

CAU in the News

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Community Access Unlimited receives \$3 million line of credit from Sun National Bank to extend housing services

SUBURBAN NEWS

Community Access Unlimited (CAU) has received a \$3 million line of credit from Sun National Bank that will enable the nonprofit agency to expand housing services for people with disabilities and at-risk youth. CAU will use the line of credit to expand housing services to existing and future members, and members of the public seeking housing assistance.

CAU is a human services nonprofit agency that provides support services for people with disabilities and at-risk youth comprising housing, life skills and employment training, crisis intervention, vocation and recreation. CAU is uniquely innovative in its business model in that the agency owns more than 200 properties throughout Union County that it uses to provide independent and semi-independent housing assistance.

The agreement between CAU and Sun National Bank marks a new relationship between the agency and the bank and continues CAU's long practice of partnering with the business community. CAU maintains a Community Network of partnerships with businesses ranging from banking to printing and considers these relationships essential to fulfilling its mission, according to Sid Blanchard, CAU executive director.

"This is a great example of a private and not-for-profit joint project that benefits both organizations and helps people find appropriate housing," Blanchard said. "Economic times are tough, especially for social services. However, doing the right thing while practicing sound business management can benefit all citizens in the state."

Sun National Bank extended the line of credit to CAU in part due to the agency's sound business model, as well as because of its commitment to the local community, according to Steven Vitale, senior vice president and regional manager at Sun.

"As a New Jersey bank that has served local communities for 25 years, Sun is proud to partner with Community Access to provide this financing that will allow them to buy real estate and expand a necessary program that will benefit the community," Vitale said. "As part of Sun's commitment to community, we want to partner with stable agencies and business leaders that are able to develop their strategy and operate their business in a way most beneficial to local communities and local residents."

Each year CAU enables an average of 45 people with disabilities or at-risk youth to move into independent or semi-independent housing through a variety of programs, people who might otherwise remain in institutional living – at a cost to state taxpayers more than three times greater than the average cost of CAU housing – or become homeless.

More than 400 people in Union County are on a waiting list for housing services from the state Division of Developmental Disabilities, a number that swells to 8,000 statewide, according to Blanchard. In addition, children under the care of the state Division of Youth and Family Services reaching age 18 and "aging out" of that care often find themselves in need of housing support, he added.

CAU anticipates using the line of credit to complete housing projects in Elizabeth and Roselle and initiate projects in Plainfield, Union and other locations.

