Lisa Coscia, CEO of Hunterdon Developmental Center partnered with agencies statewide to host a Community Provider Fair on Friday, December 3, 2013 from 10am to 3pm at Hunterdon DC in the gymnasium. This event was attended by Hunterdon DC residents, staff, families and guardians.

“I previously worked on the community side of services for many years and now that I work in a developmental center, I recognize that there is an unfortunate lack of understanding with respect to what is provided by community provider agencies and what is provided in the developmental centers,” said Lisa. “One of my goals is to bridge that gap in understanding,” Lisa added.

Hunterdon DC sent letters to families whose interdisciplinary teams and guardians agree that their loved ones can live successfully in the community. Lisa wanted people to gain more knowledge and information about the services and supports that are offered through a provider agency in a community setting. “My hope in planning the fair was that everyone would be able to learn from each other,” said Lisa.

There were 20 providers who wholeheartedly talked one-on-one with residents, staff and families about their services in great detail. Providers brought informational handout materials delineating the services offered such as medical, behavioral and self-care supports. Providers made available their

**Continued on the next page**
brochures, business cards, newsletters and magazines that shared stories of people who have moved to a community setting. Providers answered questions and concerns asked of them throughout the day. The fair was very well run and worked like clockwork, as people flowed in and out all day long.

Lisa received positive feedback about the fair from staff and many were interested in visiting group home settings. Hunterdon DC will be circling back to set up visits with providers for staff to tour homes in the community.

“It’s good for DC staff to be well-versed in community services,” said Lisa. “If you are in this field, you need to have a grasp of the bigger picture of what is available for people with developmental disabilities.”

One family member was impressed with two providers she spoke with and will have a meeting with them in the near future. Another family talked with a provider who offered services in their town.

Lisa also felt it was important for the community providers to understand what’s happening in the DC. Lisa offered tours to providers to participate either in the morning or the afternoon. There were full groups on both of those tours. Providers got to see programs and activities and many of them had a better understanding of what takes place in a DC. A lot of people left the fair with an increased respect for what their peers do. “Our overarching goal professionally is to provide quality services in the least restrictive setting possible for an individual,” said Lisa. In addition, Lisa added, “There is real value for everyone involved, when we are knowledgeable about the broader continuum of services. Ultimately, this benefits the individuals that we serve and their families.”

Lisa is looking forward to partnering with provider agencies in the spring of 2014 to host another fair!

Self-Advocacy Community Learning Events
By Ann Martineli

The Community Living Education Project (CLEP) has always provided information on community living to families and staff at the seven developmental centers through our Pictures of Community Living Events (POCLEs). In August 2013 CLEP began a new initiative with the residents at the North Jersey Developmental Center (NJDC): Self-Advocacy Community Learning Events (SACLEs). We have partnered with Community Access Unlimited (CAU) and two of their self-advocates (Ms. Adelaide Daskam and Ms. Myrta Rosa) to share information on what community living may look like for the residents and to address their concerns about leaving the developmental center. We have had five meetings to date with many residents attending multiple meetings. NJDC staff who accompany the residents have been very supportive and everyone has participated in activities including role playing, “What’s That Sound?”, “Create Your Community” and others. All activities are hands on and have been created for people with varying support needs. CLEP and CAU will continue to hold monthly meetings at NJDC in support of residents as they transition.
NJACP Advocate of the Year Award Presented to the Community Living Education Project
By Ann Martinelli

The New Jersey Association of Community Providers (NJACP) held their annual conference on November 21 and 22, 2013 at the Taj Majal in Atlantic City, NJ. During the Thursday evening Networking Session, the Community Living Education Project (CLEP) was presented with the Advocate of the Year Award for our work providing information and education on community living to individuals living in developmental centers, their families and guardians and developmental center staff. The award was presented by Karen Elliott and Dr. John Winer, NJACP Legislative and Policy Co-Chairs. The award was accepted by Dr. David Wright, Project Director, on behalf of the whole team. CLEP is proud of the work we do to prepare individuals, families and their staff for community living and were honored to receive the award.

Living in the Moment: Second Chances
By Antoinette S. Johnson

In life, we have many instances when we need a “second chance.” For example, when you meet someone for the first time, you may not be satisfied with that meeting for one reason or another, and it has been said that you do not get a second chance to make a first impression. However, you can get a second chance to make a new impression. There are instances when a person attempts to get a second chance, but that attempt fails because it is linked to a past negative situation. In that case, forgiveness is a key component in providing a second chance to someone. Also, there are instances when the forgiveness has to begin with you to give yourself a second chance first then you can transfer that forgiveness to others to provide a second chance. Keep in mind that you may have to give a second chance several times in life. Oftentimes, we strive to be as “perfect” as possible, but situations occur keeping us from perfection, therefore, causing us to need a second chance. When a situation arises that places you in a position to give someone a second chance, take that opportunity. You never know when you will be in need of a second chance too.
What is the Community Living Education Project?

The Community Living Education Project provides information and support to families of people with developmental disabilities who are moving, or exploring the possibility of moving, to community living from a Developmental Center. The Project works to help families to:

- Envision possibilities for a family member in community living;
- Learn about and participate in the transition process; and
- Provide support to a family member throughout the transition to community living.

If you are interested in visiting a provider agency, or learning about other aspects of community living for your loved one, please contact the CLEP at (800) 500-0448 or send an email to clep@sph.rutgers.edu. We are here to serve you!

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