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Pennsylvania Man Thrives On His Own, Prepares for Holiday Season

PRINCETON, NJ (December 9, 2015) -- In October of 2012, Community Options opened its first home in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania. The home was opened with the intention of providing care to a young man, Scott, who had previously lived with another residential provider for two years. During his time there, he was psychiatrically hospitalized a total of seven times. Ultimately, he was discharged from their program, and committed to Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic. He lived there for a period of seven months, destined to soon move to another state institution for permanent placement.

That is, until he was welcomed into his new home with Community Options.

Even though Scott had found a new home, there were still many challenges to overcome. Scott was on a large amount of medication, and did not feel well for a majority of most days. He also did not prefer to exit his home for a long period of time, as it seemed he had become accustomed to remaining indoors. However, through the dedication and careful planning of a truly “multi-disciplinary” team, those involved in Scott’s life became pleasantly surprised by the changes they were starting to see. As Scott became accustomed to his new environment and staff, he began to make tremendous strides in behavioral and emotional control.

With the help Community Options, Scott and his family carefully chose a new team of doctors, with the goal of reducing the amount of medications he was on. Soon after, he began to wake up earlier in the day and sing songs as he helped make breakfast, no longer showing the signs of pain that he used to from the side effects of too much medication.

As staff continued to build on their relationship with Scott, he began to slowly appreciate going out into the community more. He now ventures into the community every day of the week, planning his daily outings with a picture schedule of his choosing.

"Scott may not realize the impact he has had on so many people's lives, but at Community Options, Inc. and during a time of cheer and togetherness, it is clear the impact that he has had on our company, our individuals and their families," said Michael Carnicella, Executive Director of Greensburg, PA offices. "The reason COI expanded into Westmoreland County was to serve Scott. Scott was on the path to live in an institution because he couldn't find a provider that would accept him for who he was. Scott started a snowball effect, which resulted in COI serving 18 individuals and their families through a variety of services within the past three years. "

With the holiday season in full swing, Scott recently decorated a Christmas tree in preparation for his fourth Christmas since moving into his new home. Scott has come a long way in the time since he had moved into his new home, and although he is unable to tell Community Options staff how much he appreciates his home, everyday he exhibits it through the progress he makes and the smiles he shows.

“This holiday season has allowed us to reflect on the amazing accomplishments Scott has achieved while living with COI,” said Carnicella. “Scott has been a leader for services for so many other individuals and families. With Scott celebrating his fourth Christmas in his home, it is a true testament to the hard work of the Direct Support Professionals as well as the managers. The continued growth and success would not be possible without the extraordinary work and effort that the COI team gives to the individuals that we support on a daily basis.”

About Community Options

For over 25 years, Community Options has developed housing and employment programs for people with disabilities. Community Options operates with a budget over \$107 million and serves thousands of people with disabilities through 38 offices across 10 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.