

Special Thanks to Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. for Making COI's Red Ribbon Academy a Reality!

Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc awarded Community Options, Inc. (COI) a grant in support of the Community Options Red Ribbon Academy: Adult Medical Special Needs Program for the 21st Century. The program will have a direct impact on 25 people in NJ with the most significant disabilities such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and intellectual disabilities.

COI is a national nonprofit organization that has been developing community-based homes and employment supports for people with disabilities since 1989. As of right now, there are no organizations in NJ that aid adult individuals who have the most severe, fragile, medical disabilities in a way that fosters growth and progress. In 2010, this issue prompted a group of NJ parents to request day support services from the NJ Division of Developmental Disabilities. Five mothers who have children with special needs took the lead representing a large group of families of young adults with a myriad of conditions; they named themselves "The Parents Group." They hoped to inspire the creation of a day program that not only provides support and supervision by highly trained medical professionals, but also allows access to all the benefits of a community-based program, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and volunteerism. The parents specifically requested that COI operate this program.

This program will not only have a direct impact on at least 25 people in New Jersey with the most significant disabilities, it will also help save the state money. After a child with disabilities reaches adulthood and can no longer be supported by the educational system, the choice for parents is placing him or her in a community-based program or an institution. The State of New Jersey has over 8,000 people with developmental disabilities on their waiting list. Most often, these individuals must wait patiently for housing and support services for years. With this new program, these families will be able to keep their loved ones at home.

The new medical day program will be housed in a building tailored specifically for people with special medical needs. The building will be completely accessible, with therapy rooms and special sensory environments for persons with profound intellectual disabilities and medical needs. Individuals will be offered a wide array of therapeutic and recreational activities -within a supervised and structured environment- that maintain and increase mental acuity and maximize their physical ability. These activities will nurture friendships, stimulate interest in life, and provide opportunities for creativity.

The building will also be outfitted with advanced equipment such as a ceiling lift and eye movement technology. The ceiling lift will allow increased mobility for those with the



Supporting People with Disabilities since 1989

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more physical disabilities. The eye movement technology utilizes a retinal scan that will allow individuals to operate computers by merely moving their eyes. In addition, the program includes vocational and skills training with the goal of improving quality of life through increasing independent skills. The COI Red Ribbon Academy will be open to anyone who qualifies for services under NJ Division for Developmental Disabilities. It will be open Monday thru Friday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. and transportation will be provided to and from the Academy. It will be located in Wayne, NJ at 506 Hamburg Tpk., which is currently undergoing renovations.

Thanks to Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc., COI will make a huge impact on many by improving the lives of individuals with disabilities as well as their friends and families.

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

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If you would like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview, please call (609) 352-5280 or e-mail Kathryn at Kathryn.Sampson@comop.org.