

**Community Access Unlimited
Community Business Partners – Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

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Businesses Find Community Access Unlimited True to Its Name

Elizabeth, NJ – Businesses and organizations seeking to expand their support of the community are finding that **Community Access Unlimited** (CAU) is true to its name – providing unlimited opportunities for outreach and involvement.

Community Access supports youth and adults with special needs through dozens of services comprising housing; independent living; employment and training; education and recreation; and advocacy.

To enable the business community to fully capitalize on the outreach opportunities available through a relationship with Community Access, CAU created a Community Network of business partnerships.

The benefits of partnering with CAU include: collaboration with other Union County businesses; increased employee volunteerism opportunities and related morale development; public expression of corporate values; and improved community relations, according to Sidney Blanchard, CAU executive director.

AMERIGROUP Community Care

AMERIGROUP Corporation is a Virginia-based health insurer serving 1.7 million members, including the financially vulnerable, seniors and people with disabilities or special needs, in 10 states and the District of Columbia. When AMERIGROUP began an outreach campaign to human services organizations serving similar audiences, they found Community Access Unlimited to be a perfect fit, according to Rita Harris, marketing director for AMERIGROUP Community Care in New Jersey.

“AMERIGROUP takes pride in working closely with the communities where we live and serve,” Harris said, “and assisting in a variety of ways, including education and health promotion. We also develop programs specifically designed to help those with special needs. Collaborating with CAU was beneficial on all of these levels.”

AMERIGROUP is both a contributor to and a partner with CAU. AMERIGROUP conducts workshops for CAU members; assists in writing columns for the CAU newsletter; and donates items for the organization’s annual golf outing and homeless shelter.

AMERIGROUP also is very active in CAU’s annual Walk-a-thon fundraiser, both sponsoring guest speaker and Olympian Joetta Clark-Diggs and having employees both participate in and work at the event.

"We are proud to be involved through a variety of efforts to support CAU and the communities we serve," Harris said, who also serves on the CAU community advisory committee.

Sovereign Bank

Sovereign Bank also enjoys the variety of outreach options CAU offers, according to Lucy Reis, the bank's South Elmora branch manager. Sovereign is a \$10,000 Corporate Sponsor of the organization's golf outing and Reis serves on the CAU fundraising committee.

However, Reis seems most proud of the volunteering efforts of her branch employees, who were the highest grossing team in the CAU Walk-a-thon in 2007.

"It promotes teamwork at the bank, and we like that we're giving back to our customers, the community," Reis said. "You don't realize there are people you deal with every day who might be struggling. Just a few people getting together can help make a huge difference in people's lives."

Investors Savings Bank

Investors Savings Bank also seeks to make a difference in people's lives through community outreach and considers Community Access a solid partner in those efforts, according to Ada Melendez, first vice president and CRA officer.

The bank's First Home Club program provides grants for down payment and closing costs to first-time homebuyers and Melendez found CAU's Home Share Program to be a perfect match for Investors' community reinvestment support. Investors also supports other CAU activities such as the annual Walk and golf outing.

"For us it's natural to partner with an organization that is so committed," said Melendez, who received CAU's 2007 Community Service Award. "I see so many organizations. You can count on one hand those that have been around as long as (Community Access).

"It's very easy for a bank to send a check. We like to partner with an organization. What I like (about CAU) is the reciprocity. It's about giving and taking."

Commerce Bank

Commerce Bank considers community outreach and employee volunteerism core missions of the company, and established the Commerce Cares program to enable employees to support community organizations, explained assistant vice president and Springfield Circle branch manager Rosalinda Perez. Commerce is a \$5,000 Corporate Sponsor of CAU's annual gala.

"We're an active supporter of community charities and sponsorship programs," she said. "Active community involvement is at the heart of our service culture."

Enterprise Rent-A-Car

Community involvement is a founding value at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, as well, according to regional rental manager Tim Marino. Noting that the company's values state, "We strengthen our communities one neighborhood at a time," Marino explained that the variety of programs operated by Community Access offers Enterprise the ideal opportunity to practice that principal.

“CAU is a great partner to reach out to the Elizabeth community and Union County in general,” he said.

Marino also noted that community outreach in general and Enterprise’s relationship with CAU in particular offers business advantages, as well. In addition to providing CAU with financial support, Enterprise donates welcome kits for youths in the CAU-managed Union County Youth Shelter.

“Right now these kids are not our customers, but someday they will be,” he said.

That mix of business and personal commitment helps keep Development Directions, LLC, intricately involved with Community Access. Development Directions is a real estate consulting firm specializing in government work, including Section 8 housing. The company works closely with Community Access in its affordable housing programs.

Development Directions

For Robin Lospinosa, Development Directions president, however, the relationship goes much deeper.

“Sid and I have known each other since the Volkswagen years,” Lospinosa said Blanchard, who began operating the organization in 1979 out of his car.

Two years ago Lospinosa and her staff began “adopting” children from CAU’s group home during the holidays – filling their wish list of gifts and spending time with them. Those relationships have expanded to include year-round interaction, including birthday dinners and other excursions. Development Directions also fields a team for CAU’s annual Walk-a-thon.

While the company maintains an important business relationship with Community Access, it is the benefit of the personal connections that Lospinosa values most.

“The best Christmas presents I buy are for those kids,” she said. “That’s an important thing for us to do.”

B&B Press

Personal experiences draw support for CAU from throughout the business community. B&B Press of Somerville and formerly Kenilworth has long been a supporter of community programs, including the 200 Club of Union County, which supports police and firefighters as well as their families, according to Mark Bistis, president and general manager.

B&B provides printing and design services to Community Access and supports the golf outing. Yet it is their participation in the annual Walk-a-thon that takes on personal meaning for Bistis and his wife, Janice, whose aunt was disabled.

“We do it just because it’s something we want to do,” Mark Bistis said.

About CAU

That desire to reach out and help is essential to the success of Community Access Unlimited, Blanchard said.

“No human services organization can reach its full potential and meet its full obligations without the support of the business community,” he said. “No matter how well run an organization is, no matter how developed its programs and strategies, we still require the support of caring businesses and employees to help us make that extra effort that is always needed when serving those most in need.

“CAU Community Network establishes defined relationships between Community Access Unlimited and our business partners that fully nurtures that support and allows it to blossom. In the process, our business partners enjoy the many benefits of these relationships, including business collaboration, expanded employee volunteerism and enhanced community relations.”

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 or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07207.