



# Community Options

## Business With A **Social** Purpose

*Photo above: Robert Stack, center, ringing the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange with the board of directors.*

**F**or more than 20 years, Community Options has helped people with developmental disabilities find housing and employment. Community Options, Inc. (COI) began around the kitchen table of Founder and current President and CEO, Robert Stack. The organization is located on Farber Road in Princeton.



*Robert Stack, President/CEO of Community Options with two staff members.*

With one wall phone, a couple of chairs, along with a plethora of dedication and motivation, Stack and his associates opened what we know today as COI—the nation's fastest growing nonprofit organization providing quality support to people with developmental disabilities in 24 offices across 9 states.

Development started in Mercer County and quickly grew to 18 out of 21 counties in the state. What started as a couple of group homes has grown into 62 current homes throughout New Jersey, serving over 200 people with developmental disabilities. COI has endeavored to develop unique housing opportunities throughout the country including New York, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, South Carolina, Texas, New Mexico, Kentucky and Connecticut. Across the country, it operates 316 group homes and supervised apartments, and has a \$62.2 million budget.

COI has 21 employment programs across New Jersey and six social enterprises where they have been successfully placing people with developmental disabilities in real jobs at minimum wage or better. COE is increasing the numbers of people with developmental disabilities that land better jobs with better benefits in a competitive marketplace.

The idea behind COI's social enterprises, like Vaseful Flowers and Gifts, was to get people with disabilities out of adult training

centers where they are warehoused to do piece work all day. Vaseful, just like all of their other entrepreneurial businesses like the Daily Plan It, Just Add Water, or Presents of Mind is an alternative to the adult training site. They offer real-life work experience for real pay. The evolution of Vaseful and other businesses is that they are models that are suitable for replication in any place at any time.

The Daily Plan It, located near the Hyatt at 707 Alexander Road, offers beautiful offices for the small entrepreneur. Persons with disabilities who are taxpayers in Mercer County provide a large portion of the infrastructure through their employment at the Daily Plan It. There are seven people who provide office supports (phone and personal reception, cleaning, faxing, mail delivery, copying) for the 25 businesses that are based there. COI has had many people move from these offices to larger space; these are great starter offices for those who have been downsized or those who are starting their own business and need office support.

Having the ability to help a family move their family member from a state-run institution and into their own home in the community is what we are all about. COI helps one person at a time because the organization believes in individualized attention and service.

In the future, COI will be supporting thousands more people with disabilities all across the country that need help to find a home and a job. COI would hope to increase their rate of partnerships with the private sector such as pharmaceutical companies and other corporate entities to work together on important projects. Most importantly, COI will continue to help people with disabilities, one person at a time.

Community Options will be hosting its 5th Annual Advocacy Conference in 2010 at The W in Dallas, Texas with Judy Woodruff delivering the opening keynote address. To find out more about Community Options, please visit [www.comop.org](http://www.comop.org) or call (609) 951-9900. ■

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