



Groundbreaking for New Group Home in Hopewell a Success
Community Options Welcomes Opportunity in the Township

October 24, 2012

HOPEWELL, NJ - Community Options, Inc. (COI), a Princeton based nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide housing and employment supports to people with disabilities, is celebrating the groundbreaking of a new location for a group home in Hopewell, NJ.

The 90 group homes operated throughout the state by COI provide living arrangements for many people who would otherwise remain institutionalized or who can no longer remain with family members. Not only do these homes greatly improve the quality of life for these individuals, they also save the government vast amounts of money. Every year \$250,000 in taxpayer dollars are spent per person living in an institution. With individuals living in homes in the community, the figure shrinks to \$140,000 per person per year. With the increase of group homes opening, the government is beginning to close these expensive institutions.

The groundbreaking event for the newest home took place on Tuesday, October 23, at 1617 Harbourton-Rocktown Road, a bucolic area of farmland and woods that recently housed a farmhouse along with two barns. The farmhouse and one barn were dismantled and the majority of the useable wood was reused in historic restoration projects. Some of the wood was recycled as the walls and seating in Small World Coffee in Princeton. The second barn was relocated to a farm not far from the original. All materials that could be recycled, such as metal, glass, non-painted wood, pipes, wiring, stone and concrete, were used in other projects.

The future group home will be cutting edge, as it will be built according to high environmental standards for energy efficiency. Because the building is going to be built from the ground-up it provides builders with the opportunity to install fire-safety sprinkler systems as well as ramps and other accommodations made to conform to the physical limitations that sometimes accompany developmental issues, according to lead architect, Kevin Wilkes, of Princeton Design Guild.

Paul Pogorzelski, the Hopewell Township administrator and engineer was very excited that the project is moving along. It had been a long journey to this day, and he stated, "Contractually speaking, it took two years to start the planning process and another two years to get the funding." He said it was made possible because "the township had an affordable housing plan for individual lots, and we had talked about renovating the farm house, which is one of the townships scattered sites...it just seemed like it should happen." This was a sentiment shared by many at the event.

The groundbreaking was an energy-charged event with several people involved in the project in attendance. Several individuals from the community were there to show their support, including Allen Cannon, Hopewell Township Councilman, his wife Melody Crawford, Anne Moore, the Municipal Housing Liaison in Hopewell, and Dori Anderson and Christine Herman, both members of the Hopewell Township Affordable Housing Committee. The builder, Ted Brennan, and Edward Truscelli, a chairperson of the Hopewell Township Affordable Housing Committee were also in attendance.

Everyone at the groundbreaking was very enthusiastic about the meaning under the groundbreaking- that years of hard work were paying off in a very real way. Herman said, “The Township is thrilled to have [COI] working with us.” Anderson looked on at the photo of a home already built from the same plans and said the “building is very beautiful, it looks like it belongs here, it will nestle right back here, it just fits.”

Organizers expect the project to be completed by April next year with a move-in by June 30. Once the group home is ready it will provide an opportunity for four adults with developmental disabilities to lead lives that may have not been attainable otherwise. Support staff will staff the house 24 hours a day. Robert Stack, the President and CEO of Community Options, believes that the home will mainly house non-ambulatory individuals due to the fact that ramps will be available. He said he expects it to be a “very beautiful, very humble house.” But the event wasn’t just about the house, it’s deeper meaning was the idea that now four people will have the opportunity to maintain jobs in the community and manage their lives at home, an opportunity that may have been absent without this project.

It has taken four years, two months and a huge amount of support from the community to get this project started. Cannon spoke, stating that he is reminded of the sentiment “What you do unto the least of them, you do unto me.” He was very excited for the “Great opportunity to give back to people who need more than we,” and was proud that this new home will be erected in his township. The groundbreaking proved that there are many people out there who want to lend a helping hand. News of the groundbreaking will allow people to take pause and think about all they have to be thankful for, and perhaps take a moment to think about those who need a little more help than others. Hopefully the groundbreaking will serve as a reminder that life, with both its challenges and successes is a daily celebration.



Community Options Inc. is a national nonprofit organization incorporated in 1989 and headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey. The agency provides housing and employment services for people with disabilities in nine states: Connecticut, Kentucky, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. www.comop.org

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