

WAYNE TODAY - FEBRUARY 12, 2009

Community Options reflects on 20 years

Thursday, Feb. 9, 1989 could have been just another day for you, but for hundreds of people with developmental disabilities it was a turning point in their lives. They were given the opportunity to choose a provider agency that was going to depart them from segregated unlawful institutions into inclusive community homes. Thursday, Feb. 9, 1989 was the day that officially marked the opening and incorporation of Community Options, Inc.

Community Options, Inc. (COI) began around the kitchen table of founder and current president and CEO Robert Stack in Bordentown. Stack and his associates opened what we know it as today, the nation's fastest growing nonprofit organization providing quality supports to people with developmental disabilities in 22 offices across nine states. For 20 years, Community Options, Inc. (COI) has developed housing and employment opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

Development started in Mercer County and quickly grew to 18 out of 21 counties in the state. What started as a couple of group homes has grown into 62 throughout New Jersey serving over 200 people.

Henry Ward Beecher, a social reformer of the 1800's once said, "The ability to convert ideas to things is the secret to outward success." The vision and ideas behind the operations of Community Options, Inc. comes from Robert Stack, founder, president and chief executive officer of Community Options.

Community Options places persons from institutions or on wait lists labeled as behaviorally or medically challenged into the community. They do not permit aversive conditioning for anyone. Positive approaches coupled with custom tailored common sense is the most effective way to facilitate a full life for persons regardless of the severity of their disability. They consistently prove that people with disabilities can thrive by transitioning them with an arsenal of support services.

In addition to being instrumental in closing state developmental centers throughout the country and developing the most innovative housing opportunities for people with the most severe developmental disabilities, Community Options has worked for 20 years to develop entrepreneurial business that positively employ people with developmental disabilities.

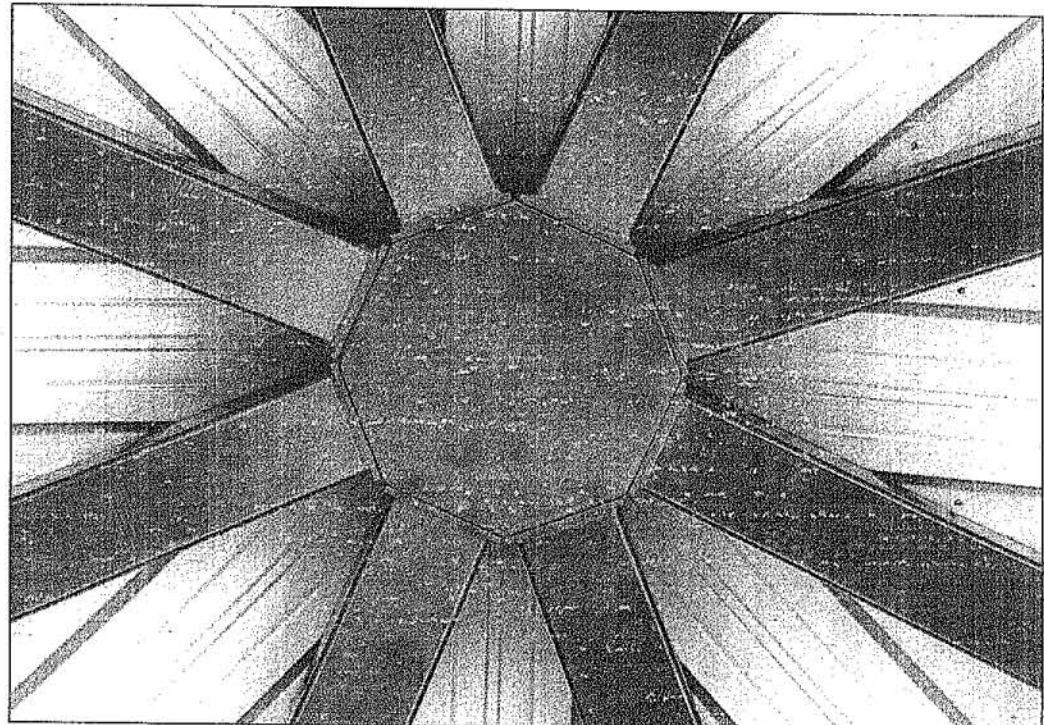
Community Options Enterprises has 21 employment programs across New Jersey. They are successfully placing people with developmental disabilities in real jobs at minimum wage or better. They are increasing the numbers of people with developmental disabilities landing better jobs with better benefits in the competitive marketplace.

Reflecting on the past 20 years can only be adequately explained in one word - freedom.

Community Options is devoted to continuing on this journey and wholly dedicated to converting their ideas into outward success.

Visit www.comop.org.

MYSTERY PHOTO



STAFF PHOTO BY PIERFRANCESCO BACCARO



Can you guess where in Woodland Park this Mystery Photo was taken? Call our Mystery Photo Answer Line at 973-569-7375 and leave your name (PLEASE spell BOTH your first and last names), the town in which you live and your phone number. The first correct caller who can be contacted by phone will win a Mystery Photo T-shirt. Only one winner per household. Answers must be received by 10 a.m. on the Monday following publication. Good luck!

The last Mystery Photo was a close-up of the rusty tractor in front of the auto repair shop on Garside Avenue in Wayne, near the corner of Laauwe Avenue.

There were no correct callers.