

**February 2008**

**Newsletter**

**Homeownership  
and People with Disabilities**

A recent study reported in the AAIDD Professional Journal by David Hagner, Judith Snow, and Jay Klein entitled Meaning of Homeownership for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: A Qualitative Study found that "Although the process of purchasing the home was described as lengthy and difficult and ownership brought unexpected problems, these were outweighed by the financial, social, and psychological benefits of owning one's own home."

The most recent edition of Priced Out and Opening Doors from the Technical Assistance Collaborative (TAC) shows that:

*The national average rent for a one-bedroom unit climbed to \$715 per month and the studio/efficiency unit rent to \$633 per month in 2006-both higher than the entire monthly income of people with disabilities who rely on federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.*

In New Jersey there are an estimated 79,304 SSI recipients between the age of 18 - 64 and it would take 149.30% of their monthly SSI payments to rent a one-bedroom housing unit.

Over the past two years Community Access Unlimited has facilitated the purchase of condominiums by three people with disabilities

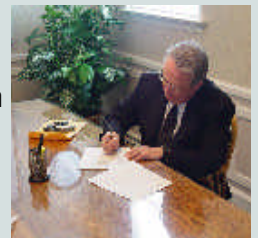
The purchases were made possible through the combined effort of Community Access Unlimited (CAU) and the city of Elizabeth. CAU is a nonprofit organization that provides support services for people with developmental disabilities. Mr. Straka and Mr. and Mrs. Kurnos are CAU members. Mr. Straka and Mrs. Kurnos work for CAU. Mr. Hargrove, the third Purchaser works for a local company

CAU, the Elizabeth Housing Authority, and the city's Home Improvement Program joined forces to help Mr. Straka,

*(Continued on page 2)*

**From the Desk of the Chapter President**

There are currently over 7,500 people with developmental disabilities on the state waiting list for services and another 1,500 people in institutions who were determined prior to 1998 as being better served in community placements.



A number of states have closed all their institutions. A number of states have significantly increased funding to people with Disabilities, families and the service system. It is time for New Jersey to invest in the benefit of people with disabilities.

New Jersey provider agencies have had nominal contract increases over the years since 2000. Sharply increasing costs for healthcare, utilities, transportation insurance and other basic costs have grown faster than contract renewals. In a recent survey of New Jersey providers of services for people with disabilities, 48% of the New Jersey DD providers are operating in the red.

Increase in Self-Determination and family support funding and the annual operating support is but one of a series of critical issues that must be resolved to maintain and improve the lives of people with disabilities in New Jersey. Other areas that significantly weaken the viability and stability of the community based service structure are:

- Adjusting annual operational funding support through cost indexing,
- Long-term capital needs for Olmstead expansion but also for existing community infrastructure needs to be addressed,
- Unfunded mandates need to be funded,
- Identifying and serving the need of an aging DD population with funding, and
- Fulfilling the Olmstead mandate and resolving the various legal suits against the state of New Jersey.

## Homeownership and People with Disabilities

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Hargrove and the Kurnoses buy the condominiums where they have lived as renters. “Now I have my own condo and I am proud of it,” Mr. Straka said. “I’m not worried about paying the mortgage,” he added. “It’s just another bill.”

CAU, a pioneer in the low-income housing field, was one of the first nonprofits to take advantage of a federal tax credit program, the Community Reinvestment Act. The program offered incentives for investors to partner with nonprofits and create low-income housing, and in the late-1980’s CAU acquired over 50 housing units throughout Union County. Now the agency has taken another pioneering move by offering some of that housing stock to members who are qualified to own, rather than rent, their homes.

“Most organizations try to build capital, but CAU wants to create opportunities for their members to own their own homes.”

Bob Laux, of Bethel, ME, works to help people with disabilities acquire housing, and he is helping CAU convert rental units owned by the agency into home ownership opportunities.

“Most organizations try to build capital, but CAU wants to create opportunities for their members to own their own homes.” The closings are part of a larger effort on the part of CAU to convert rental units to home ownership opportunities. CAU intends to sell between 8 and 12 units to members who are currently renting them.

The city of Elizabeth, which will benefit since the properties once owned by a nonprofit agency, and therefore tax exempt, are now on the tax rolls, played a key role in both purchases. The purchases involved converting his Section 8 federal rental subsidy to mortgage subsidies under a new Section 8 home ownership program—the first time this has been done in Elizabeth. Bill Jones, Executive Director of the City of Elizabeth Housing Authority, said, “We hope that this is the first of many Section 8 home ownership opportunities in Elizabeth.” He also praised the partnership that CAU had achieved with his agency. “We do the red tape and they provide the support.”

Elizabeth Mayor Christian Bollwage sent his congratulations to Mr. Straka, Mr. Hargrove, and the Kurnoses in realizing their dreams. “In Elizabeth we know that a home serves not only as a place to live, but is an important component to improving the quality of life for our residents.”



### ***Congratulations to Alvin Cox!***

The New Jersey Chapter wishes to outgoing Chairman of Region IX a hearty congratulations for his two years of service. Under his guidance Region IX has held a successful conference, increased its financial position and facilitated the revitalization of the Pennsylvania Chapter.

## **AAIDD New Jersey Chapter Treasurer's Report**

Revenue:	\$343
Expense:	\$525
Net Assets:	\$18,075

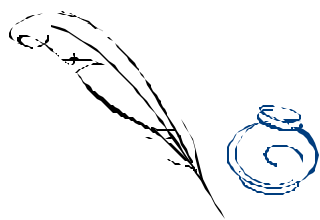
## **AAIDD New Jersey Chapter Goals for 2008**

- Hold two workshops: One on Positive Behavior Supports; second on the Supports Intensity Scale
- Build participation in the National Conference
- Build Participation in the Self Advocacy Movement
- Engage in New Jersey Service System and Advocacy Issues

## **Region IX Conference a Success!**

On September 6th and 7th the Pennsylvania State Chapter of AAIDD hosted the Region IX conference at the Willow Valley Conference Center, Lancaster Pennsylvania. This conference was a great success by the responses of the conference attendees (where the overall conference rating was very high. Over the 2 day course of the conference, attendance was 153 from 12 different states.

With key note address by Steve M. Eidelman opened the conference giving a "State of the Association Address" and throughout the course of the next two days best practice workshops included: an overview of AAIDD's Support Intensity Scale (SIS), Real Life Relationships that work, Re-involving Families of Institutionalized Individuals in the Transitional to Community Living, an Integrated Service Model Approach for Individuals Dually Diagnosed with ID/DD & MH Disorders, The Road to Employment: What Parents Should Know and Feel Great About.



## **Noteworthy**

- The next meeting of the New Jersey Chapter of AAIDD will be held on March 27, 2008, 3:00 PM—4:30 PM at the Community Access Unlimited Board Room, 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ. Go to [www.caunj.org](http://www.caunj.org) for directions
- The National AAIDD Conference will be held May 28—30, 2008, Washington, DC. Go to [www.aidd.org](http://www.aidd.org) for details



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It's a powerful community, and that power is growing.



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