



Summer 2004

Of Missions & Milestones

Where the determination is, the way can be found. George S. Clason

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American educator, Reed Markham, once said that outstanding achievement lies within the reach of those who know how to reach beyond themselves. The sentiment befits Community Options' President and Chief Executive Officer, **Robert P. Stack**. On April 12, 1989, as he called his first Board of Directors meeting to order from his Bordentown, New Jersey kitchen, Robert dreamed of empowering individuals with developmental disabilities nationwide, enabling them to depart institutions, define their dreams, and make career and life choices that foster their self-esteem. Fifteen years later, Community Options continues earning its acclaimed reputation as one of the nation's foremost nonprofit organizations supporting people with developmental disabilities to achieve personal and financial success. Now headquartered in Princeton, NJ, Community Options operates residential and employment programs in eight states, assists nearly 1,500 individuals and employs more than 1,300 people.



Tim Dunigan, Community Options' Board Chairman; Robert Stack, President & CEO; and Dr. Clarence York, Trustee, enjoying Community Options' 15th anniversary gala.

When social participation increases, people with disabilities enjoy their lives and continued on page 2

GROUNDWORK FOR TOMORROW

In an effort to address the disparity millions of Americans with disabilities face every day, **The Dr. Clarence York Foundation** was created to establish a \$5 million endowment to enhance services for individuals assisted by Community Options. Dr. York is an internationally acclaimed specialist in the development and leadership of organizations serving children and adults with disabilities. Funds generated by The Foundation will assist the organization to enhance staff training and support, augment staffing levels and capabilities, and expand program services. With financial support derived from interest income of the endowment fund, The Foundation will develop a stable funding source to enhance the mission of Community Options. Dr. York has been a trustee of Community Options for more than ten years and has advised the agency on methods for growth and program integrity, drawing upon his own strong values and experience offering comprehensive, worldwide services to entities serving persons with mental, emotional and physical disabilities. For more information, contact Sara Mariner, Director of Corporate Relations: 973-725-7876.



The Dr. Clarence York Foundation

WHAT CONSUMERS SAY ABOUT COI?

"I like it here in my home and I have friends." **Gerardo Rodriguez, TX.**

"I'm not treated like a patient, I'm treated like a person." **T La Rock, NY.**

"Community Options gave me a home. I love my staff because they take me into the community and to basketball games." **Norma Toney, PA.**

WHAT WORKING FOR COI MEANS?

"Community Options sincerely values its employees, encourages creative thinking outside the box, and offers the autonomy to implement new ideas." **Mario Saenz, Regional Vice President.**

"I am proud to be affiliated with an organization that stands behind the rights and dignity of persons who have developmental challenges." **Sherry Franklin, Executive Director.**

"We listen to people with disabilities and make their wishes and dreams come true. We do not make excuses or tell them they can't have or do something because of their disability." **Bridget Haney, Executive Director.**



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live longer. In 1991, this fact propelled Robert to successfully move 16 people from the E.R. Johnstone Research and Training Center in Bordentown, NJ into their own modern and comfortable homes. Today, Community Options supports the autonomy of 464 individuals in 140 homes nationwide. These men and women no longer worry about bedtimes; they determine their own schedules and consider what they will do in their free time. Typifying this sentiment is consumer **Richard Dominguez**, a man who was institutionalized for forty years and now lives in a group home. When asked what Community Options means to him, he responded, "Freedom!" The agency also assists people with disabilities to purchase their own apartments, condos and houses. Individuals assisted by Community Options carry on regular activities of community life. They make friends, shop at malls and supermarkets, pay bills, attend concerts and movies, hail cabs and compete in sporting events. This summer, they are enjoying the beach, painting porches, and envisioning summer barbecues.

Community Options' employment programs have consistently placed hundreds of capable individuals into rewarding jobs. Their successes have prompted businesses to examine the diversity, dedication and strength each individual with a disability contributes to the world of business. "Individuals are prepared to enter and remain in the job market," says **Fran Curley**, Regional Vice President for New Jersey. "We work with each person on his or her individual goals. We assist them in developing whatever skills they want to learn. **Eddie Williams** wanted to work and earn his own money. Today, he experiences the satisfying accomplishment of his first job at Shop Rite."

Robert also pioneered successful entrepreneurial businesses that employ people with disabilities in integrated settings where they learn skills and earn an income. In 1995, under the auspices of Community Options Enterprises, Inc., the organization opened the Daily Plan It (DPI), a Princeton, NJ-based professional working environment and copy center offering job training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and offering self-employed and small business people, start-ups and others all the amenities available in a traditional office environment. In 1999, another DPI opened in Morristown, NJ. In 1997, a New Brunswick, NJ-based flower shop called Tennyson's opened its doors for business and began providing training for people with disabilities. Renamed Vaseful, this profitable business enterprise continues to thrive. "Vaseful provides the highest quality floral services nationwide and creates empowering employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities who gain valuable customer service and retail skills that enable them to enhance their career potential and segue into other jobs," said **Corey Hribar**, Director of Community Options Enterprises, Inc. "We hope to continue expanding not only our walk-in business, but our online and toll-free services, thereby creating even greater opportunities for the individuals employed at the shop," Corey added.



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“We treat people with disabilities as people. We respect their individuality, and we ask how they’re doing because we’re a family with those we support.”

- Robert Stack

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Agency initiatives foster independence by fully valuing the opportunity, participation, independent living and economic autonomy of every individual it assists. “We don’t segregate people in workshops, and we don’t hurt people in the name of clinical treatments,” **Robert Stack** explains. “We treat people with disabilities as people. We respect their individuality, and we ask how they’re doing because we’re a family with those we support.” Robert has continually advocated for disability issues worldwide by sharing his expertise, knowledge and best practices in Egypt, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.

On March 26, 2004, at Princeton University’s Prospect House, Robert was joined by his son Chris, his brother Ronald, Community Options’ Board of Directors, advisors, friends and supporters to celebrate the agency’s 15th anniversary. Guests included **Bernard Krakowsky**, one of the first individuals who Robert moved from an institution into the community; **Jim Smith**, the NJ Dept. of Human Services’ Deputy Commissioner; **Tim Dunigan**, Vice President of Sales for Hershey Foods Corporation and Chairman of Community Options’ Board of Directors; **Madeleine Will**, Director of the Public Policy Center for the National Down Syndrome Society and former Community Options’ Regional Vice President of Planning and Advocacy in Washington, DC; and **Dr. Clarence York**, an international disability expert and COI Trustee.



Community Options celebrated its 15th anniversary at Princeton University’s Prospect House.

Community Options’ indefatigable efforts transform public attitudes, promote and support ongoing change, enlighten the community, encourage increased creativity and innovation, and illustrate how closing the gap between people with and without disabilities strengthens the nation’s workforce and improves the lives of all Americans. Through Robert Stack’s determination and leadership, a dedicated Board, support of national offices, and partnerships with private industry, thousands of individuals with disabilities nationwide are enjoying wonderful, successful lives.



*NJ Dept. of Human Services’ Deputy Commissioner, **Jim Smith**, recited a congratulatory letter from Governor James McGreevey at Community Options’ 15th anniversary gala.*



***Bernard Krakowsky**, center, speaking at the gala event.*



HOMeward BOUND

TENNESSEE

New residential options in Chattanooga and Hixson are affording additional individuals with homes of their own. In February, **Deron Bethune** was thrilled when he stood on the doorstep of his new Chattanooga house. Deron quickly acclimated to his environment and loving staff, and began a part-time job at a local social service agency where he is making friends and earning a salary performing janitorial duties. "He is thrilled about participating in his community and takes advantage of the local zoo, park, grocery store and area restaurants," says **Garth Platt**, Executive Director of our Chattanooga office. Deron lives alone in his house and receives support from a 24-hour rotating staff. **Bryan Coppinger**, whose Hixson duplex is a lot more private than the house he once shared with five siblings, is discovering the joys of a home of his own where he receives supported living and personal assistance services. "His bedroom is decorated with Shania Twain posters, a TV and a computer, on which he writes notes to his staff," Platt says. Bryan will have a housemate within the next year. He lived with parents for most of his life, and then spent several years at a developmental center before moving to his Hixson address.

with similar interests and abilities. He works at the Metroplex Habilitation Center where he is a full-time assembler of beauty products. **Brent Wright** also wanted to live with others who share his goals. Brent is about to graduate from high school, participates in a local community college's bridge program where he studies sales, and works part-time at an athletic shop stocking shelves. **Steven Stoops** works full-time as an assembler of gift packs. "These men are like brothers," says **Richard Brownlow**, Executive Director of Community Options in Dallas. "They're outgoing, energetic and looking forward to making memories in their new home. They receive minimal assistance with daily living activities, love horseback riding, rodeos, the racetrack, dining out, and movies. They exemplify the goals set forth by Community Options."

Two new homes opened up in Amarillo. **Nick Mitchell, Aaron Thurman, JP Bolden** and **Christopher Romero** are between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two. Three of the four gentlemen are in school, and one participates in day service options through our agency. "These housemates are very close to each other and enjoy playing Nintendo, going to the park and having barbecues," says **Carla O'Brien**, Executive Director of our Amarillo office. Three men reside in the second home. **Steven Counts** works part-time at a Wal-Mart Super Center. **Gregory Counts** assembles displays at Brother's Furniture and participates in agency day service options along with **Finis Wade**. The men enjoy attending church, doing yard work and playing basketball for the Special Olympics.

TEXAS

In April, our Dallas office heralded the opening of a new home and welcomed three residents who are overjoyed with their new abode. **Thomas Roberts** wanted to live with people



Bryan Coppinger is discovering the joys of a home of his own where he receives supported living and personal assistance services from Community Options.



WISCONSIN

Community Options successfully placed two persons from nursing homes back into the Franklin community. **Phyllis Steinert** and **Madelaine Weidig** live in a beautiful, four-bedroom home amid friendly neighbors, a welcoming community, and an attentive, around-the-clock staff. Phyllis attends a day program in Milwaukee where she enjoys music therapy. Favorite outings include trips to the local library, museum and grocery stores. Madelaine, who lived in a nursing home for 34 years, now smiles often, laughs aloud and cleans her plate at mealtime. Her bedroom, which she decorated, features bright bedding and her own artwork. "Expansion in Wisconsin means that Community Options is diligently working with the state and local funding sources to successfully expedite the departure of people with developmental disabilities from institutions, large group homes, and nursing homes," says Regional Vice President, **Karen Hensley**. In the next few weeks, the residence will become the agency's first coed home when **Harold Wright** unpacks his suitcases.

COBAC SPOTLIGHT

The efforts of the Community Options Business Advisory Council volunteers are invaluable. Nashville, Tennessee COBAC member and catering executive, **Don Weidknecht**, has championed Community Options' mission by educating businesses about the value of hiring people with disabilities. "People with disabilities are enthusiastic, dedicated workers who make great contributions to this community, and deserve ample opportunities for personal growth, job flexibility, and social inclusion," says Don, a National Association of Catering Executives' (NACE) board member and owner of Foodstaff, a catering business that provides delicious cuisine to statewide venues. For two consecutive years, Community Options has been honored by NACE during an annual fundraising event that emphasizes the value of social participation of people with disabilities. "The community is the right place for these capable individuals," Don says, "and I encourage my clients, including the Airport Marriot, to hire people with disabilities." Recently, Don connected with LeVan's Guitar Repair where individuals with disabilities now clean instruments and perform other maintenance chores. In total, Don has assisted more than 30 individuals with disabilities to gain employment. Sincere thanks to Don for his ongoing support!



BUILDING BLOCKS CAMPAIGN

Because Community Options' employees are wholly committed to providing excellent programs and supports to the individuals we assist, our services are exemplary. Unfortunately, these levels of service are not always provided for by traditional funding sources. Our Building Blocks Fund was created to help us increase services for individuals with disabilities. Additional funds help us move more people out of institutions, enable families to keep their loved ones at home with support services, and give them a place to go when their families are unable to care for them. If employees would donate two dollars from each paycheck, we could raise close to \$100,000 in one year. Our goal of 100% employee participation would be a remarkable measure of our commitment to the people we support.

For more information, contact
Jennifer Uppole
National Coordinator
of Special Events at
609-951-9900

FORWARD THINKING

Regional Vice President for New York, **Rich Zuckerman**, who joined Community Options last November, relays that he is optimistic about his office's future plans. "We applied for and received renewal from the New York Department of Education's Vocational and Educational Services for the continuation of the vocational services operating in Binghamton, NY. This means that we'll continue to provide vocational services to consumers in the Southern Tier where we now serve 40 individuals in supported employment and follow-along services. The types of businesses that have hired people with disabilities include the hotel industry, Wegman's, and other retail establishments. Our Brooklyn office just received approval from the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities to expand the Day Habilitation Without Walls program. Beginning in July, services will be provided to five additional consumers who will benefit from this non-center-based program that focuses on community integration, and personal choice." Rich adds that our New York State regional offices plan to expand residential opportunities in the coming year.



TARGET HITS THE MARK

Community Options' Binghamton office gratefully accepted a generous donation of furniture from the Vestal, New York office of Target, the national department store chain.

Biannually, Target donates items to one area nonprofit agency, upholding its commitment to support and empower the communities it serves. "It's a great feeling for us to provide this furniture to an organization dedicated to helping to improve quality of life for individuals with disabilities," said House Ware Department Manager, **Jim Pippa**. The donation included dressers, entertainment centers, desks, coffee and end tables, coat racks, sofa tables, and other useful items. "We plan to use this furniture in two of our group homes, and in several apartments where individuals with disabilities reside," said **Megan Adams**, Community Options' Executive Director in Binghamton.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Kudos to Regional Vice President for TN, PA and WI, **Karen Hensley**, the 2004 recipient of the Betty Pendler Award, given to employees whose dedication and work exemplify Community Options' mission.



SUCCESS CORNER

The achievement of your goal is assured the moment you commit yourself to it, as these highlights demonstrate.

· *Patience is a Virtue*

Dallas resident, **John Anderson**, is a bowling enthusiast whose affinity for knocking down the tenpins led to his participation in a Tuesday night league, and a yen for a career involving his favorite sport. Imagine his joy when he was hired at the Fun Fast Bowling Center where he provides customer service. "Everybody at the bowling center loves John because he is a true people person," says Dallas Executive Director, **Richard Brownlow**. To date, John's highest score is 175.

· *Movie Buff and Elvis Fan*

Nashville resident, **Elissa Groves**, is about to celebrate four years of employment at Regal Cinemas. Elissa, who lives in a supervised apartment, says she thoroughly enjoys her job responsibilities of preparing snacks for moviegoers, and the relationships she has built with coworkers. In March, Elissa vacationed in Memphis where she visited Graceland. She also spent one afternoon at the Grand Casino in Tunica, Mississippi trying her hand at the nickel slots.

· *A Full Life*

Ray Seifert is a Pittsburgh resident who receives support from Community Options in his own home. For two years, he has worked part-time as a janitor for the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. He saves his money for CDs, presents for his girlfriend, and occasional vacations. Most of all, Ray enjoys having control over his own life.

· *Leading by Example*

In 1988, when **David Listowski** sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI), the Syracuse, NY resident lost his ability to speak. Following a coma, David had to re-learn how to walk and talk. With Community Options' support, he now assists 30 area individuals with TBI via a computer lab that teaches cognitive skill development, e-mail, journaling and how to scan pictures. An avid bicyclist, David also publishes *The Voice*, a quarterly newspaper geared toward people with TBI.

· *Pet Lover*

Vonda Kaye Prather joined Community Options' Dallas family in 2002. Vonda receives residential support services in her home. She recently graduated from high school in McKinney, Texas where she was voted Homecoming Queen for 2003-2004. Vonda's determination and love of animals netted her a job at Pet Smart where she works four days a week. Puppies and small dogs are her favorites.

· *Watchful in Princeton*

There's no ceiling on effort! Take Princeton, NJ resident, **Frank Gambuti**, a man whom Community Options coached for employment. While working as a greeter at Lowe's, Frank saved the company \$900 when he spotted a man attempting to leave the store carrying a wood splitter, but no receipt. When Frank confronted the man, he dropped the merchandise, fled the establishment and was apprehended in the parking lot.

· *Special Delivery*

Typifying Community Options' job sampling through our supported employment program, **Katie Terzian** delivers mail at Princeton's Educational Testing Service. "I love working here, and the people are wonderful," Katie tells us.



NATIONAL SPECIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

Second Chance Prom July 24, 2004

If you missed your prom, or would have preferred a different date, now is your chance to rewrite history! Our Community Options' team is hosting the Second Chance Prom in Binghamton, NY. The evening includes dinner, dancing, and a two-hour open bar. Tickets are \$120 per couple. **Contact Megan Adams: 607-722-5971.**

Casino Night August, 6, 2004

Feeling lucky? Participate in Casino Night as our Community Options' team brings Las Vegas to Dallas, Texas! The evening includes a buffet dinner, open bar, games and entertainment. Tickets are \$40 and include 100 chips. **Contact Sonja Stanton: 972-503-3901.**

Community Options' 12th Annual Golf Classic August 16, 2004

Golf anyone? In partnership with Hooters of Princeton, this fun-filled event will be held at the Olde York Country Club in Columbus, NJ and includes green fees, driving range use, lunch, dinner and prizes galore! **Haldeman Ford** of Hamilton, NJ is sponsoring the event. **Contact Jennifer Uppole: 609-951-9900.**

SPREADING THE WORD

Continuing to impart pertinent information about Community Options' mission and initiatives, **Robert Stack** has spent the past year addressing a variety of national audiences. In May, Robert was one of several distinguished panelists participating in The Yale School of Management-The Goldman Sachs Foundation Partnership on Nonprofit Ventures' Second Annual National Business Plan Competition for Nonprofit Organizations. The Partnership is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Goldman Sachs Foundation. Held in Manhattan, the event is open to nonprofits seeking to start or expand successful profit-making ventures, with substantial cash prizes and technical assistance offered to the winners. Robert's knowledge of entrepreneurship, business skills and social responsibility led to his being invited to participate alongside the VP of Goldman Sachs & Company, faculty from Yale, Duke and Columbia Universities, and other prominent individuals. Robert led a workshop entitled, "Affirmative Businesses: Working With a Targeted Population."

Harvard University's Business School has offered courses in entrepreneurship for more than a half century and counts among its 65,000 graduates some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs. In April, Robert addressed the School's Social Enterprise Initiative to enlighten tomorrow's leaders about how Community Options' various business enterprises improve society and the economy, and the importance of creating social value through the nonprofit sector.

In February, at Tennessee State University's School of Social Work and Sociology, a crowd of seventy seniors about to seek entry-level social worker positions gathered to hear Robert debunk myths about individuals with disabilities. "His remarks were on target, timely and accurate," said Professor of Social Work, **Dr. Robert Castor**, "and we were particularly enlightened by his remarks from an international perspective as he spoke across a variety of different cultures." Graduate students at Rider University were equally captivated as Robert overviewed the philosophy of Gentle Teaching, a non-aversive approach to teaching individuals with disabilities, during a Community Agencies class. "His remarks provided students with a positive alternative to the punishment-oriented interventions that many institutions still use," said Professor of Graduate Education, **Dr. Nancy Westburg**, who hopes Robert will return to address students in the fall.

This summer, Robert will work with the Central NJ Council of the Boy Scouts of America to engender a broader appreciation of the abilities of individuals with disabilities. Last fall, Robert and agency technology initiative, COINet, were highlighted on the PBS program, "New Jersey Works," and featured in NJ Business Magazine and Mercer Business Magazine. This year, Robert and several consumers were highlighted on "Garden State Matters," a UPN9/FOX/WWOR TV program. This spring, The Times of Trenton and the Philadelphia Inquirer interviewed Robert.



Robert Stack and Dr. Nancy Westburg, Professor of Graduate Education, Rider University, November, 2003.



Host Mike Gilliam, Robert Stack, T LaRock and Bernard Krakowsky after taping "Garden State Matters," a UPN9/FOX/WWOR TV program.



Robert Stack being interviewed by a newspaper reporter.

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EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

A unique characteristic of Community Options is the value placed on entrepreneurship, among the most respected avocations in American society. Community Options' Incubation Network (COINet), a first-of-its-kind technology incubator, continues making dreams come true for entrepreneurs with disabilities, as well as individuals who develop services for individuals with disabilities, by providing invaluable support and business development services. To date, COINet has incubated nearly a dozen businesses including travel and employment agencies, a greeting card company, a wholesale jewelry business, and others. COINet recently

welcomed **Ed Larsen**, founder of AbilityMarket, a for-profit consulting firm that introduces administrative and management professionals *with abilities* to corporate clients nationwide. "I'm incredibly grateful for the enthusiastic support I've received in realizing my entrepreneurial dream," Larsen commented, adding that AbilityMarket was open for business and signed its first major client in less than one month. Larsen shares Community Options' strong conviction that individuals who want to work can, regardless of their disability. His business gives them the opportunity to take that first step.

Historically, the services that Community Options, Inc. provides have been supported primarily through the Division of Developmental Disabilities, Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Section 811, and by grants from corporations, foundations, and individuals.

Times are changing, and government funding for people with disabilities is diminishing. To continue serving the increasing number of people waiting to leave institutions, we must rely on the generosity of individuals who support Community Options' commitment to empowering people with disabilities to live regular lives by benefiting from and contributing to society.

Yes! I can help Community Options, Inc. continue to develop residential and employment supports for people with developmental disabilities. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 Other: _____

Checks should be made payable to Community Options, Inc. and sent to: Community Options, Inc., 16 Farber Road, Princeton, NJ 08540

Name: _____ Tel: _____

(as you would like it to appear in all donor listings)

Address: _____

Contributions to Community Options, Inc. are tax deductible as allowed by law.