

CHOICES

Fall 2013

Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina visits Community Options' Group Home

"In my 50 years in this field I have never, ever seen a Governor come to any home operated by an agency supporting people with disabilities" said long-time Community Options Trustee and Chairman of the York Foundation, Dr. Clarence York.

In the most recent board member meeting, Robert Stack explained that when South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley came into the house, she asked one of the residents to give her a tour.

Rebecca, one of the residents, led the Governor around the home. Instead of starting with her bedroom or the kitchen, she went right to the garage to show Governor Haley what she believed to be the most important part of the community, a Ford van (a Ford van, Rebecca explained means freedom to her).

"We can go any place we want here," said Rebecca.

Governor Haley asked how the local community accepted our home.

South Carolina Executive Director Dorothy Goodwin pointed out that, "When we bought the bank foreclosure and renovated it, we had a barbecue and invited all the neighbors. They all came and now we are friends with them."



Governor Nikki Haley visits with one of our residents.

"It was an honor to tour the Community Options' home in Columbia," said Governor Haley. "They offer quality care and provide adults with special needs the opportunity to live an independent life style. We will continue to support these kinds of services for individuals with disabilities."



Community Options 25th Anniversary Gala Committee Members

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A Message from Susan Kyrillos Chair Community Options' 25th Anniversary Gala

Community Options is inspiring to all of us who know this impressive organization. When Robert Stack, founder and CEO started the company in 1989 from his kitchen table, he had no idea that the mission would expand to a total of eight states. The ninth, Mississippi, will be added any day now.

The simple goal of Community Options is to provide a higher quality of life for individuals with disabilities living in state institutions. Over the past two decades, we have seen the realization from state government leaders that a small group home is a better way for these individuals with significant disabilities to live and enjoy life. Many of them understand it is a moral issue and reflects a stronger mutual benefit to our society.

Ironically, this is also a smarter financial plan for state governments. In New Jersey, every individual who leaves a state institution and moves to a group home, saves the state approximately \$100,000 annually.

In addition to the group homes Community Option provides, employment opportunities and on the job training are provided to the clients. The Daily Plan It located in Morristown, NJ and Vaseful Flowers in New Brunswick, NJ are two businesses where Community Options provides ongoing, appropriate level of work for those clients who are able and willing to work. They have fun, receive a paycheck and contribute to society.

In 2014, Community Options will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary! We are planning a celebration in May. Please stay tuned for details. In the meantime, enjoy the upcoming holiday season with your family!

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Susan Kyrillos'.

Susan Doctorian Kyrillos, Chair, 25th Anniversary Gala

Mississippi officials assess and evaluate our homes and businesses



Featured in photo: David (Matt) Armstrong, Director Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Bureau, Jerry Avery, Director of Dept of Mental Health, Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Screening, Katie Teizian, associate, Daily Plan It Princeton, Ashley Lacoste, Director of Home and Community Based Services & Ed LeGrand, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Mental Health & Steven Verba, Managing Director for Community Options Enterprises.



Danny C., Ashley Lacoste, & Ed LeGrand take a break after Danny gave them a tour of his home. Thank You for taking the time to see our group homes, our businesses and visit with the people we support.



David's art is in private collections around the world. Despite the significant value of the initial donation, after meeting the day program participants David surprised us with two additional pieces. David said, "For me, when 'things' are given, the value cannot exist in how much something is worth. It is about inspiring people, bringing freedom, and making connections. Life has more value than can be measured."

The donated works will be proudly displayed in the Santa Fe day program. David's art can be seen and purchased at www.scorpiostudio.org.

We are pleased to announce that the improvements and re-design of our website are now complete!

Everything is more legible with darker texts on lighter backgrounds as well as smoother web navigation with drop down menus. Users will have an easier time accessing the different types of services we provide, office locations, and our career section with current job openings.

When signing up for Cupid's Chase 5K just click on the Cupid's Chase tab and you'll be able to sign up for the race directly on our site, form a team or join an existing team.

Visit us at www.comop.org to check out our complete re-design and let us know what you think.

If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please reach out to Kathryn Sampson at kathryn.sampson@comop.org



Community Options would like to thank David Culbertson for generously donating paintings to the Santa Fe day program

Since coming to Community Options in September of this year, Santa Fe, NM Day Program Coordinator, Jon Paszkiewicz, has been working to add value through community activism and involvement, self-advocacy, education, and the arts. As part of this initiative, and with the support of Executive Director Kathy Davies, Jon reached out to local artists. This is how he met David Culbertson.

David's work is best described in his own words: "I work in organic dye and polyurethane on panel using various non-traditional tools to create my paintings... My current works are explorations in mixing paint, polyurethane, & organic dye to create random flowing images. The final result is far from the look of the creation of the piece, with gravity slowly moving the paint into forms & designs that are very different when I go check on it the next day."

NJ Congressman Frelinghuysen visits Community Options' Red Ribbon Academy

Community Options, Inc. welcomed 11th District New Jersey Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen to the Red Ribbon Academy. Community Options operates this program for young adults with profound disabilities.

The Red Ribbon Academy is the first organization in New Jersey that aids adult individuals who have the most severe, medically fragile disabilities in a way that fosters growth and progress. Congressman Frelinghuysen met with Community Options President and CEO Robert Stack as well as Regional Vice President Svetlana Repic-Qira to learn about this program and the therapeutic services it offers. Two parents of the programs participants, Linda Thomas and Marsha DuBose-Wilks, gave Congressman Frelinghuysen a tour of the building. He had the opportunity to visit the program's state of the art sensory therapy room and meet the individuals receiving daily support as well as their physical and occupational therapists.



Congressman Frelinghuysen high fives Mo one of the students at the Red Ribbon Academy.

"It was an honor and pleasure to tour the Red Ribbon Academy in Wayne," Frelinghuysen said. "The facility boasts state-of-the-art programs with loving staff, which enhance the emotional and physical growth of those with severe developmental disabilities. I thank the Red Ribbon Academy and Community Options, Inc. for their hard work and dedication in development of such an inspiring plan to serve New Jersey families."

Frelinghuysen and Stack's relationship dates approximately 30 years. While employed with the state of New Jersey, Stack gave a tour to Frelinghuysen of a state-run institution for people with severe disabilities. At the time, Frelinghuysen was serving his first term as Assemblyman. This is where the two gentlemen forged a relationship based on improving care for people with disabilities. This relationship was founded on a fundamental belief that people with disabilities who want to live in an environment in which they can flourish, should be given the opportunity.

The Congressman ostensibly showed that he cared by visiting two of the grateful mothers who fought hard for the program. Before he left, they thanked him for the visit. He hugged them and said, "You are the powerhouses".

New York City Councilwoman Inez Dickens visits our home in Harlem, NY

Director of Residential Services, Alicia Henry, New York City Councilwoman Inez Dickens, and Executive Director Christopher Thompson on the rooftop of our home in Harlem were residents have a designated picnic area.



"Above and Beyond"

The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities or CARF accreditation signals a service provider's commitment to continually improving services, encouraging feedback, and serving the community.

Please join us in congratulating Hector Johnson, Kathy Davies and Todd Case along with their entire teams on another 3 YEAR CARF Accreditation for all regions in New Mexico!

A STEP for South Carolina

The South Carolina Developmental Disabilities Council awarded a grant to Community Options to establish a STEP (School-To-Employment-Program) in Columbia. With this grant, Community Options is contracting with schools and businesses to provide a certain number of students with disabilities the opportunity to sample jobs and receive direct on-the-job training during the 2013-2014 school year. While they explore possible careers at job sites, they will also learn key skills like interviewing, networking, and resume building. In addition, our employment specialists will ensure the completion of the program so that each student can secure the job that they want after graduation.

According to Dorothy Goodwin, the Executive Director of Community Options Columbia office, "This STEP grant will provide some high school students in the Midlands area with special needs the opportunity to develop real work experience prior to leaving high school. It is our objective to assist them with transitioning into the workforce using the skills they will gain from working with partnering companies." As generally agreed, the transition from school to work is a challenging time for young adults, and these challenges are often magnified for youth with developmental disabilities. As STEP becomes part of their secondary education curriculum and individualized education plan, it will make a difference in addressing and mitigating these issues.

Originally developed in New Jersey five years ago, STEP has grown to 25 job sites throughout the Garden State and last year placed 100% of their graduating class into paid employment in a career field of their choosing. A few years ago, Community Options received a grant to expand STEP to Pennsylvania, and now looks forward to making the same impact in helping young adults with disabilities achieve their dreams to be independently employed in the Columbia community.

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CUPID'S CHASE 5K

Saturday, February 8, 2014

Community Options' Cupid's Chase 5K run is a national fundraiser that takes place in 24 cities, throughout eight states, on the same day. Each race is set to start at 10 a.m.

Register now at COMOP.ORG

 www.facebook.com/CupidsChase



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