

Life ...

Continued from page A-2



PHOTO: LENORE SCHULTZ

tion. Morgan, of course, disagrees. "People have forgotten the original mission of CUNY, which was to help disadvantaged students get an education," she says. SEEK Director Alex Cruz echoes that sentiment, adding, "Between the challenges of a troubled public school system and the problems of poverty and minority status, many bright and ambitious young men and women arrive at CUNY's doors academically and socially unprepared to achieve their goals. What are we to do?"

Morgan herself can't help but look back on how she got to where she is today when thinking about her students. "I know first hand what it's like to be supported," says Morgan who gives much of the credit for her success to the kindness and generosity of Columbia Law Professor Harvey Goldschmid and his wife, Mary Tait Goldschmid, a consultant for Ernst and Young. In 1984, the Riverdale couple was advertising in newspapers for a housekeeper, at a time when Morgan was desperately looking for work. "I looked in the Riverdale Press one day and saw 'Cleaner wanted.' I thought to myself, 'I can clean a house. Let me call them.'" It turned out they also needed a nanny for their two children and a baby they were expecting. To Morgan, it seemed like another case of divine intervention, because it meant finally finding the family she had been longing for all her life. "The Goldschmids were like my SEEK program," she says. The family sponsored her for her greencard, and presented it to her as a Christmas gift. She became such a part of the family over the 12 years that she worked for them that they paid for her undergraduate studies and helped her fund her master's degree studies in English Literature, which she received from Lehman. It's because of the help she received from the Goldschmids that Morgan points out, "If I didn't give back, it would be a disgrace on me."

Since SEEK was initially set up to provide remedial work for students, some

people initially thought the changes CUNY policies might spell the end of the program. They haven't. Although catch-up courses will no longer be available during the academic year, SEEK will provide remedial help to students through the Summer and Inter-Session Immersion Programs, particularly for reading, writing and math. And as always, Morgan's tutoring center will be there to provide students with any assistance they may need during the academic year.

As upbeat as Morgan has remained in the face of criticism, she admits to being frustrated about the lack of positive attention SEEK receives for the work it does. She points out that students in SEEK want to achieve so much that they're willing to put in time to attend various mandatory programs that other students don't have to attend, such as Cambridge Study Skills workshops, study hall two times a week, and review sessions for challenging courses.

SEEK also provides financial support to students who might not be able to attend college without it. Abbey Roman, 22, a Lehman College senior who comes from a family of six with one income, says she is sure that without SEEK there would be no way for her to attend CUNY. "My counselor in high school looked at my father's income and said, 'My word, you need to apply for SEEK. How do you all make it on your father's income?'" Since entering college, Roman has done so well that she was accepted into the Lehman Scholars Program and just received honors from the Golden Key National Honor Society.

Morgan recalls one day meeting with some students to ask them if they find SEEK's services helpful. One student said, "Now I go home and tell my brother, 'Turn off that television. You need to be getting an education.'" She smiles at the recollection. It's times like that that make her most proud. "You realize these are kids that you've really had an impact on, and you think, 'Yeah, this is why I do what I do.'"

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