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COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED EARNS FUNDING TO EXPAND YOUTH SHELTER **Agency to receive \$200,000 annually for three years from Health & Human Services**

Elizabeth, NJ – Community Access Unlimited (CAU) has been awarded a three -year annual grant of \$200,000 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to expand the Union County Youth Shelter by four beds, from six to 10, thereby increasing the number of youth the agency can assist from 90 to 150 each year.

CAU operates the youth shelter for Union County, providing temporary housing for youth aged [12 to 18] as well as counseling, recreational activities, access to education and follow up. Youth entering the shelter are generally referred from the Union County Family Crisis Intervention Unit, Juvenile Detention Intake Unit or county juvenile, criminal or family courts.

The HHS grant will allow CAU to expand access to the shelter to other homeless children not referred by those programs or courts and who might otherwise be turned away.

“When a young person is facing a personal crisis or does not have a bed to sleep in that night, how they arrive at a safe and structured environment is irrelevant to them,” said Sidney Blanchard, CAU executive director. “This grant will allow us to provide that safe and structured shelter to 60 more young people each year, which in the end may result in 60 more healthy adults in the future. One small extension of assistance at a crucial time can pay enormous rewards later for young people at risk and society as a whole.”

The grant, which is being provided through the HHS Administration for Children and Families, will be used for housing, education, medical exams, psychological testing, staffing and other requirements related to the four-bed expansion of the shelter.

“We cannot thank the Department of Health and Human Services enough for these additional resources,” he said. “I also believe that our successful track record at helping youth at a very vulnerable and focal point in their lives also was key to this award.”

Youth entering the shelter may remain for 30 days as their personal situation is stabilized, with a goal of returning them to their families or transitioning them into an alternative permanent residence, which can include CAU programs. The average length of stay is two weeks.

About CAU

Community Access Unlimited (CAU) supports people with special needs in achieving real lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives a voice to adults and youth who traditionally have had little support and no voice in society. CAU helps people with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil rights. CAU serves more than 3,500 individuals each year. For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at www.caunj.org or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07207.