



## **DONATED VEHICLES CHANGE LIVES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND AT-RISK YOUTH**

**Elizabeth, NJ – December 13, 2013** – The television commercials show new cars with giant red ribbons sitting in the driveways of fine homes as wives or 17-year-old daughters open their eyes to their special Christmas gift.

The true story is much more heartwarming.

Christmas comes any time of the year at Community Access Unlimited (CAU) and the impact can be remarkable. CAU provides support programs and services to people with disabilities and youth served under the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to enable them to live independently in the community, in areas including housing, vocational and life-skills training, education, advocacy and recreation.

CAU agency operates a Vehicle Donation Program through which members with disabilities or those aging out of the child services system are provided a used vehicle donated by agency supporters. The vehicle is free as long as the member takes the initiative to secure their license and CAU pays the first six months to a year of insurance and also provides some upkeep.

“This program changes lives dramatically, which means those people donating these vehicles change lives dramatically,” said Cara Pavia, CAU fundraising and marketing coordinator. “You’re giving the individual the opportunity for employment that requires travel or is just outside walking distance. You’re providing them with the ability to get to school and earn a degree, strengthening their future. And you’re expanding their social life.”

Saquan Brown received a '98 Honda Civic this June after earning his license in September 2012. He had been saving money to buy a car but was fortunate to receive one through the program.

“It made a dramatic impact on my life,” he said. “I make it to work on time. I’m able to make it to class. I get to more job interviews.”

Brown, 23, has been a member of CAU since he was 18. He lives in an apartment within the agency’s Supportive Housing program. Getting a car and his own apartment were two of the goals he set for himself, which will allow him to live fully independently.

Allowing members to live full and rewarding lives independently within their communities is the mission at CAU and the Vehicle Donation Program is one of the many components of the agency’s continuum of care provided to all members toward that mission.

“No other agency can provide such comprehensive support as we do here at CAU,” Pavia said. “We provided Saquan with housing as well as vocational and life skills training as he transitioned out of the child services system. Now we have been able to provide him with a car that gives him even more independence. That’s the advantage CAU has over other agencies, the CAU Advantage.”

Pavia stresses that the CAU Advantage of the Vehicle Donation Program would not be possible without the generosity of those supporters providing the vehicles. She also noted that the benefit they receive from their donations exceeds those of similar programs elsewhere.

“Unlike other car donation programs, we do not take the donated cars and sell them, thereby receiving only a cash value,” she said. “The vehicle itself goes to one of our members. Therefore 100 percent of the value of the vehicle reaches the recipient.”

CAU will pick up a donated vehicle from any location in New Jersey and perform a quick inspection to make sure the vehicle is in good working condition and has limited cosmetic damage. If the vehicle is

accepted CAU provides the owner with a letter verifying the donation and allowing them to claim 100 percent of the vehicle's value on their taxes, since the vehicle is not sold for a lesser value.

Anyone interested in donating a vehicle should contact Gene Tavera, the information and referral assistant director at CAU, at 908.354.3040, ext. 272, or email him at [info@caunj.org](mailto:info@caunj.org).

### **About CAU**

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 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 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 5,000 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 by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.

### **[Brown]**



Jaquan Brown's life changed dramatically when he received a car through the Vehicle Donation Program of Community Access Unlimited, which allows donors to improve the lives of people with disabilities and at-risk youth and receive a 100 percent tax benefit for the contribution.