

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FILE THIS UNDER “G” FOR GENEROSITY AND “I” FOR INVESTING IN THE COMMUNITY**

***Community Access Unlimited Community Network partners step up with contributions for CAU members in need – support that builds for tomorrow***

**Elizabeth, NJ** – The power of the public-private partnership was on full display recently as partners within the **Community Access Unlimited** (CAU) Community Network rallied to support two members of the agency, investing in both their future and that of the community.

CAU member Marquis McNeill is a young job-hunter who also is preparing to return to college. As Marquis was searching for work and preparing for the next level of his education, he had a simple yet potentially impactful need for a filing cabinet. Meanwhile fellow member Deshawn Freeman lacked an interview suit for his own job-hunt efforts.

McNeill and Freeman offered the CAU Community Network the ideal opportunity to support two young people while investing in the community. The network is a collaboration between the agency and local businesses that enables businesses to partner with a social services agency serving the community, thereby extending their own community outreach, according to Joanne Oppelt, CAU development director.

At the same time, the Community Network provides CAU with trusted business partners to help achieve its mission, which includes supporting people with disabilities and at-risk youth through housing, vocational training, living skills training and advocacy, according to Oppelt.

“By enabling our members to live within the community, become consumers and employees and pursue career paths, CAU allows them to contribute to the community,” she said. “We are strengthening the community one member at a time.

“Our partners within the business sector recognize that these are investments that match their own commitment to supporting people and neighborhoods to create healthier and more stable communities. They recognize that, in the end, that’s good business.”

McNeill and Freeman, young men within the DYFS system who have been able to find stability as CAU members, offered an ideal opportunity for CAU Community Network partners to make that investment on an individual basis, according to Oppelt.

“The response was overwhelming,” Oppelt said.

Valley National Bank in Cranford provided a metal four-drawer cabinet. Roselle Savings Bank offered to buy the filing cabinet and law firm Herrick Feinstein offered a contribution, as well. Oppelt used those contributions to purchase interview suits for McNeill and Freeman.

The giving did not stop. David Buckman of Buckman Architectural Group in Kenilworth also offered a filing cabinet. Buckman and associates operate a non-profit agency called Furniture Assist that provides free furniture to low-income families and individuals. Oppelt said she will call on Buckman’s generosity in the future as the need arises.

“CAU could not possibly be as an effective social services agency as we are without the support of our partners within the business community,” Oppelt said. “Our Community Network members always have been exceedingly supportive and truly see the network as an opportunity to partner – with CAU and with each other – to help build better communities.”

**About CAU**

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating its 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary in 2010, 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 3,500 individuals each year. For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at [www.caunj.org](http://www.caunj.org) or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07207.



Marquis McNeill, a member of Community Access Unlimited (CAU), shows off the filing cabinet and interview suit provided to him by businesses within the CAU Community Network.