



# Crystal Run Village, Inc.

## Public Relations Department

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# News

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## **Those Who Get Not, Are Given**

*Middletown* -The Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Inc. (SANYS), was awarded \$5,000. from the Crystal Run Village Foundation, Inc. for its Jigiya Fund to help alleviate the poverty of people living in Mali, Africa who are marginalized in their society due to disabilities. Jigiya is comprised of 240 people having the challenge of a developmental or physical disability or blindness. The donation will support the development of a cooperative work center and provide materials that will make it possible for Jigiya members to support themselves.

The word Jigiya, in Bambara, a native language, means “support” or “help”. In Mali, people with disabilities experience discrimination and social, economic, and political exclusion. Jigiya was organized 10 years ago for the purpose of providing mutual support for people who are utterly invisible in their society. The group does not receive government funding, nor does any nongovernmental organization assist them. Forced to leave their family homes because parents cannot afford to provide for them, Jigiya members live as outcasts and beggars; there are no opportunities for work. On average, Malians earn a daily wage of \$2.00 that must sustain the typical family size of eight people.

The Jigiya Fund was created and is administered by the executive board of SANYS, a not-for-profit organization for and led by people with developmental disabilities. The SANYS mission is to assure the civil rights and responsibilities that include the opportunities and choices of equal citizenship. They do this by promoting independence and empowerment, through leadership, communication, networking and the encouragement of each other. SANYS is a confederation of regional and local self-advocacy groups, such as Wishes and Dreams, which is comprised of 22 people receiving services through Crystal Run Village, Inc. Wishes and Dreams recently made its own donation to Jigiya with funds raised from a car wash and the recycling of ink jet cartridges.

The relationship with Jigiya began in 2006 when Steve Holmes, the administrative director of SANYS asked his good friend Stephen Anderson, a Peace Corps volunteer in Africa, if he had encountered any people with disabilities. Anderson, whose service work is teaching people to start a small business, asked around and discovered a group of people with disabilities calling themselves Jigiya. He took photographs of the people and emailed them along with individual stories to Holmes.

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Compelled by the great need seen in these forgotten people the decision was made to send a care package of letters, T-shirts, hats, pens, brochures and newsletters, cassette recordings and photographs of SANYS members. When Anderson presented the box to Lamine, the leader of Jigiya, he shared it with his members; they were overwhelmed. SANYS is the first organization, Malian or foreign, that has ever offered the group any recognition or support.

With the assistance of the United States Embassy in Mali, the Peace Corps and New York State, the constraints of distance and language were overcome through technology; SANY made face to face contact with the Jigiya people via Internet video conferencing through an interpreter. This unprecedented connection was made during the recent statewide self-advocacy conference attended by more than 300 self-advocates with intellectual disabilities. The SANY Board decided to establish the Jigiya Fund right then and there by donating \$363 from the 50/50 raffle held during the conference.

The Crystal Run Village Foundation, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that raises, manages and distributes funds for the purpose of improving the quality of life for adults and children with disabilities and their families. As the fundraising entity associated with the human services agency Crystal Run Village, Inc., the Foundation seeks to promote the human rights and dignity of people with disabilities through inclusion in all aspects of their communities, whether it is across the street or in the global arena.

**Learn more about the Jigiya Fund by calling Steve Holmes, administrative director of the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State at (518) 382-1454 or email him at [seholmes@earthlink.net](mailto:seholmes@earthlink.net) or visit [www.sanys.org](http://www.sanys.org)**

**To learn more about the concept of self-advocacy and the Wishes and Dreams Self-Advocacy Group in Middletown, contact Christine Knickerbocker at 845-695-2547 or [Christine\\_Knickerbocker@crvi.org](mailto:Christine_Knickerbocker@crvi.org)**