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For more information: *Please contact Katie Baird*
Community Access Unlimited – 80 West Grand St. Elizabeth, NJ 07202
908.354.3040, ext. 376 / email: kbaird@caunj.org

**ADVOCATE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LOST ON 9-11 REMEMBERED THROUGH
COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

Colleen Fraser died while pursuing her passion of fighting for the rights of people with disabilities

Elizabeth, NJ – On the morning of September 11, 2001, before boarding Flight 93 that later would crash in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, Colleen Fraser left behind a ring she never took off. This year Colleen's sister, Christine, will wear that ring as she does each day when she marks the 10th anniversary of her sister's death and the establishment of the Colleen L. Fraser Advocacy Scholarship Fund at Community Access Unlimited (CAU).

Yet Colleen's story is remembered every day.

Much as that ring connects Christine to her sister, Colleen's connection to CAU and to the ongoing advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities was forever sealed that fateful day. The connections then and now are astounding.

Colleen Fraser was aboard Flight 93 bound for San Francisco because she was traveling to a grant-writing conference in Reno. A member of CAU for more than 20 years who also served as president of the agency's board of trustees, Fraser was a staunch advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and a fundraiser for that cause and CAU.

Fraser's passion for advocacy was something she felt in her bones – literally. Born with the disabling condition of rickets that causes a weakening of the bones, Fraser underwent 31 operations by the time she passed away at age 55.

"She didn't let it stop her," Christine Fraser said. "She wasn't afraid to go places and take chances. That gave her a passion to make the system better. Her passion was that everybody should be treated the same and that everybody has the same rights."

Colleen Fraser was looking forward to attending the grant-writing conference, according to her sister.

"Colleen was so good at getting to know how to get through the red tape," Christine Fraser said. "She said, 'Imagine me with a little education.' She was very happy to be going."

CAU established the Colleen L. Fraser Advocacy Scholarship Fund immediately after Fraser's death. Each year two CAU members – one a person with disabilities and the other an at-risk youth, CAU's primary constituents – receive a \$500 scholarship to help them further their own advocacy efforts.

"The scholarship is awarded to members who have grown in the agency," said Mark Straka, a longtime CAU member whose first counselor at the agency was Colleen Fraser and who sits on the selection committee. "They don't need much help from their counselor. They do things on their own and live independently. They speak up and advocate for themselves and others."

This year's scholarship recipients will be named at CAU's 31st Annual Gala Dinner Dance, scheduled for October 26. A special remembrance of Colleen Fraser is planned.

Christine Fraser remembers her sister every day. She describes Colleen as someone small in size – she was little more than 4 feet tall – but a giant in stature. She served on the New Jersey Developmental Disabilities Council for more than 11 years and was appointed chair of the council in 1990 by Gov. James Florio.

Despite her disabilities – a boyfriend once cracked her rib just hugging her – she enjoyed life fully, according to her sister. Colleen loved traveling, the arts and was a gourmet cook. She made dinner for herself and Christine the night before leaving for Reno.

“I can’t believe it’s the 10th anniversary,” Christine Fraser said. “It feels like it was just a very short time ago I took her to the airport. That morning was really a beautiful day. We were singing.”

Christine Fraser will mark the anniversary of Colleen’s death attending the dedication of the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville. She is a board member of the Families of Flight 93, an advocate just like her sister.

She also will remember her sister when the scholarship named for Colleen are presented to this year’s winners.

“This keeps alive awareness of her and her passions, to help people in need, whether they were disabled, hungry or in need of a home,” Christine Fraser said. “I hope winners of this award take away Colleen’s message of not giving up, not being negative about things that have happened to you and making it work for you. Everybody has the same rights.

About CAU

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 32nd anniversary in 2011, 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 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 or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.

Photo - [CAU Fraser Scholarship]



Christine Fraser holds a photo of her sister, Colleen, who died aboard Flight 93 on Sept. 11, 2001, joined by Mark Straka, a member of Community Access Unlimited and the selection committee of the Colleen L. Fraser Advocacy Scholarship Fund.