

COMMUNITY SERVICE OPTIONS, INC.

Happy New Year!!!

And what an exciting new year it promises to be! Democratic majorities in both the state and federal legislatures signal positive changes in areas of education, healthcare and employment. However, both levels of government have severe financial deficits that threaten cuts in programs, funding and staff support. Now is not the time to rest on expectations. YOU MUST ACT and keep pressure on state and federal law makers to: create fair, affordable and accessible housing, create jobs and a fair minimum wage, ensure adequate and appropriate healthcare and improve school systems to compete with global standards. Call or write your state and federal lawmaker; tell YOUR STORY. Get their contact info online at www.elections.il.gov.

Ask state legislators to support:

- ⇒ Children’s Waiver
- ⇒ Indexed cost of living and cost of doing business increases for service provider agencies and staff.



Tax reform to eliminate pension deficit and increase funding for schools and human services without raising property taxes

Call Renee (773) 838-4630 for help with advocacy.



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CSO, Inc. MANAGEMENT changes!

The New Year also brings an administrative facelift to CSO, Inc. David Ogunbode (pictured on the left, above) has been promoted to Clinical Director. He has oversight of Intake, case management, pre-admissions screening (PAS), service coordination and traumatic brain injury case management. Jill Speigner Hall has been promoted to Assistant Clinical Director; she supervises all clinical operations for individual service and support advocacy (ISSA). Congratulations!

HOME OPTIONS'

50TH HOMEOWNER

Home Options, a program that assists people with significant mobility impairments or developmental disabilities, seeking to become first-time homebuyers, accomplished its 50th house closing in October. Pictured are Andrea Smith and daughters: Samantha and Dahlia, enjoying their new home.



Andrea said, "Buying your first home can be a frustrating, tedious and confusing experience. The staff at CSO, Dennis Howard and Shirley Perez, held my hand and made the transition easy and tolerable. They walked me through the process, making sure my application was complete and intact. They explained my application and terms that were unfamiliar to me. Shirley, even, applied pressure to other agencies, when they "dragged their feet" on additional grant applications. Dennis and Shirley are 'advocates for voices that go unheard in our society'. I recommend CSO services to anyone.

CHILDREN'S WAIVER

DHS' submission to the federal government of an application for a Children's Waiver is welcomed and badly needed. It will provide a safety net for families with medically fragile children, those with unique needs and fill gaps in services. We ought to support and encourage DHS' efforts. However, the Arc of Illinois and other advocates have some concerns about the application:

- Only 600 (400 of whom are already being served) will be supported by the Waiver. Advocates ask that 3,350 be included in the first three years.
- Two, separate waivers are being submitted, rather than one, combining "home-based" and "residential" service. This will cause more, not less, fragmentation of services.
- The application imposes a financial cap of \$14,472, rather than the recommended \$21,698 per child.

For more information about the Children's Waiver, call Arc of Illinois or go to its web-site www.thearcofil.org.

SSI rate increase

The Social Security Administration announced a rate increase of 3.3%, for SSI, beginning January 1, 2007. Families enrolled in the Family Assistance Program (FAP) for Children with severe mental disabilities will receive a monthly increase (from \$603) to \$623. The FAP checks for January will arrive in late February and will reflect the new amount. For individuals enrolled in the Home-Based Support Service Program, the maximum amount will increase from \$1809 per month to \$1869. And adults, between the ages of 18 and 21, currently enrolled in a special education program, will receive an increase from \$1,206 per month to \$1,246. Recipients are asked to make adjustments in their service plans and agreements to reflect the new maximum amounts and accurate rates for January 2007.

"Boogie Nights"

expanding!!!!

Consumers want more "normal" social experiences—shopping trips, small dinner parties, sports events, etc. SO.. CSO, Inc. is planning a year of fun and frolic, in addition to "Boogie Night" dances. We're asking for volunteers to "buddy" and share community experiences. We're asking donors to make \$50 "gifts" to fund one person for four events per year. For details call Renee at (773) 838-4630.

SIX HONORED AT "STAR" GALA

The 2006 "Conquering Life's Challenges" Gala honored six outstanding "champions" of accessibility, stewardship, advocacy and courage. The event always inspires and delights those who attend but, this year, the warmth and unity of purpose, within the disabled community, was more evident than ever! Below are their stories and pictures of our celebration.



*Carlos Barcenas suffers from a serious heart condition but he works a physically challenging job, as a cafeteria worker for the South Side Learning Center. Carlos also has Downs Syndrome but he graduated from Benito Juarez High School and attended Harold Washington College's Vocational Training and Development Program. Carlos is bi-lingual in English and Spanish and has been recognized by the Institute for Latinos with Disabilities.

*Brian Caridine survived the death of his mother and learned to function, without her, independently, in his community. After a period of intermittent supportive living, he now lives on his own and performs janitorial work for the Department of Children and Family Services. Currently Brian is taking GED classes in order to enhance future opportunities. His goal, one day, is to obtain his driver's license and to purchase his own home.

*Sequoia Roberts survived a drowning, at age 10, a 5-day coma and extensive recovery, during which she had to relearn how to speak, dress, eat and walk.



*Everybody knows Michael Grice, who has been an outspoken crusader for disability rights and accessibility, for many years. Michael is on the Boards of Directors for Seguin Services, Inc. and the Progress Center for Independent Living. He is also an active member of the Human Rights Commission, West Suburban Chapter. More importantly, Michael is an illuminating example of independence, progressing from a group home to his own apartment and support services.

* Commissioner Karen Tamley, Mayors Office for People with Disabilities was honored for "Outstanding Leadership". Her goal is to "make Chicago the most accessible city in the nation" and she has made excellent progress in this position and throughout her career.

* Representative Danny K. Davis was honored as "Legislator of the Year" because of his tireless efforts to ensure that Medicaid and Medicare remain available and provided equitably to low income and vulnerable populations. His efforts and support of disability issues are too numerous and diverse to recount.

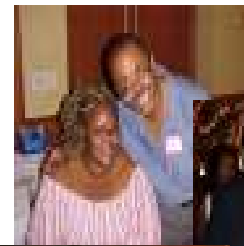
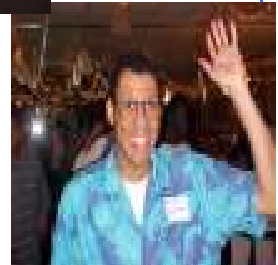
CSO, Inc.'s 2006 in Pictures



Friends gather in their finest...

At the GALA

But we



"boogied"



all year long!

During 2006, CSO, Inc also hosted parent support group meetings on financial and estate planning, advocacy and consumer-controlled housing. Prior to the mid-term elections, CSO, Inc. coordinated a candidates' "speak out" on disability issues at UIC.

SPANISH FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

WISH YOU COULD COMMUNICATE better with consumers and their families? CSO, Inc. offers a convenient, effective (and even fun) way to learn Spanish and enhance your professional skills. By popular request, we are offering Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 classes, Tuesdays, for 10 weeks, 5:00–7:00pm and 7:00-9:00pm, starting April 17, 2007.

Spanish 1 entails basic greetings, interview phraseology, present tense conjugation and basic home, family, health and personal business vocabulary.

Spanish 2 entails past and future tense conjugations, lifestyle, business and travel vocabulary as well as practical dialogue techniques for human services professionals

This is NOT your high school Spanish class! No books to purchase! No useless memorization!

But hurry! Space is limited! Send your check for \$250 and register by Feb 28!

For additional information or to register for classes, please contact Ms. Renee Lumpkin, Executive Director of CSO, Inc. at 773/838-4630 or fax your request to 773/838-9362.

Minimum wage increase !! Governor Blagojevich signed the bill to increase the minimum wage to \$7.50 starting July 1, 2007. Another 25 cents will be added to the wage each year for the next three years. But stay tuned! The Governor wants an indexed cost of living to replace the 25 cents but Speaker (our Representative) Michael Madigan disagrees. They will battle over this and the electricity freeze, next session.

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Service
Options, Inc.*

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**Giving a voice
&
VOicing a choice**