

CHOICES

FALL 2007

Community Options National Picnic

Community Options Staff, individuals we support, and our families gathered at Liberty Lake Park in Columbus, NJ in June for the Annual Company Picnic. Those who attended enjoyed burgers, pasta, and fun activities including miniature golf, paddle boats, swimming, and just hanging out in the sun. Community Options "imatter" shirts, bracelets and mugs were handed out as you entered the pavilion. A major highlight of the afternoon was the intense annual volleyball tournament, which resulted in the Fiscal Department "The Blings" giving up their title, and passing it on to the COE "Wolves".



Our work would not be possible without your support

Community Options is always in need of a strong and reliable team of volunteers to help with special events, advocacy issues, and business networking. We need your help to build strong communities that welcome and support all people. Please share your special talents and interests with the people we support.

Visit our website at www.comop.org or call our national office at 609.951.9900 for more information.

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Autism to experience the physical, psycho social, cognitive, and recreational benefits of aquatics.

The imatter Surfing Camp was inspired by research that supports the concept that water is the ideal medium for exercise, and to rehabilitate the body. For children with Autism, aquatic therapy focuses on therapeutic, play-based functional movement, improving range of motion, helping to facilitate neurodevelopmental growth, improved body awareness, increased balance, sensory integration, mobility skills, and most importantly, having fun.

"Ten years ago, Autism was diagnosed in 1 out of 10,000 children, and considered a rare disorder," explains Guberman. "Today, Autism is diagnosed in 1 out of 166 children, and is a growing epidemic with no cure." There are 1.5 million people with Autism living in the United States today - 450,000 of whom are children in need of individualized special education programs. In fact, Autism is considered the fastest growing developmental disability.

Community Options plans to expand its imatter initiative and to host a surfing camp each year at different locations throughout New York and New Jersey. "What we hope to gain from this event is a connection with these children and their families that will last a lifetime," says Guberman. "We also want the children to be able to go back to school in the fall, and when they are asked what they did for the summer, they can proudly say, 'I went surfing!'"



Thank you to Cancos Tile, Therapy Surf Shop, Hough & Goudice and Fifth Room Creative for sponsoring this event.

Disability Awareness Week October 22 - 28

The National Development Council is gearing up for Community Options Disability Awareness Week beginning October 22, 2007. Community Options offices around the country are working together to hold awareness days during this week and are having proclamations read by their local officials at these events. In addition, the Council is planning a national fundraiser for October 2008 in which all of the offices will host the same fundraiser on the same day.

To start gaining momentum the council has designed an "imatter wristband". Wearing these will help spread the word about Disability Awareness Week.

ALOHA

from Hawaii

Debbie, one of the people supported by Community Options, wanted to travel to Hawaii to visit with her sister, who resides there. Not wanting to go alone, Debbie asked her friend Arlene to accompany her. Naturally, Arlene was very happy to oblige!

With the help of Liberty Travel, the spectacular trip was planned successfully, complete with a variety of sightseeing activities, luaus, and other fabulous opportunities to experience Hawaiian culture. The date was set, and joining Debbie and Arlene were four of Community Options' Community Support Staff - Judie, OJ, Tawnya, and Norma Jean. The six travelers departed from Pittsburgh



for their eight day stay in sunny, Honolulu. Upon arrival, they were greeted in traditional Hawaiian style, and each was presented with a beautiful lei. Then, it was off to the luxurious, Outrigger Waikiki Hotel on the beach.

Each day had something new in store. The travelers went shopping at the International Market Place, toured historical landmarks like Pearl Harbor and the Iolani Palace, visited the Hawaiian Royal Museum and the zoo, attended a luau, and basked in the sun on the crystal clear waters of the Pacific Ocean. When the time came to depart for home, they were disappointed that they had to leave, but were grateful for all of the opportunities that the trip had provided for them.

BOWLING GREEN, KY

Offering individuals what they want!!!

Community Options recently began providing services in Bowling Green, KY and we officially received our certification and provider number in February and began providing services for our first individual on March 1st. As of June 12th, Bowling Green has four individuals living with Family Home Providers. The most exciting aspect for the many people needing services in the Bowling Green area is that Community Options is offering individuals what they want (Family Home Providers). This commitment by Community Options is now forcing other agencies to consider doing the same type of program which will benefit all individuals. Executive Director of Kentucky Jonathan Howard writes, "In our little corner of the world here in Bowling Green, we find this movement quite exciting!"

For more information please contact the Bowling Green, Kentucky office at 270-780-9330.

BINGHAMTON, NY

Launches unique Structured Day Program!!!

The Binghamton, NY office has launched a unique and stimulating new Structured Day program in June called Non-Stop SDP. Non-Stop SDP distinguishes Community Options in several ways. We built the all day, every day schedule precisely according to waiver participant's availability, interests, goals and desires. We combined interests for "activity cells" within each scheduled period, and developed upon an entirely new perspective on community inclusion. Non-Stop SDP includes a 14-hour help line that allows waiver participants to call for assistance, information, and support while not attending our programs, and an interactive schedule of availability for our clients to meet ILST, IBP, Employment specialists, and counselors during regular program hours.

The response so far has been overwhelming and very exciting. We have begun developing special projects for individuals recovering from TBI's to participate in camping, hiking, job skills, historic train rides, overnight visits to new communities, job training in "real world" settings, church and other worship groups, picnics, exercise programs, art and music classes, computer education, and interaction with natural supports and friends in our Community Options facilities. Every bit of the Non-Stop program originates with the goals, ambitions, suggestions, and enthusiasm of our wonderful TBI community.

Non-Stop SDP goes far beyond the routine programming and library visits of traditional Structured Day programs. In less than a month, we have met a dozen new participants and began working with service coordinators to enroll people across our region in the program that provides the greatest opportunities for growth and happiness.

More than simply learning to live with a traumatic brain injury, our waiver participants have begun to enjoy more of the opportunities that life has to offer.

For more information please contact the Binghamton, NY office at 607.722.5971.

International Association of Positive Behavior Supports Conference

On March 9, 2007 Chris Dixon, Assistant Executive Director of COE, and Lisa Smith, Director of Training and Quality Assurance, presented along with Dr. Daniel Baker of the Elizabeth Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities at the International Association of Positive Behavior Supports Conference in Boston, MA. The presentation, entitled the 'Intersection of Gentle Teaching and Positive Behavioral Supports: Implications for Training and Support' outlined the result of a year long partnership between Community Options, Inc. and the Boggs Center. The project included technical behavioral support assistance, training methodology and ideas on improving support to direct care staff.



Dr. Daniel Baker, Chris Dixon, & Lisa Smith.

Community based homes vs. institutions

The priority in funding should be switched to independent living alternatives.

On January 16, 2007 former DHS Commissioner Tim Carden spoke on the behalf of Community based homes vs. institutions and pleaded for the priority in funding be switched to independent living alternatives. This will help close the gap between New Jersey and the 46 states in the US that have already heavily funded similar programs, and are now more advanced than New Jersey.

The purpose of his speaking at the hearing, as stated by Mr. Carden was to “highlight the failure of our state over a long period of time to stimulate, fund, and support more independent living alternatives for developmentally disabled citizens.” Referencing a report written by Mr. Carden, as Commissioner to the Governor-elect Thomas Kean, in November 1981 he explains, “as long as the resources and attitudes of the Department favor the institutional side, the responsiveness and the capacity of the community to address human needs will be inhibited.” Mr. Carden states that in the twenty-five years since this report was written we “haven’t come far enough” and “we can do more.” Today in New Jersey there are still 7,000 developmentally challenged adults and their families awaiting service and/or residential placement in our system. Also, there are over 3,000 residents in state institutions for the developmentally disabled that could be living more independent and fulfilling lives in community settings.

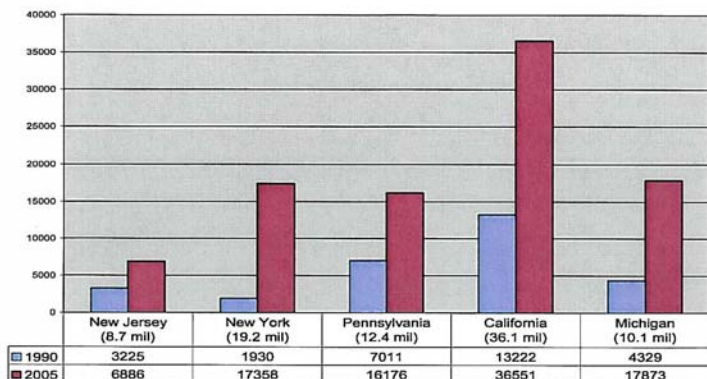
Mr. Carden states we must do away with the excuses including lack of money, and instead find solutions such as extracting money from our institutional budgets, where we can increase federal participation significantly. Mr. Carden also points out that the fear of not recruiting enough qualified workers can easily be squashed with the investment of outreach and training programs to recruit new workers. Also, the transfer of some dedicated professionals already working at institutions into the community settings will provide the community with knowledgeable staff. Mr. Carden summarizes himself best when he says “In short, we can do better.”

Excerpt from the Testimony of former DHS Commissioner Tim Carden at the January 16, 2007 Department of Human Services Division of Developmentally Disabilities public hearing regarding transitioning people with developmental disabilities from state institutions to community settings.

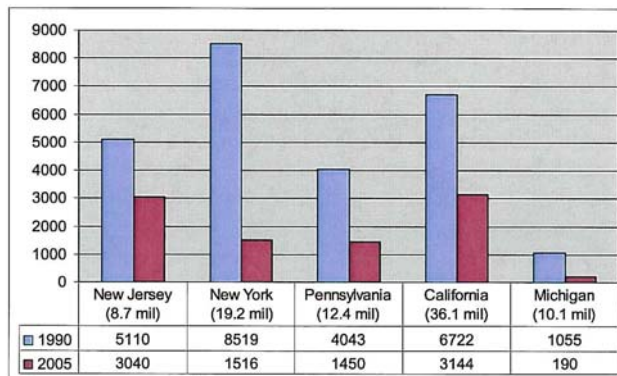
Tim Carden is a member of the Community Options Board of Directors.

“I want to be clear at the outset that my comments are not directed as criticism of this administration or the DDD staff in attendance this evening. My purpose is to highlight the failure of our state over a long period of time to stimulate, fund, and support more independent living alternatives for developmentally disabled citizens. I want to further emphasize that our systemic failure to change the continuum of service that is based on long discarded models of care can be made about other areas of Human Services as well. In short, the crisis in the Division of Developmental Disabilities to build adequate community based support and services reflects a challenge our state continues to face throughout our human service network.”

DDD Community Residents 1990 & 2005



DDD Institutional Population 1990 & 2005



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

SAVE THE DATE



imatter conference in Santa Fe, NM

After the tremendous success of the ‘What Works?’ Conference in Austin, Texas last year, Community Options is pleased to announce this year’s imatter conference. This year’s event will be held in Santa Fe, NM on October 1-2, 2007. The focus of the imatter conference is to provide old and new strategies for maximizing Medicaid funding to support community programs for people with disabilities. Specifically we will be focusing on current Medicaid regulations, learn about new initiatives and how they are working, listen to accomplished speakers such as Dr. Colleen Wieck, Executive Director of Minnesota’s Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities, and to form an on-going community of stakeholders to keep track of future opportunities. Our keynote speaker will be New Mexico’s Governor, and United States Presidential Candidate Bill Richardson. Community Options, Inc. will be awarding scholarships to participants of Partners in Policy Making. Registration and travel stipends for people with disabilities and their family members are available at www.comop.org or by contacting **Lisa Smith** at lisa.smith@comop.org.