

Sight From Within

Fall 2008

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

AMIB Plans to Renovate Pine Beach Properties for Visually Impaired Residents

AMIB recently signed mortgages for two homes in Pine Beach — one on Merion Avenue, the other on Midland Avenue. The goal is to renovate these homes and turn them into accessible four-bedroom residences for eight individuals with developmental disabilities and visual impairments, who are currently living in state institutions.

However, before placing individuals from the state into these renovated homes, AMIB's plan is to first relocate the eight residents living in the Bayville home into the Pine Beach homes.

This will give us the opportunity to undertake major renovations to Bayville that will make this home appropriately barrier free and accessible for the residents.

Opened in 1982 to AMIB residents, the

Bayville property on Muller Avenue was AMIB's second group home.

As soon as the Bayville renovations are completed, we will move the original residents back to their home, and open up the Pine Beach homes to individuals who are on the state waiting list.

Currently thousands of individuals in state institutions are on the list.

AMIB recently relocated four women from this list to the newly completed home in Howell.

We now look forward to doing our part in providing homes and services for eight more. We thank everyone who provided the financial support to help open the Howell home. We hope we can rely on the same generous help to make these new homes a reality.



Future Group Home on Merion Avenue, Pine Beach



Future Group Home on Midland Avenue, Pine Beach

AMIB recently obtained mortgages to two residences in Pine Beach. One is on Merion Avenue (above). The other is on Midland Avenue (left). Extensive renovations costing approximately \$350,000 each must now be made to these homes to make them accessible to the visually impaired, developmentally disabled population that we serve.

From the President



Dear Friend:

Heartfelt thanks go to you for the wonderful support you have given us enabling us to purchase our sixth group home that opened this year in Howell.

AMIB and the AMIB Endowment

Fund board members held a board retreat and planning session earlier this year which helped show us the direction we must take AMIB in the years to come. (See back page.)

Our goal is to meet the challenge of the New Jersey Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities "Path to Progress" in the Olmstead Plan.

The plan outlines how individuals with developmental disabilities can best transition from developmental centers to the community over the next eight years.

We have already embarked on that path with the opening of our sixth home, and are progressing with the purchase of our next two homes in Pine Beach.

We ask for your continued help in making these goals a reality for the blind/visually impaired, developmentally disabled individuals of New Jersey.

Kenneth J. Carson, Jr.

Giftback.com: Another way to give back

Are you looking for a birthday, get-well, thank you, house-warming, or new baby gift to send to a friend, family member, employer or employee? Then consider going to **Giftback.com**.

The site offers a wealth of items from fresh flowers to fruit baskets to engraved items and electronics. Giftback actually has the ability to locate almost any type of gift . . . to be delivered any time to anyone — to him, to her, to them.

And better yet, after you have selected your gift, you can select the **Associated for the Multiple Impaired Blind** as the charity of your choice, and Giftback will donate 10 percent of the purchase price to us.

From the Director



Greetings,

I hope this finds you doing well. I am happy to report that by April four women had permanently moved into the Howell group home, and AMIB's first day program serving these four has been operat-

ing smoothly out of the recreation room of the house.

Thanks go to all of you who responded to our last newsletter in which we requested funds for the final stage of renovations to this home — exterior beautification.

AMIB has now been able to level and landscape the property, making it safe to walk the perimeter of the home. We have also replaced the rusted broken fence with weatherproof material and, most importantly, replaced the existing cracked and hazardous sidewalk to ensure the safe throughway for our neighbors and visually impaired residents.

With your financial support, we have been able to take care of these details and make this house one of the most aesthetically pleasing on the block.

Looking forward: AMIB has recently obtained mortgages for two properties in Pine Beach, and we are ready to embark on "Project Muller Relocation."

The first step will be to purchase these two Pine Beach homes and turn them into accessible four-bedroom residences. The second will be to relocate the eight individuals from our Muller Avenue residence in Bayville into these two homes. The third is to make major upgrades and accessibility renovations to the Bayville residence. The fourth is to move the eight original Bayville residents as a family back to the Bayville home. And, finally, the fifth step will be to fill the two Pine Beach homes with residents from the state waiting list. The list numbers in the thousands, and we look forward to doing our part in providing homes and services to eight more individuals with developmental disabilities and visual impairment.

We look forward to the opportunities ahead and will keep you posted on our progress.

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

Four Move into Howell Home from New Jersey Developmental Centers

Four women, all in their early fifties, are now living in AMIB's newly renovated home in Howell.

As reported in our spring newsletter, Brenda moved into the home in March. In May she was joined by Linda, Janis and Mary. All come from developmental centers in New Jersey — Woodbridge, New Lisbon and Vineland — where they have lived for over 25 years.

All have adjusted exceptionally well to their barrier-free, accessible new home, and to using the hand rails that help them navigate the hallways and find their bathrooms and bedrooms.

In this home, they can relax, listen to music or television, assist with cooking and laundry, and take part in many other activities.

Brenda, for instance, may be seen going on walks to visit neighborhood dogs. Linda often enjoys dancing to



Day program staff members Teresa Necci (left) and Linda Firstmeyer (right) pose with new Howell home residents Linda, Brenda, Janis and Mary.

music on television. And Mary and Janis may be seen cleaning up after a meal or helping with the dishes.

Many thanks go to our generous donors who have made this home possible for our four new residents.

Changed Guidelines Give Residents More Control over their Activities

Within the past year, federal and state guidelines on providing financial assistance to individuals with disabilities have changed. The guidelines now allow recipients of services to have more control over how the money allocated to them is spent.

Previously, when individuals such as the four Howell group home residents were given the opportunity to live in a community group home, they had to fit into a traditional day program, such as working on piecemeal production.

AMIB has discovered that what makes residents most productive and happy is the freedom to choose what they want to do within their capabilities.

When presenting the proposal to the state of New Jersey for the four women who would be living in the Howell home, AMIB felt strongly that they would best be served by staff who specialize in working with the visually impaired. We also felt that the four should be able to participate in activities of their choice and not be placed in a traditional day program that might not meet their needs.

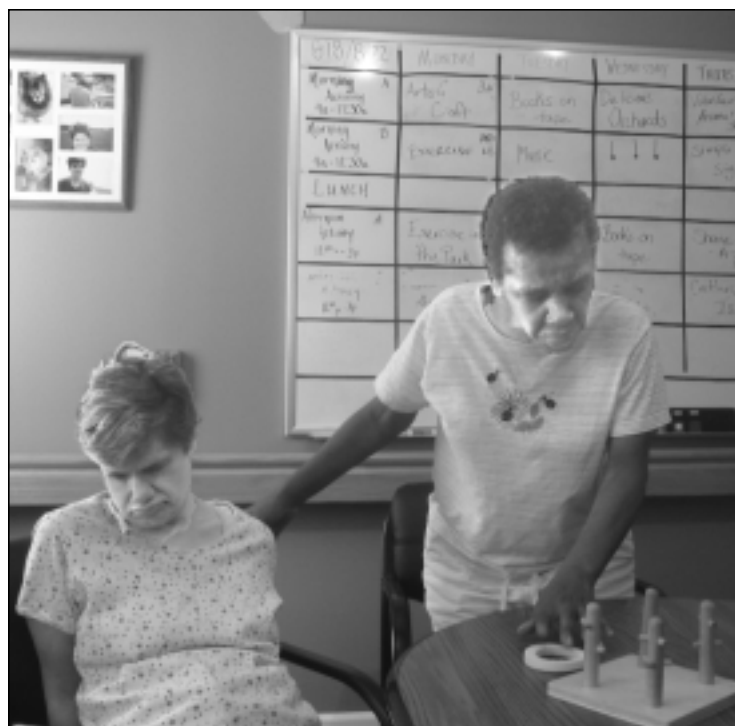
In the second living room of the Howell home, AMIB provided plenty of room for residents to conduct in-house

activities. We also created a recreational and day activity hub site from which the residents can decide which activities they want to participate in during the week. The location also serves as the central point from which they gather prior to leaving for their community-based outings.

When they lived in state settings, the four women had approximately one day a month in which they were exposed to community-based interactions.

In the Howell day program, they can now go out into the community three to four times a week and participate in many different activities.

These activities include delivering flowers or cookies to cheer up residents of nursing homes, participating in thera-



Howell home residents Mary (left) and Brenda are shown in front of the weekly activity board in the room where they gather to plan activities before leaving for community-based outings.

peutic horse riding, attending an animal shelter in which they adopt pets and provide newspaper to be shredded for cages, and gardening around the house.

Out and About in New Jersey



Forked River Residents Visit Allaire Village

Delma (left), Janet (center) and MaryAnn, all residents of the Forked River home, attend the Allaire State Park and historic 19th century village. At the village they learned about the early blacksmiths, bakers, quilters and carpenters. Dressed in the costume of the time, docents demonstrated to the visitors the way of life of those days including how cooking, cleaning and laundry was done. The tour ended with a ride on the Pine Creek railroad.



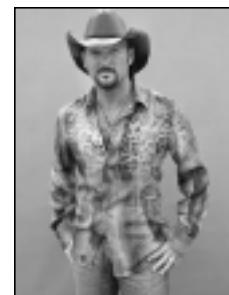
Artie Continues His Volunteer Efforts

Previously featured in our newsletter for his job delivering Meals on Wheels, Artie has been continuing his volunteer efforts. He heard of the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation and decided to donate some of his unused clothing. With the help of staff, Artie packed up clothes in the van and brought them to the Toms River MS Foundation bin. He felt a great sense of achievement in helping to make a difference in his community.



Three from North Dover Visit Nursing Home

In July, individuals from AMIB's North Dover home decided to visit residents of the Rose Garden Nursing Home and bring them cookies as a community outreach experience. John (left) and Paul (right) are seen above with one of the residents. Below, during lunch in the dining hall, Tommy shares cookies with another resident. Before they proceeded to the dining hall, the three received a full tour of the facility from Kevin, the activities director of the home. All enjoyed the visit and were invited to come again.



Janet Has the "Best Night Ever"

In May, Forked River home resident, Janet, said she had the best night ever. She

attended a concert to hear Tim McGraw live at the PNC Arts Center.

An avid McGraw fan, Janet put on her best country outfit and cowboy hat (above) for her concert experience. She knew every word of every song and also danced to them. The only thing she did not get to do was meet McGraw in person. But she had a great night and hopes next time she will actually meet her idol in person and get his autograph.

The Bixel Fund Gives Respite to the Lolla and Strauss Families

The Bixel Respite Fund was established in 2006 in memory of David R. Bixel who donated countless hours to AMIB and to the growth of the AMIB Endowment Fund, Inc. over which he presided for many years. The fund makes annual grants available to families of individuals with developmental disabilities and visual impairment. Grants may be used to pur-

chase direct care services offered by AMIB or other providers, to offset the cost of family-chosen respite services, or a combination of the two.

If you or someone you know would like more information on the grant application process, please contact Deb Roche at 732-262-0082 or e-mail her at droche@amib.net.

AMIB's Colleen Sherman Offers Respite to the Lolla Family

The Lolla family has been a recipient of assistance from the Bixel Respite Fund for the past three years. At 14, Kathleen Lolla's son, Jamie, or "JT" as he is known to his friends, is visually impaired, developmentally disabled and requires direct-care services and support with activities of daily living (ADL). The grant to the Lolla family provides direct care workers to spend time with JT two and a half hours a day, two days a week.

AMIB respite care worker Colleen Sherman (seen right with JT) has been working with the teenager for two of those years. She greets him at home, helps him off the school bus, put away his books, wash his hands, and helps prepare his afternoon snack. JT is an active teenager who loves the outdoors, sports and going to local parks. While JT is with Colleen, the family is able to help their other children with after-school activities and outings.



Strauss Family Takes Time Out to Hang Out with Sesame Street Characters

Sometimes something as simple as being able to enjoy holiday time together can mean a lot to a family, especially a family dealing with the stress of caring for a child with a disability. This is true for the Strauss family in Old Bridge.

One of the family's two-year-old twin daughters, Logan, has a developmental disability and is blind. Recently the Bixel Respite fund provided the family with season passes to the Sesame Place Theme Park in Langhorne, Pennsylvania. The family enjoyed the opportunity to hang out with their favorite Sesame Street characters — including Bert and Ernie (left).

“Logan loved it when the characters touched her, and it made me so happy. Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity,” said the twins’ mother Natasha, pictured left holding Logan. Logan’s sister, Alicia, rests in her stroller.

AMIB, Inc.

909 Cedar Bridge Avenue
P O Box 4259
Brick NJ 08723-4259

Visit us on the web at
www.amib.net

PRSR STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Boyertown, PA
Permit No. 5

AMIB BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kenneth J. Carson, Jr. President
Janet Wilson Alternative
..... Executive Vice President
Ken P. Carson .. Vice President of Operations
Edward M. Gillespie.....Treasurer
Colleen Healey; Sean Healey; Austin Helle;
Lillian Johnsen; Daniel J. McCarthy;
Muriel Martucci; Ann Pambello

AMIB ENDOWMENT FUND BOARD

Kevin J. Cunniff President
Jerry Perez, CPA.....Treasurer
Edward M. Gillespie Secretary
Kenneth J. Carson, Jr.; Steven B. Kelmar;
Charles Paolino; Beverley Parry;
Robert Pearson

Board Members Meet to Plan AMIB's Future

AMIB and AMIB Endowment Fund board members held a highly productive retreat and strategic planning session earlier this year at the Woodbridge Hampton Inn to help plan AMIB's future.

Derrick Dufrense (standing second from right), president of Community Resource Associates, led the session. Since 1982, his consulting firm has worked with mental health centers, providers and families in coordinating support systems and housing for persons with mental illness.

Deborah Wehrlen (seated right), senior vice president of the Pennhurst Group, described details of the state's eight-year "Path to Progress" set out to help individuals with developmental disabilities move from state centers into the community.



Attending the retreat are, standing from left: Jerry Perez; Kevin Cunniff; Sean Healey; Kenneth J. Carson, Jr.; Daniel J. McCarthy; Ken P. Carson; Aaron Soto, AMIB's executive director; Derrick Dufrense; Edward M. Gillespie; seated, from left: Muriel Martucci; Janet Alternative; Colleen Healey; and Deborah Wehrlen.