

Sight From Within

Fall 2007

A newsletter from the Association for the Multiple Impaired Blind, Inc.

Renovations Are Turning Howell House into Sixth Group Home

Renovations are underway to AMIB's sixth group home, purchased last fall in the town of Howell. The crew has been on site since the middle of August, and the home is expected to be fully operational by the first of the year. AMIB will then open the doors to four women from the Woodbridge and New Lisbon state development centers.

The project is divided into five stages of which AMIB has recently completed stage 3—framing, carpentry,

Right: Repair of the cracked sidewalk outside the Howell house — a hazard to pedestrians especially those with visual impairments — is an essential part of overall renovations.

masonry, electrical and plumbing work. Paperwork has been submitted to the township and permits received, and the crew has completed demolition of areas to be renovated. Workers are currently embarked on painting and the installation of appliances and furniture.



Above: Major landscaping will be required for the backyard of the Howell house which has been covered with dirt and rock due to excavation for the kitchen.

Below: The Scelfo truck parks outside the Howell house as crew members work on inside renovations.



Above: Joe Scelfo (on ladder) of Scelfo General Contracting and crew member work on the addition of the fully accessible kitchen. Other areas of renovation include equipping two bathrooms with ADA-compliant fixtures and grab bars, one with a roll-in shower; adjusting two bedrooms to allow for wider hall space; converting the garage into rooms for medication, storage and laundry; and building ramps for improved accessibility.

From the President



Dear Friend:

Please refer to the box below for a report on our recently completed successful capital campaign.

We exceeded our campaign goal, which allowed us to meet the actual cost of building the first long-term care

group home in the state of NJ for blind and developmentally disabled individuals.

This was a wonderful achievement, and I am very proud of you, our friends, who have been so generous and responsive to the needs of our group home residents. Thank you.

Now we are embarked upon renovating our sixth group home—the first outside Ocean County—for four residents of the Woodbridge and New Lisbon state development centers.

The photos in this newsletter show some of the challenges ahead of us as we tackle this project. I hope you will join us in this endeavor with a generous year-end gift.

Thank you, again, for your generosity and support in helping to make a difference in the lives of the multiple-impaired blind and their families.

Kenneth J. Carson, Jr.

From the Director



Greetings:

I hope this finds you doing well. AMIB has selected a contractor to complete accessibility design renovations for our sixth group home in Howell, Monmouth County. We are using StructureTone,

Inc. for our project management. We also used them for our eight-bedroom stick-built, accessible ranch in Lacey Township back in 2005. And we have retained Scelfo General Contracting as our general contractor.

It has taken longer than expected for us to receive permits from the township, but the crew has been on site since the middle of August. If renovations continue to move as smoothly as they have, we anticipate being fully operational by January 1.

AMIB has selected five families as this year's Bixel Respite recipients. Last year we successfully served three families in New Jersey (one of whom is featured in this newsletter).

A sincere thank-you to Suzanne Mazzuocolo, Colleen Sherman and Deborah Roche, who assisted in getting the respite fund off the ground.

Please contact me if you or someone you know would like more information on the support AMIB can provide to families in need of respite. And don't forget to check out our web site at AMIB.net for the most recent news and services.

We look forward to the opportunities ahead and will keep you posted on our progress. I would like to extend a thank you to all the board members, staff and supporters of our cause and wish you and your family happy holidays and a happy New Year.

Aaron Soto

The Legacy Society



We wish to acknowledge and thank the following who have become members of The Legacy Society through a bequest or planned gift:

Janet Andruss *
David R. Bixel *
Elaine O. Behr *
Kenneth J. Carson, Jr.
Mary J. Carson
Phil Cochran *
Albert R. Costa *
Viola Ellison
Peter & Mildred Galanti *
Richard F. Harries & Carol J. Harries
Austin & Clara Helle
Betty Wold Johnson
The Keith Wold Johnson
Charitable Trust
Robert Wood Johnson 1962
Charitable Trust
Kellogg Endowment Fund
Mary Katherine Lightner *
Muriel Martucci
David Mathey *
Daniel J. McCarthy
Patricia McKinley
William McKinley, III
Margaret J. McLean
Vera Monaghan
Ann Pambello
Edna Thorsen *
Polly Wilson *

* deceased

Vision of Independence Capital Campaign (A final report to our donors and friends)

In the spring of 2003, AMIB launched a three-year, \$819,000 capital campaign based on original projections of \$135 per square foot to build the first long-term care group home in the state of New Jersey for the multiple-impaired blind. Because actual costs for providing the barrier-free, handicapped-accessible home ended up at \$165 per square foot, our fundraising goal increased accordingly to \$1,065,000.

The AMIB Board of Trustees is happy to report that through your dedication and support, we successfully reached this increased goal in the spring of 2006, having raised \$1,065,000 (\$665,000 from the private sector — with 96 percent of pledges paid in full — and \$400,000 from the sale of one of our older group homes).

The AMIB trustees and the senior citizens living in this long-term-care group home are deeply grateful to you for your generosity.

From Respite to Resident — Liz Moves into Sweetwood Home

Elizabeth “Liz” Koberle and her family were among the first recipients of the Bixel Respite Fund created in 2006 to honor the memory of David Bixel and provide relief from the everyday challenges faced by families who care for the multiple-impaired blind.

The respite provided peace of mind for Liz’s mother, Joan, allowing her time to conduct household chores, run errands and simply take a break from providing the 24/7 care and attention that Liz required.

Originally from Carlstadt in Bergen County, New Jersey, Liz and her mother, a widow for eight years, settled in Forked River during the fall of 1996. Liz attended Lacey High School and was the only student from the special needs class to graduate.

Just before Liz graduated in 1998, Joan married Hassel Ratcliff whom she met when Hassel’s son was doing work reupholstering her furniture.

After graduation, Liz began attending local day programs. However, no program was able to meet her needs, and so she ended up staying at home.

After six years of staying home with no meaningful activity, Liz began displaying her need for independence, and it became more and more difficult for Joan and Hassel to accommodate her challenging behavior.



Liz Koberle (right) with her mother, Joan Koberle-Ratcliff, and Joan’s husband Hassel Ratcliff are delighted that Liz is now gaining independence as a resident of AMIB’s Sweetwood group home in Forked River.

Then Joan met a former employee of AMIB who recommended that Joan contact AMIB. AMIB’s Director of Operations Deb Roche offered Joan and Liz a tour of the Sweetwood home, which was near where the family lived and had a bedroom available.

Joan applied to the state for funds to transfer Liz into the home.

As Liz waited for state approval, the family applied for and received temporary relief from the Bixel Respite Fund. At the same time, 32-year-old Liz

became familiar with AMIB, its residents and staff, and attended parties, games and dances with the other residents.

Ultimately her request was approved, and Liz moved into Sweetwood on July 6 of this year.

“Liz knows that this is her home,” says Joan. “The constructive meaningful activities that the wonderful staff members engage her in is just what Liz needs to provide her with structured routine.”

NJACP Names Artie Koweek a Community Star



At the NJACP awards dinner on May 14, Artie Koweek is joined by, from left, his mother, Mildred Koweek, and his aunts, Lena Fishman and Sara Schwartz.

Arthur “Artie” Koweek of the Muller Avenue home was named recipient of this year’s NJACP Community Star award. Artie’s family, friends and staff members joined him at the Westin Princeton Hotel at Forrestal Village on May 14, when he received the award.

An active member of AMIB’s Dream Weavers self advocacy group, Artie delivers meals on wheels to several elderly people through Saint Andrews United Methodist Church. He has also taken part in Toys for Tots, local food banks and in fundraising projects to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina. Artie has received awards for his volunteer work for two years in a row.

While Artie enjoys making people laugh, he also has a serious side. He cares deeply for family and friends and people he meets on a regular basis.

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AMIB Appeals for Funds to Beautify and Complete Howell Home



Stage 5, the final phase of beautification and renovation planned for AMIB's sixth group home, includes all the touches that will turn the house into a real home for four residents.

It includes landscaping, replacing a dilapidated fence, repairing the cracked and hazardous sidewalk, and cutting down, trimming and replacing overgrown bushes (shown left).

With the help of supporters, AMIB's goal is to make the the home fully functional and as attractive as the surrounding neighborhood.

The total cost of this beautification phase is estimated to be \$30,000.

Look for and please respond to our appeal later this fall to help us conclude the purchase and beautification of this house.