

For Immediate Release
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Community Options Receives \$10,000 Donation from Valley National Bank for Acclaimed Red Ribbon Academy

(PRINCETON, NJ) – Community Options, Inc., one of New Jersey’s largest non-profit corporations whose focus is to help provide community housing, job training, employment, and life-skills experience to those living with disabilities graciously accepted a \$10,000 donation from Valley National Bank of New Jersey.

“As a community bank with long-standing ties to the neighborhoods we serve, we feel it is our responsibility to help organizations like Community Options in its mission to provide housing, support services and advocacy assistance that empower people living with disabilities,” said Valley National Bank Vice President Steve Bearse.

The donation will be dedicated to the opening of a second Community Options’ Red Ribbon Academy, a day habilitation program designed to foster growth and progress for adult individuals who are the most medically fragile. Launched in 2013, the Red Ribbon Academy in Wayne, NJ is specifically tailored for people with special medical needs. The facility is barrier free and ADA compliant, containing therapy rooms with special sensory environments for people with profound intellectual disabilities and medical needs. A wide array of therapeutic and recreational activities is available to maintain and increase mental acuity and maximize their physical ability. These activities nurture friendships, stimulate interest in life, and provide opportunities for creativity for 23 individuals.

“It has been the dream of parents and caregivers across the state that their medically fragile adult children with developmental disabilities will have a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment in which to happily spend their days after aging out of high school. A big thank you to Valley National Bank for helping make this a reality for those in Middlesex and Somerset counties”, said Linda Zani Thomas, one of the founders of The Parents Group. The Parents Group is made up of the five advocates who created the original concept to be carried out by Community Options.

“We are very grateful for Valley National Bank’s generous donation to help start up our new Red Ribbon Academy in Hillsborough,” said Robert Stack, CEO of Community Options. “The people of Valley National have been great supporters of the programs and services offered by Community Options and we look forward to continuing our relationship with them well into the future.”

Community Options is targeting a Spring 2016 opening for the Hillsborough location. The Red Ribbon Academy is open to anyone who qualifies for services under the NJ Division for Developmental Disabilities with transportation provided to and from the Academy.

About Valley National Bank:

Valley National Bancorp is a regional bank holding company headquartered in Wayne, New Jersey with over \$20 billion in assets. Its principal subsidiary, Valley National Bank, currently operates 227 branch locations serving 30 counties throughout northern and central New Jersey, the New York City boroughs of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and Long Island, and Florida. Valley National Bank has generously donated to Community Options in the past; helping fund the nonprofit's largest fundraiser, [Cupid's Chase 5K](#). Its current donation will aid the startup costs of the new Red Ribbon Academy as well as provide equipment for the sensory room.

About Community Options, Inc.:

For over 25 years, Community Options has developed housing and employment programs for people with disabilities – serving thousands of people through 38 offices across 10 states. Community Options provides advocacy assistance to empower people with disabilities because all people – regardless of ability level – should live and work in the community with dignity, choice and self-determination.

For more information please visit our website: www.comop.org and to follow along with the ComOpCares campaign, search #ComOpCares on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Photo Caption: Community Options President and CEO, Robert Stack, graciously accepted the gift from Steve Vitale, First VP and Team Leader of Commercial Banking, and Steve Bearse, VP and Territory Sales Manager, at the nonprofit's headquarters in Princeton, NJ.

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