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A Power Generating Community Access Unlimited (CAU) is Stronger than the Storm
The CAU Advantage – The CAU Keep the Power Generator Project

Elizabeth, New Jersey – October 2013 - Less than a year to the day that Superstorm Sandy pummeled New Jersey, [Community Access Unlimited](http://www.caunj.org) (CAU) has become one of, if not the first, social service agency to install permanent and provide transportable generators to most of their housing locations in Union County. This initiative, referred to as the CAU “Keep the Power” Generator Project is estimated to provide over 350 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with necessary power during future outages and emergency situations.

Community Access Unlimited (CAU) has been providing a broad array of [support services](#) in low income housing, daily living skills training, competitive employment and day program services, recreation and advocacy assistance and training for almost 35 years. They have most recently been named as one of the few statewide providers of support coordination, with the exception of their home-town of Union County.

With the great unknown of when the next storm will hit, CAU knew that it had to get the project done now. Discussions and plans were in progress following Hurricane Irene, but after Superstorm Sandy, it was clear that the project could not wait any longer. The CAU Board of Trustees unanimously voted to allocate \$350,000 of agency unrestricted funds to cover the cost of this project as the safety of the individuals served is the agency’s first priority.

The Keep the Power project will provide three levels of generator service to the members of CAU. The members with complex medical needs have had their homes equipped with an automatic standby gas generator by Milbank PowerGen that will automatically come on within mere moments of the lights going out. These generators have a continuous natural gas fuel supply and are one of the most compact, streamlined space saving designs available. Fifty four homes have been equipped with these types of generators. Sixteen homes that have need for a less automatic generator have been equipped with a pre-wired, Honda 7200 Watt Portable Electric/Recoil Star generator. Generators at these locations can be activated in the event of an outage and will supply necessary power as long as it’s needed. In addition, CAU has a supply of generators available for transportation to properties who are in need during an outage.

Because of the generator initiative, individuals who CAU supports are able to receive access to necessary power-driven equipment they would not survive without such as refrigeration for individuals who require insulin and medical equipment such as breathing machines, shower chairs, hospital beds, and powered electrical wheel chairs. Having power during outages also provides heat and air conditioning for individuals who are medically fragile or have complex behavioral challenges and give staff the ability to maintain telephone systems for necessary communication throughout the agency.

According to Sidney Blanchard, Executive Director, “Superstorm Sandy was the impetus to get generators installed in all of our homes. I can vividly remember member’s huddled in a living room in their home in New Providence so they could all share the one area of the house that had working electricity and a functioning DVD player to watch movies after we were able to install a portable gasoline generator. Unfortunately, after a week without power, staff had to wait hours upon hours on line for gasoline and make long trips out to

Pennsylvania to keep the power going. [With the commitment we have made to the individuals we support](#), our members will now be provided for whatever comes in the future.”

The generators coupled with emergency kits stored at each of CAU's 235 homes can best prepare the agency for any future natural disaster. CAU is stronger than the storm and the Keep the Power generator project is just one of the many advantages that CAU has to offer individuals with developmental disabilities in New Jersey.