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LOCAL CHARTER SCHOOL
GETS ITS CHARTER
FOR THE HOLIDAYS

After a two-and-a-half-year effort, the dream of a new kindergarten-through-eighth grade charter school on Staten Island's north shore has come true. For the parents, grandparents, neighbors and friends who started and supported the effort, there could be no more welcome holiday gift.

On Monday, December 14, the New York State Board of Regents approved the charter application of the Staten Island Community Charter School, formerly known as the Barack Obama Community Charter School. That approval means the new charter school can begin operations, as its founders hoped, in September, 2010.

In its first year, according to co-founders Ellen Icolari, a former New York City teacher, teacher trainer and program administrator; and Tina Sher, an art director, designer and former public school parent coordinator, the new school will admit two kindergarten and two first-grade classes.

"You think about it, talk about it, write about it, dream about it," Sher admitted, "and still, you can't believe this has really happened."

"Except it has happened," Icolari interjected, "and now the hard work really begins."

According to Sher and Icolari, that hard work includes securing appropriate space, which they say the school is negotiating for now. And hiring staff and teachers. And enrolling new students for next fall. And more.

That 'more' includes getting the word out not only about the Staten Island Community Charter School's opening next September, but about what a charter school is and is not.

"We have to make it clear that a charter school is a public school like any other," said Ellen Icolari. "We want parents to know there are no extra fees or costs, no entrance exams or special requirements. By law, we must admit all students who apply, including English language learners and students with individual education plans."

Students living within District 31--which includes all of Staten Island --are admitted before those residing in other districts; but that's the only entrance requirement. If there are more applicants than seats available, admissions will be determined through an impartial lottery whose results will be announced in April, 2010.

For more information on the new school, go to its blog at statenilandcommunity@gmail.com

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