknowledges the following contributors who have made generous donations of: meeting space, clothing, toys, furniture, computers, and household furnishings to the members and residents of HDSW/HOPE House:

Congregation Emmanu-El
The Christina Foundation
Christ's Church
Ethical Culture Society
Rabbi Bruce Fryer
Holy Trinity Church
Andrea Kocsis
Meg Uyeno Koester

Susan Klinger
Gloria G. Karp
Mr. & Mrs. Edward O'Donnell, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Pandekakes
Randi Cleaners
Peter Tangredi, Esq.
Trinity Church
Marjorie Zeidner

The following individuals represent the HDSW Junior Donors who have generously given their gently used toys and clothing to the children in our Family Supported Housing Program:

Miss Alyssa Agri
Miss Giana Agri
Miss Chelsea Byrne

Miss Katie O'Donnell
Miss Kelly O'Donnell
Mr. Ryan O'Donnell

A Day in the Life of... Blanca Lopez, Director, Neighborhood Preservation Company

It's almost 9 AM on a rainy spring morning, and Blanca Lopez is opening the Neighborhood Preservation Company (NPC) office at 28 Adee Street, Port Chester, to gather instructional materials for the third week of the "Civics for Immigrants" class, an English as a Second Language (ESL) course sponsored by HDSW's NPC. The course is funded by the Westchester Community Foundation, held at



Blanca Lopez

Summerfield Methodist Church in Port Chester, and ably taught by Jenny Mosquera, an ESL teacher certified and trained through Literacy Volunteers of Westchester County. It is free to participants, who are intermediate-to-advanced limited English speakers. Blanca meets Ms. Mosquera at Summerfield, and together they set up the room for the class, and greet

the eight adult learners, ranging in age from thirty-something to seventy-something, who arrive eagerly "back to school," to begin class at 9:30. Today's three-hour curriculum topic is: "Getting Comfortable in the U.S." Later topics will include understanding government, with a visit from Port Chester's Mayor Pilla, and understanding money and banking. As the students practice speaking and writing in the context of everyday civic institutions and examples, they have already formed their own informal learning community, sharing stories, questions, and real life situations. Most of the students in this group are employed evenings.

Leaving the class in good hands, Blanca returns to the NPC to prepare for another class, part of a five-session course in "Financial Literacy," sponsored by the NPC and funded by JPMorgan Chase. This sequence is held in Spanish, will begin this evening, and will meet at HDSW's HOPE House in Port Chester, adjacent to the NPC. Twelve participants have registered. The course uses the "Money Smart" curriculum developed by the FDIC. This is the second year the NPC has offered the program; two sequences are offered each year. It is already considered an NPC staple—full of useful information, valued by participants, and an excellent supplement to individual housing counseling.

Settling back at the office to work on individual housing counseling matters, Blanca follows up with a pending mortgage default foreclosure issue, talking with the mortgage company loan officer to help to resolve the mortgage arrears. She is the liaison between client and Mortgage Company. Happily, in this case, resolution is near at hand: the terms of the loan will be modified so that the client and his family can meet their financial obligations and stay in their house.

Blanca then rushes off to meet a general contractor who was selected to complete a project funded through the HOME Property Improvement Program. A chair lift will be installed in a two-family house, to make accessible the second-floor apartment of a handicapped tenant. Blanca meets with the home owner, tenant, and contractor for a final review of specifications and to confirm an installation start date.

No time for a lunch break. This is another sandwich and beverage "to go" day. Back at the office, Blanca meets with an NPC client, employed as a school bus driver, who has been having financial difficulties. Blanca shows her how to keep a daily journal of expenditures, and recommends that she enroll in the financial literacy class. Next, a "walk in" client has a document for the IRS which Blanca notarizes. Blanca then sees another "walk-in," a woman with a young child, seeking rent assistance. Blanca directs her, as the first step, to the Department of Social Services in White Plains to apply for emergency rent relief services.

It's now late afternoon. Blanca attends a planning meeting to prepare for AmeriCARES Homefront Day, sponsored annually by the NPC. This year, community volunteers will meet on May 3rd to make needed repairs at St. Francis AME Zion Church on Smith Street in Port Chester. Then she is on to one final meeting, this time held at the Port Chester Senior Community Center, where "Port Chester Cares," a group of local community agencies and organizations meet monthly to address the needs of adolescents in Part Chester, and report on progress, initiatives, and emerging issues.

Finally, returning to the office, Blanca catches up with her telephone voice mail messages and email, before heading out to help teach the evening's Financial Literacy class from 6-8 p.m. So ends another day of your NPC in action. ■

HDSW Recent Grant Support

HDSW thanks the **National Cooperative Bank (NCB)**, for their \$2,500 grant to HDSW for an Emergency loan/grant fund for HDSW clients. Such a grant enables HDSW to help clients pay rent arrears and security deposits, and thus prevent the threat of eviction and homelessness.

HDSW thanks the **Rye Presbyterian Church, Mission and Outreach Committee** for its \$4,000 grant for general support. Such support is critical in helping us to maintain ongoing staffing and programs.



Shelley Bender, HDSW Executive Assistant and HOPE House staff members: Juan Rodriguez, Robert Clark and Eddie Jerido arrange for and deliver 1000 coats to the HDSW offices in Mamaroneck which were arranged by Karl Mollin and donated by Artie Epstein at Randi Cleaners. The coats were distributed to hundreds of HDSW consumers and their children. HDSW also shared this donation with CLUSTER in Yonkers and the Larchmont/Mamaroneck Clinic of The Guidance Center of New Rochelle.

We thank Melissa Burgos, HDSW Homeless Outreach Worker, for making the arrangements for this donation and La'Mour Davis, Shelter Plus Care Supervisor, for her assistance in preparing the coats for distribution.

Human Development Services of Westchester

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