

# CHOICES

Spring 2010

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5th Annual Conference

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## Community Options, Inc.

Supporting People with  
Disabilities since 1989.

Our Mission is to provide  
housing and employment  
supports for individuals  
with disabilities.

[www.comop.org](http://www.comop.org)

## — Advocacy - Connect. Share. Live.

### Community Options Prepares for 5<sup>th</sup> National Conference

In September, Community Options will host its fifth annual conference at the W Hotel in Dallas, Texas. The conference will run from Monday, September 27, 2010 to Thursday, September 30, 2010.

This year's conference will be the culmination of a year of work by family advocacy groups that we have assembled across the United States. The formulation of these family groups was made possible by a grant our organization received in September of 2009 through the Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

The theme of our conference for 2010 is Advocacy, a cause that is especially important to individuals with disabilities and our mission statement. Mrs. Judy Woodruff will be our Opening Keynote on Monday, September 27, 2010, and Laura Shumaker will follow as the second keynote speaker on Tuesday, September 28, 2010. Dr. Al Condeluci, an advocate for inclusive living and interdependence, will also speak during conference. The conference will also feature "break-out sessions," where advocacy groups will give presentations on topics related to individuals with disabilities.

For more information about the conference, please contact Lisa Smith at 609-951-9900 or [lisa.smith@comop.org](mailto:lisa.smith@comop.org).

### Official Media Sponsors



Judy Woodruff

## Community Options Remembers Surf Camp Volunteer

The Community Options family was struck by tragedy this New Year's Eve, when Kristen Bednar, lead female volunteer of the iMatter Surf Camp, sadly passed in a snowmobile accident in Vermont. Kristen was a special education teacher, and a passionate supporter of children with autism spectrum disorders.

"She was the most amazing woman and a huge advocate for all children with autism spectrum disorders. She had the best attitude and a smile that could light up your entire life. She will be greatly missed," says, Jessica Guberman, Executive Director of COE and founder of the iMatter Surf Camp.

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, a "Paddle Out" took place on Long Island in memory of Kristen. Hundreds of surfers, families, and friends gathered on the beach in Kristen's honor. Kristen volunteered at Community Options' iMatter Surf Camp for Children with Autism, which takes place every

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## Celebrities Align Themselves with our Cause



### Tray Chaney

**Q:** What inspired you to become an Ambassador for Community Options?

**A:** I like to be a part of projects that deal directly with the people, where you can see the work that

is being done directly. The services that Community Options provides gives tangible results that can be measured by those in need in each state. That is exactly what is needed when so many are in need of real help.

**Q:** What types of adversity have you had to face in your own life and what words of wisdom can you offer to families?

**A:** No matter where you live or what people might think are your circumstances, we are all hurting in some way. In my life I have had to deal with uncertainty about my future and the challenge of choosing the right road over the wrong one. I think the best advice I can give is don't let your circumstances define who you are. No matter how dark today might seem, we have to remember that the sun will always rise in the morning.



### Jacki-O

**Q:** There are many causes that celebrities can attach themselves to. Why did you choose a disability cause and how do you think being involved with Community Options can help you?

**A:** Anyone in the public eye will tell you that so much of what you do is constantly being judged. When it comes to those with disabilities, they are judged as well, but not always given the press and attention their needs deserve. I hope my involvement will at least in a small way give them the voice they deserve, and it will be yet another avenue for me to appreciate all that I have been given.

**Q:** As a parent, what suggestions can you offer to parents who are in need of resources and access for their children with disabilities?

**A:** The most important thing is to not be afraid to ask for help or seek it out. Sometimes our pride gets in the way, but when it comes to our children, it is our responsibility to do all we can for those we love. Do your research and take advantage of all that is out there.

## Family Web 2.0 Update

In September of 2009, the Administration on Developmental Disabilities awarded Community Options a one million dollar grant entitled "Family Web 2.0," and since then family support groups have convened in 12 cities throughout the country.

Each month, these groups, comprised of parents, siblings, and other relatives of individuals with disabilities, meet to review and rate resources on the three topics determined to be most important by these family members: advocacy, inclusion, and education. The grant is unique in that it will inevitably result in a national network of family members of individuals with disabilities, transcending geographical boundaries.

The website, to be launched in the beginning of April, will function as a "consumer reports" for family members, as it will provide them access to resources specific to their own situation and rated by parents who have "been there done that". The website will also feature videos relating the real-life experiences of individuals with disabilities, family members, and knowledgeable individuals in the field. The groups continue to grow and are always recruiting and accepting new members.

For more information on the Family Web 2.0 grant please visit [www.familyweb2.org](http://www.familyweb2.org) or contact Devi Hensch at (609) 951-9900.

## COI to build NJ's first environmentally friendly Group Home

In partnership with Hopewell Township and Princeton Design Guild (PDG), Community Options will transform one of its seventy group homes in New Jersey into the state's first environmentally friendly building of its kind. The home will be certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. PDG will be responsible for the management of project architecture and construction, including disassembly, renovation, and relocation of various existing structures.

The environmentally-friendly project will result in a Community Options group home constructed of various recycled materials including 10,000 board feet of lumber harvested by PDG; the entire original timber frame, flooring, and siding



from a previously existing structure; and reusable supplies such as glass, pipes, stone and concrete. Less than 10% of the existing materials will go into a landfill. Not only will the project provide an attractive group home in a rural setting, it was also assist Hopewell Township in satisfying affordable housing goals.

*Hopewell Township Mayor Michael Markulec; Community Options CEO Robert Stack; Princeton Design Guild Project Architect Christina Loiacono, AIA; Community Options Regional Vice President Svetlana Repic Qira and Hopewell Township Administrator/Engineer Paul Pogorzelski*

## Community Options Remembers Surf Camp Volunteer

summer in Westhampton. She was an invaluable member of the camp, which was inspired by research that supports the concept of aquatic therapy for children with autism to improve movement and facilitate personal growth.



Photo provided by Lennon Photo

For more information about Kristin Bednar or the iMatter Surf Camp, please visit [www.comop.org/surf\\_camp](http://www.comop.org/surf_camp) or contact Jessica Guberman at 973-927-8500.



Jessica Guberman, Ph.D., Executive Director of Community Options Enterprises. and Mayor Steenstra of Bloomingdale.

## Despite Recession, COI secures jobs for people with disabilities

On December 8, 2009, PBS Nightly Business Report featured a segment on Community Options' ability to advocate for people with disabilities through the development of relationships with employers throughout the country. "There are statistics that show that 66 to 85 percent of all jobs are found through personal connections," says Robert Stack, President and CEO of Community Options. Stack went on to explain that Community Options has been successful in finding employment for people with disabilities because the organization takes the time to build relationships.

Community Options will soon kick off its 2010 Supported Employment Campaign, with the goal of securing successful employment for individuals with disabilities. The organization values the importance of not only finding jobs for the individuals they support, but securing meaningful employment opportunities that these individuals will enjoy and look forward to everyday, jobs that will allow them to build relationships with their non-disabled peers.

## Community Options relocates "Journeys" to Bloomingdale, NJ

On December 5, 2009 Community Options' day program, *Journeys*, moved into its new home of Bloomingdale, New Jersey. *Journeys* provides vocational skills training, recreational and community inclusion, and volunteer opportunities to people with disabilities, and is one of Community Options' most prominent day support programs.

Bloomingdale's Mayor Steenstra is very supportive of the program, stating, "When you have an opportunity to diversify your town and include a program that does such tremendous good, it is always a pleasure to do so." Community Options is thankful to have found such a welcoming community in which to continue the program. "We are ecstatic to be a part of the Bloomingdale community and are so appreciative of the warm welcome we have received," says, Jessica Guberman, Ph.D., Executive Director of Community Options Enterprises.

## Vaseful and Presents of Mind on the town and featured at:

Tribeca Retail Club Event  
CUNY Graduate School of Journalism  
The New Yorker Hotel  
Real Housewives of NJ's Star,  
Dina Manzo's New Jersey charity event



Lindsay, Gabby and Brooke of Community Options of New York City at the Tribeca Retail Club Event.

Vaseful.com

PresentsofMind.org

To learn more about the Journeys program please contact **Megan Lamphear, Program Manager** at 973-492-1745.

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# CAREER DAY

Saturday, June 19, 2010

## Rider University

The Mercer Room  
2083 Lawrenceville Rd.  
Lawrenceville, NJ 08648

For more information  
please contact **Eileen Johnson**

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[www.comop.org](http://www.comop.org)



## CAREER DAY Rider University

June 19, 2010

11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

For more information  
please contact **Eileen Johnson**

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Email: [Eileen.Johnson@comop.org](mailto:Eileen.Johnson@comop.org)

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and more...