

CHOICES

16 Farber Road, Princeton, NJ 08540 Community Options, INC. 609-951-9900 / Fax 609-951-9112

Jobs through TECHNOLOGY

This July, New Jersey Assemblyman Richard Bagger helped Community Options, Inc. obtain the funds to create a program called ***Jobs Through- Technology***. It is designed to help people with the most severe disabilities access various modes of technology to enhance their ability to become employed. The program will help people who were formerly supported by state assistance to become wage earners and to move from dependence to independence.

After receiving notice of the funding, COI created the Technology Employment Committee (TEC) to help lend direction to ***Jobs Through Technology***. Comprised of COI staff and businesspeople from companies such as Merck, Bristol Myers Squibb, First Union, and Merrill Lynch, TEC studied the employment needs of corporate New Jersey. TEC hopes to place thirty individuals in internships within these companies as a result of their study. Typically, 75% of all interns are hired.

TEC also designed COI's latest venture, "Community Options Enterprises - Technology Support" (COETS). COE-TS provides job training; trainees are then qualified for employment at COE-TS. COETS assists businesses in setting up e-mail services, websites, and computer networking, and also provides technical support.

Twenty people with disabilities are expected to complete the COETS training program and secure jobs in the fields of information technology, computer technology, and rehabilitation science.

COE-TS's first placement is Lorraine Lee, who is visually impaired. Previously working part-time for minimum wage, she is now employed by COETS as a Systems Support Associate. Her job includes the development of an interactive web site and the building of online communities supporting people with disabilities.

"This is the kind of work I've always wanted to do," said Lorraine. "Compared to my old job, it's more challenging, better paying, and has more of a future."

COE-TS already has satisfied customers. The NJ Development Disability Council hired COE-TS and was very pleased with their services. And Paul Potito, Executive Director of the NJ Center for Outreach and Services for the Autism Community, said that "COE-TS helped us create a system that links families to each other and to resources. They made us more accessible to our members-families of people with autism. COE-TS understood our needs." •



A Assemblyman Richard H. Bagger (NJ) helped fund "***Jobs Through Technology***."

Says Assemblyman Bagger "I enthusiastically support this project, which provides so many of New Jersey's severely disabled citizens with opportunities for education, training, and meaningful work. These men and women perform essential tasks and are once again contributing members of the workforce. They have regained their feelings of dignity and self-worth."