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Community
Options, Inc.



Supporting People with Disabilities since 1989.

Please Support Our Mission as We Rebuild after Hurricane Sandy

Hurricane Sandy was arguably the most destructive Atlantic storm since Katrina. Its impact on the eastern United States, Canada, and the Caribbean will be felt for a long time to come.

Community Options operates 90 group homes in New Jersey alone. Like everyone in the tri-state region, we were hit hard, experiencing wide spread power outages, uprooted trees, and other property damages. We are grateful that our staff, who worked tirelessly during the storm, were able to relocate a majority of our residents to hotels or other COI homes that did not lose power. This collective effort ensured that all of our residents remained safe during the storm.

Please consider making a donation in any amount you are able to provide. Any size donation will go a long way in assisting our efforts. For additional information regarding donations and how

7th Annual iMatter Conference a Success!

Special thanks to our Keynote Speaker: Keith Gardner, Chief of Staff to the Governor of New Mexico, Suzanna Martinez

The figures of Community Options, Inc. (COI) are constantly changing. As it stands right now, COI employs about 3,000 staff members in 35 offices with a budget that is quite rapidly approaching \$100 million. However, throughout the years since the founding of COI in 1989, the mission has remained the same- to provide housing and employment supports for people with disabilities. Robert Stack was happy to proclaim this at the 7th Annual iMatter Conference in San Antonio, Texas during his welcome speech on November 12, 2012. He told everyone in attendance that COI carries out its mission "with unflappable conviction, unapologetic pride and seamless execution, stressing dignity, individual rights, and liberty for those we support, all against the backdrop of honest common sense." He stressed that COI strives to ensure it does not fall into the category of "meaningless day programs." One of the main goals of COI is to move people out of institutions and into community based housing. This is happening slowly but surely.

One of the keynote speakers, Keith Gardner, seemed to have an opinion on par with Stack's. Gardner is Chief of Staff to the Governor of New Mexico, Suzanna Martinez, the first Hispanic woman governor ever elected in the history of the US. He is a strong, ethical man who works tirelessly and with enormous, ungraspable responsibilities- he holds together a very complex state with significant environmental, budget, infrastructure, and political challenges. During his tenure as a legislature he served on the Health and Human Services Committee and was able to see firsthand the programs that do not hold client dignity and respect to the high standard that COI has maintained. This experience helped him to shape his opinion of COI.

As he stood before the audience at the conference, he had a lot to say to those in attendance. He said, "I want to tell you how much I appreciate the work you guys do at community options. I'm always humbled to be able to talk to a group of folks who make so many great sacrifices as this group here... I understand the passion but also the toll that it takes on individuals who are providing care. It's not always easy, it's not a very thankful job, in fact many times it's very thankless...What an incredible thing it is there are people who are willing to make those sacrifices so I can tell you on behalf of my boss who sends her regrets that she can't be here today, to tell you personally thank you, I want to tell you thank you, thank you for what you do as you venture

you can get involved, please contact Kathryn Sampson at 609.352.5280 or via email at Kathryn.sampson@comop.org.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request and we look forward to working with you toward our common goal.

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Community Options, Enterprises, Inc. (COE) was established to develop and operate entrepreneurial businesses that successfully integrate people with disabilities into the workforce. By operating businesses such as a flower shop, copy centers, and shared office facilities, COE confronts the barriers

through life, in helping and improving the lives of those around you. You have the initiatives that will help based upon respect for individuals and their families, something that is so essential, so viable."

Gardner commented on the fact that it is usually the companies that do bad that end up on the radar, not the ones that do good. He reminded the audience of this, and commented, "Think about what happens if you fail, I try not to go to the negative but think about that." This segued into a story that really sums up the obstacles COI faces and the efforts the organization makes. The story he shared is by Lauren Eiseley and he paraphrased:

"I'm reminded of a story, some of you may have heard it. It talks about a wise man that is a talented, published writer. He likes to go for a walk on the beach in the morning before he starts doing his work. He is walking along the beach and sees a figure that looks like it is dancing by itself. So he becomes curious and he starts to pick up the pace as he's walking along the water. Finally as he gets closer he realizes it is not an image dancing, it is a little boy and this little boy has this weird move where he reaches down and grabs something and he throws it in the ocean then he goes back and he does the same thing over and over and over again. So as he gets closer to the little boy he looks at him and he says 'Excuse me son, can you tell me what you are doing?' And the little boy looks at him and says 'Duh, I'm picking up these starfish and I'm throwing them back in the ocean.' The man says 'What on earth are you doing that for?' He answers 'Because the tide is going out and the starfish are stranded here on the beach and if I don't, they'll die.'

And the man said 'Son, there's millions of starfish along this beach and there's miles and miles of beach. How can you possibly think that you're going to be able to save these starfish? How can you possibly think that you are going to make a difference in how many of these starfish die?'

Well the boy reaches down, grabbed one more starfish, throws it in the ocean and says "I made a difference for that one."

Gardner concluded the story by asking, "How many starfish do we interact with on a daily basis?" He said that it is through organizations like COI, which has assembled a professional group that works with stellar reputation, with accountability and implementation of programs that help those who sometimes can't help themselves, that we can continue to make a difference. It is important to remember that this is an organization focused on the individual, not the majority. Change won't happen overnight, it won't happen in the masses, but with continued hard work, dedication and determination, COI is helping individuals, one person at a time.

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to working in community based settings instead of sheltered training centers or workshops. These businesses are owned and operated by COE in order to enhance job training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



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