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**SID BLANCHARD OF COMMUNITY ACCE UNLIMITED NAMED TO
THE NEW JERSEY INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS**

Brings three decades of creating affordable housing to council created by Gov. Christie

Elizabeth, NJ – August 8, 2012 – Sid Blanchard of Scotch Plains, executive director of Community Access Unlimited, has been named by Gov. Chris Christie to serve on the New Jersey Interagency Council on Homelessness. Blanchard brings to his appointment more than three decades of creating affordable housing for people with disabilities, at-risk youth and those with affordable housing needs.

The council was created in April to develop a 10-year plan to reduce or end homeless in New Jersey, including evaluating the effectiveness of services being provided to the homeless, impediments to those services and recommendations for improvement. Blanchard is one of 15 non-government appointees to the 26-member council, which operates within the Department of Human Services.

Blanchard founded Community Access Unlimited (CAU) in 1979 with a \$90,000 grant to remove 20 adults with developmental disabilities from state institutions and place them in the community. The agency added support programs for youth in New Jersey's child welfare system in 1984. CAU secured its first housing units in 1987 and today owns and operates more than 200 units of housing throughout Union County. Since its founding CAU has enabled more than 7,000 individuals to find housing.

"Every individual has the right to live a fulfilling life in the community and that starts with safe and secure housing," Blanchard said. "That has been the primary driver for CAU since our inception and we have proven very effective at providing affordable housing for thousands of people.

"While I am honored to have been chosen to serve on the Interagency Council on Homelessness by the governor, I am equally excited to share some of the experiences and success we have had at Community Access as the council collectively works to end homelessness in New Jersey."

Under Blanchard's leadership, CAU was one of the first nonprofits in the nation to pursue the federal low-income housing tax credit to acquire property. CAU also administers the Union County HomeShare program, which matches people who have a home but who are experiencing financial hardship and difficult housing costs with people who are homeless or soon-to-be homeless.

"There are creative ways to fight homelessness," Blanchard said. "With the backgrounds and depth of knowledge represented on this interagency council, I believe we can make a real difference."

There are nearly 13,000 homeless in New Jersey, while up to 29,000 people may experience homelessness at some point during the year. Nearly 2,300 families and more than 4,300 children were homeless, the report showed. In Union County, 887 people were homeless. After mental health issues the top reported reason for homelessness was economics and evictions.

"Those numbers are unacceptable," Blanchard said. "We are too wealthy a nation and state to allow families and children to go one night without a home. I look forward to working with the council to end this tragedy."

Photo below

Photo – [Sid Blanchard CAU]



Sid Blanchard

About CAU

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 33rd anniversary in 2012, 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 4,500 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 07202.