

CHOICES

Winter 2007

Joining the Workforce

Keith began working at Longhorn Steakhouse in Hermitage, TN on September 1, 2006. Despite his lack of work experience, Longhorn hired him to work for 10 hours a week on Friday and Saturday nights. After only a month, Keith decided he wanted to work more hours and asked for an additional shift. Because Keith had shown himself to be an exemplary and diligent employee, they immediately assigned him another shift. Working has truly made a difference in Keith's life showing him greater independence and pride by being a part of the working community. He is a true example of what joining the workforce can do for one individual. We are very proud of Keith and wish him the best for continued success!



Keith outside Longhorn Steakhouse in Hermitage, TN

UPDATE

Our house becomes their home

In September 2006, Nancy Seiler and Terri Morrison moved from the New Lisbon Developmental Center into a brand new home which was donated by Kara Homes, a prominent developer in New Jersey. Since then, Nancy and Terri have settled into their home and have acclimated themselves to their community. Terri is now working at McDonald's where she has already proven herself to be one of their most responsible, dedicated employees. She has opened her first bank account

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"Teri has been doing an exceptional job with all of her work. She has exceeded our expectations as an employee."

Ceil Smith
General Manager,
Manahawkin District McDonalds

Providing "Options" Across the USA

In 1989, Community Options, Inc. (COI) was a small non-profit run from the home of founder and CEO, Robert Stack. Over the past 17 years, Community Options has grown tremendously and now proudly offers services to over 1,500 individuals in nine different states. Recently, Community Options has begun offering services in Kentucky and Connecticut, states where services were not previously available. We have also recently developed a new site in Corpus Christi, Texas, and are increasing the services provided in New Mexico. Due to further growth in already established locations, several offices have moved to new sites, including San Antonio and El Paso, as well as our Manhattan office which is now located on the 12th floor of the Empire State Building. In the future, Community Options will be opening new offices in Ohio, continuing to expand our mission of

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UPDATE

Our house becomes their home

and purchased Christmas presents for her family on her own for the first time. She is also saving her money, so that she can enjoy more new experiences- she says there are too many things that she wants to do that she can't even name them! Nancy is also enjoying her new community, spending her days improving social skills so that she can be employed and get a paycheck like her housemate. On the weekends, Nancy loves to socialize and has invited friends and neighbors to her home so that she can cook for them. She also enjoys going to community events and has not missed a street fair that has come anywhere near her town! Both ladies are thrilled to be living in their own home and appreciate their freedom of choice.



Nancy & Terri moved from the New Lisbon Developmental Center into a brand new home in September 2005. Terri says there are too many things that she wants to do that she can't even name them!!

Pittsburgh's 11th Annual "Gift of Giving" Fundraiser

COI of Pittsburgh proudly hosted their 11th Annual "Gift of Giving" Fundraiser - a fundraiser that provides gift wrapping services to area shoppers. The annual gift wrapping event was held at Century III Mall in West Mifflin and ran from Friday, December 1, 2006 to Sunday, December 24, 2006 from 10AM-9PM. COI Staff and over 70 volunteers put in countless hours wrapping holiday presents for mall shoppers in return for donations. Their hard work and dedication to the COI mission assisted the Pittsburgh office in successfully raising over \$3,000!

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Providing "Options" Across the USA

empowerment through opportunity for people with disabilities.

Connecticut - Our new administrative office in Farmington, CT opened on December 2, 2006, and is being led by Executive Director, Joseph Poliquin. Community Options has opened a home in Unionville currently providing supported living for two individuals. With the first home underway, staff are now in the process of obtaining a license from the State for a second home in Bristol to provide a Comprehensive Living Arrangement (CLA) for 4 people. It is expected to begin operation in February 2007.

Executive Director, Joseph Poliquin states "Now that we have our foot in the door and a base from which to operate, we are prepared to plan on increasing the residential opportunities we offer and to develop day and employment programs. We look forward to meeting the needs of people who can benefit from Community Options services in this State."

Kentucky - Our new office in Bowling Green, Kentucky is being headed by Executive Director, Jonathan Howard. He is working closely with the State of Kentucky's Division of Mental Retardation Services with regards to referrals to provide residential, day, and employment services. Our goal is to open eight three person homes within the first 12 months of operation.

The Division of Mental Retardation Services has indicated that they have additional needs for new providers in Hopkinsville and in Paducah in the western part of the state. Our short term plan is to build and grow the Bowling Green operation and then expand to those two areas with stability and quality of services being the focus of the expansion. Included in this plan is exploration into the Lexington and Louisville areas to provide innovative services for people with disabilities such as The Daily Plan It and Project OPPORTUNITY.

Texas and New Mexico - Mario Saenz, Regional Vice President for Texas and New Mexico, and Richard Moreno, Director of Operations in Albuquerque, have worked to open a small office in Corpus Christi, Texas. Two individuals are now receiving residential services, and opportunities for growth are being sought.

Operations at our Albuquerque office in New Mexico have also been expanding recently. Mario Saenz and Richard Moreno have worked to open a Day Habilitation Program in Peralta, New Mexico. In the Southwest region of New Mexico in Las Cruces, services are being expanded to include residential, home based services, respite, community access, supported employment, and non-medical transport. We also plan to develop and implement a Day Habilitation program in Santa Fe and Las Vegas, NM.



The El Paso office enjoying their holiday breakfast in their new building. This new office is able to accommodate the growing staff and Day Program members.

Vanderbilt Children's Hospital & Community Options, Inc.

expand EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In 2005, Vanderbilt Children's Hospital and Community Options, Inc. formed a unique and progressive partnership targeting the vocational gap between graduating special education students and their leap into the workforce after high school. This collaborative relationship resulted in the creation of "Project Opportunity."

The premise for Project Opportunity is based on the simple reality of training students with a potential employer such as Vanderbilt Children's Hospital instead of a simulated or artificial work trial experience. The goal is at the end of the academic school year, participating high school students may be offered employment at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital.

As one of the largest non-profit employers in the state of Tennessee, Vanderbilt Children's Hospital had many job opportunities to offer graduating students. At the same, Community Options, Inc., as an expert in supporting individuals with disabilities in the workforce, could provide

the technical expertise for Project Opportunity participants through innovative accommodations, adaptations, and on the job coaching.

In the 2005-2006 academic year, five special education students from Williamson County schools in Tennessee were the first class to participate in Project Opportunity. Out of this original group of five students, four were offered employment with Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. Two of these successful job opportunities were provided to Nancy Hays and Jessica Crowell. Both Nancy and Jessica work in the Perioperative and Precedural Services Department (PACU). The Hospital and Community Options, Inc. were able to create this employment through job sharing and carving.



It is a win situation for everyone since Vanderbilt Children's Hospital has a recruitment tool and the students have a potential of being offered employment with one of the largest employers in the state of Tennessee.

A story of inspiration and motivation

My name is Karen Lambeck and over a period of about 30 years, I was diagnosed with two brain tumors that led to 19+ surgeries (including the placement/revision of a dual shunt system). I am now a 39 year-old woman, living independently and working full-time in New York City. I want to share my story of overcoming adversity and I hope to inspire others and to convince them that their struggle is worthwhile and can lead to a fulfilling life.

My story depicts the many challenges that I have encountered and that I continue to struggle to overcome. Among these are physical (disabilities, speech, fatigue), emotional (fear, loneliness) and social (insecurities, professional difficulties, limitation on activities) challenges. While my struggles will likely continue throughout my life, and despite past failures and setbacks, I must stress that I have won many of the battles. In spite of the uncertainty, I look towards the future with hope and confidence.

My journey qualifies me to comment on a patient's critical need for the support of family, friends, medical practitioners and fellow patients, and to discuss the difficulties in coping when this support is absent.

While I appreciate the encouragement of friends and family, I believe there is no better source of inspiration and motivation than the story of another's triumph over similar obstacles.

Karen was recently published in Exceptional Parent magazine and is currently seeking funding for her book in order to tell her full story. Karen can be reached via email - Lambeckk@aol.com.



Photo from Karen's article published in Exceptional Parent Magazine.

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Creative Services, a subsidiary of
Community Options Enterprises,
designed & produced this newsletter as
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employing persons with & without disabilities.

The ToyMaker

Where we see tape, foil, markers, cereal boxes, and plastic silverware, Sam Dugan sees superheroes, spacecraft, and monsters. Using everyday household items, Sam has designed, developed, and engineered an impressive collection of action figures, vehicles, and dioramas, each with a unique name and a detailed biography. In fact, Sam's toy making talents have recently caught the eyes of several people in New Jersey – you can now find superheroes and vicious creatures atop a number of filing cabinets and desks throughout our offices, and some have even made its way to the University of Medicine and Dentistry New Jersey.

Sam's creative personality and vivid imagination also bring an extra element of fun into his home. Sam's room contains well over 100 unique creations, some with moveable parts, some that can change into cars or animals, and some that snap together to make bigger toys. Sam's staff members are often amazed at his creations, and they do an excellent job of keeping him well stocked with supplies, no easy task given the volume of characters that Sam can imagine and build in just a few hours. Recently, Sam has turned his creative attentions to the floral business, and has just finished a several month training period at Community Options Enterprises flower-shop – Vaseful. Sam has also recently discovered AC Moore, so we can all look forward to new ground being broken in Sam's toy-making enterprises.

1.877. **VASEFUL**
VASEFUL.com



Vaseful, a Community Options Enterprise is a unique floral business, which provides employment for people with disabilities in an integrated setting. We are committed to Community Options mission and to serving our customers with the finest floral arrangements and gifts.