

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **CAU Executive Director Sidney Blanchard Becomes Fellow of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

**Elizabeth, NJ – Sidney Blanchard**, founder and executive director of **Community Access Unlimited (CAU)**, was accepted as a fellow into the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) at the AAIDD Annual Meeting, May 28-30, in Washington, D.C.

Blanchard was recognized for his accomplished career working to improve the lives of people with special needs, as well as youths. He launched Community Access Unlimited in 1979, operating out of the backseat of his Volkswagen Beetle, with the goal of helping people with special needs live independently and lead normal and productive lives as citizens integrated into the community.

Less than 30 years later, CAU each year serves more than 3,000 people with disabilities and youths with an operating budget of \$17.5 million. Services include housing, employment assistance, recreational and educational, life skills training, in-home respite services, counseling, health maintenance, personal assistance services, crisis intervention, parenting skills and more.

Under Blanchard's leadership, CAU became one of the first nonprofits in the nation to pursue the federal low-income housing tax credit to acquire property. Today, CAU owns more than 190 units of housing throughout Union County, providing members with greater access to the community, and now helping some move toward private ownership.

In addition to founding and leading CAU, Blanchard is a founding member of the New Jersey Residential Provider Association, and a founding board member of Families and Community Together, Inc., a care-management organization for children and youth services in Union County. Blanchard also resurrected the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, New Jersey Chapter, which had been dormant for 10 years.

He is a member and active participant in many organizations, including the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities – National and NJ chapters; Association of Community Providers; NJ Alliance for Children, Youth and Families; National Independent Living Association; Families and Communities Together; Community Access Institute; and Union County Human Services Advisory Council.

Blanchard is a resident of Scotch Plains. Sam Jenkins, a resident of Plainfield and a member of the CAU board of directors, accepted the fellowship award on behalf of Blanchard.

**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 3,000 individuals each year.

For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at [www.caunj.org](http://www.caunj.org) or my mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07207.

**About AAIDD**

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), a 130-year-old association representing developmental disability professionals worldwide, is dedicated to promoting progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Formerly known as the American Association on Mental Retardation, AAIDD is well known for its journals, the *American Journal on Mental Retardation* and *Mental Retardation*.