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Community Options Awarded Grant To Assist Students In Gaining Employment After Graduation

PRINCETON, NJ – Earlier this month, the Trenton Thunder, a minor league baseball team and affiliate of the New York Yankees, awarded Community Options, Inc. a \$2,500 grant for their School-To-Employment-Program (STEP) through the 2013 Trenton Thunder Charities Community Grant Program.

Community Options' School-To-Employment-Program provides students with disabilities in Mercer and Middlesex counties the chance to develop real-world work experience. STEP's purpose is to help them transition into the workforce using the skills they gain from job sampling at partnering businesses. Some include: Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) University Hospital; RWJ Center for Health and Wellness; University Medical Center of Princeton; Mercer County Community College; and YMCA. Services range from vocational assessment to interpersonal skills for achieving community-based paid employment. This year, Community Options will serve school districts in Ewing, Hamilton, Robbinsville and Metuchen.

“The STEP grant will provide select Mercer and Middlesex county high school students with disabilities the opportunity to develop real work experience prior to graduating,” said Steve Verba, Managing Director of Community Options. “It is our objective to assist them with transitioning into the workforce, using the skills they will gain from working with partnering companies.”

STEP and the aforementioned school districts will select 23 students, ranging from ages 17 to 24. Students will take their high school classes in the morning and will then be transported to job sites for three hours of hands-on skill building job duties. Students work with job coaches at each job site for six weeks until rotating to a new experience.

In addition, students will receive training in career exploration and job skills workshops on topics such as: Writing a Resume, Writing a Cover Letter, Interviewing Skills, Effective Communication Skills, Exploring Career Interests, Seeking and Obtaining Employment and Successfully Maintaining Employment.

The Thunder awarded a total of \$12,150 to eight local nonprofit organizations through their grant program.

Trenton Thunder Charities grants are awarded annually with the goal to support organizations that enhance the educational opportunities and quality of life for children as well as programs that support the betterment of the local community in general.

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About Community Options

For nearly 25 years, Community Options has developed housing and employment programs for people with disabilities. Currently the 7th largest non-profit in New Jersey, Community Options operates with a budget over \$96 million and serves thousands of people with disabilities through 38 offices across 8 states. Providing advocacy assistance to empower people with disabilities, Community Options believes that all people –regardless of disability level – should live and work in the community with dignity, choice, and self-determination. A registered PVO with USAID, Community Options is also the pioneer of innovative programs for people with disabilities in the Middle East, Russia, and South America. Please visit our website at www.comop.org.

CEO available for comment. If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview, please call (609) 352-5280 or e-mail Kathryn at Kathryn.Sampson@comop.org