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People with Disabilities Share Empowering Stories Across Pennsylvania

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA – Community Options, a leading national non-profit supporting people with disabilities, is proud to share the impact of its employment storytelling program. *Empowerment Through Employment* gives people with disabilities a platform to share stories about how they defied expectations and moved away from segregated environments to join the workforce.

Now in its second year, the project includes twenty-five Storytellers with disabilities who are participating from ten counties across Pennsylvania. Storytellers are instructed by seasoned public speakers with and without disabilities who provide guidance on self-determination, how to outline and craft engaging stories, how to select content, and how to present and speak in front of large audiences.

Michael Gajewski has been participating in the project since its inception. When self-advocates from Community Options' New Jersey-based Center for Advocacy Leaders came to speak to Pennsylvania Storytellers, Michael was inspired to create his own PowerPoint presentation on how self-advocacy shaped his journey. Each Storyteller, including Michael, will have a chance to present their stories in front of a live audience in July. Storytellers will be encouraged to invite their families, friends, mentors, colleagues and employers. Events will take place at Community Options offices throughout Pennsylvania.

“We’re thrilled with the progress made so far and look forward to continuing our efforts to showcase the incredible achievements of people with disabilities,” said Lacie Parker, Community Options’ Vice President of Pennsylvania. “By sharing these stories, we hope to reduce barriers and promote inclusion among employers.”

Empowerment Through Employment highlights alternatives to segregated employment practices like sheltered workshops, encouraging everyone to follow their dreams by participating in supported employment and competitive employment programs. If you would like to attend a presentation to hear people with disabilities share their unique aspirations and achievements, please contact Karen McKivens at karen.mckivens@comop.org.

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About Community Options, Inc.:

For over 35 years, Community Options has developed housing and employment supports for people with disabilities – supporting thousands of people from over 50 offices across 12 states. Community Options provides advocacy assistance to empower people with disabilities because all people – regardless of ability level – should live and work in the community with dignity, choice and self-determination. For more information please visit our website: www.comop.org and follow us on social media on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X](#).