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Cooperative Movement in Sunset Park Thriving: United Handymen Launches Newest Worker-Owned Business

Brooklyn, New York - Today, nine immigrant men are proud to call themselves business owners. They are the members of United Handymen, a new worker-owned handywork business providing services such as appliance installation, furniture assembly and basic repairs to clients across the five boroughs.

A spirit of contentment and pride permeated the room at the Grand Opening launch celebration held at the Dedalus Foundation offices at 254 36th St. in Brooklyn. After a welcome and introductions, members shared the story of the cooperative's formation and provided the audience with an overview of their services.

The path to launching a cooperative was an intensive one. The members prepared through twelve weeks of training with the Center for Family Life, a program of SCO Family of Services, learning the ins and outs of democratic decision-making, cooperative principles, business planning, brand development and customer service. "It is an innovative model," says Noe, the President of the cooperative. It took another five months of refining their business plan and industry-specific training to formally open for business. "They have been working hard for this moment for eight months, have dedicated countless hours to the development of their cooperative business, and have dreamt about creating something that belongs to them and is now a reality." says Maru Bautista, Co-Director of the Cooperative Development Program at Center for Family Life.

The members' reasons for joining a cooperative are many, but all look forward to increased economic stability and a sense of collective ownership in their work. Jose Benitez explains, "it breaks the scheme of traditional work. Because we are representatives of our own business, it makes us feel valued." Mutual aid within the cooperative is also a big factor. "We learn from each other and we feel support from all of the colleagues," shared Manuel.

Today's symbolic ribbon cutting displayed that United Handymen are prepared to move into the next phase of their business: providing clients with reliable high-quality repair services, grounded in cooperative principles and a commitment to the community. If you are in need of handyman services, please call (718) 475 2039 to schedule a free estimate.

The Cooperative Development program at the Center for Family Life also provides technical assistance and training to 8 additional worker-run businesses. If you are interested in dog walking, cleaning, child care, elder care, or handyman services, please contact us at coopdevelopment@sco.org or (718) 633- 4823.