

# Sight From Within

Spring 2009

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

## AMIB Begins Renovating Two Pine Beach Properties



**Contractors add new siding and a new roof to this property on Merion Avenue, one of two ranches that AMIB purchased last year in Pine Beach. The home will ultimately house four visually impaired/developmentally disabled individuals from state institutions.**

AMIB is currently renovating the four-bedroom ranch, pictured above, adding new siding and a new roof, as well as windows, flooring and features such as accessible showers, an ADA-compliant exit ramp and vinyl handrails in front and rear egress. Hallways and doors are being widened for wheelchair access. All interior finishes will include new trim, handrails, doors, hardware, vinyl flooring, paint, carpet and ceramic tile. AMIB is renovating the existing galley kitchen into an open-floor-plan area with solid surface countertops, new fixtures and appliances and recessed lighting. The garage floor will be raised to the level of the house floor, and the area will be converted into space for an office, laundry and medication room. Other new features include a fire sprinkler and fire alarm system and a backyard patio for outdoor recreation.

The second Pine Beach property undergoing renovation is a three-bedroom ranch on Midland Avenue with den, dining room and attached garage. AMIB is enlarging and converting this ranch into a four-bedroom home with a 480-square-foot addition. Other renovations are similar to those planned for the first home, including: accessible showers, exit ramp and handrails and wider hallways and doors. The garage floor is also being raised, and the area converted into space for office, laundry and medication room. Other similar additions include a fire sprinkler and fire alarm system and a backyard patio for outdoor recreation. *(Turn to page 7 for photos of the Pine Beach home on Midland Avenue.)*

AMIB recently began work on a project that will eventually help New Jersey save millions of dollars and lead to better care for the developmentally disabled. Through proposed legislation, New Jersey hopes to reduce the population of its seven developmental centers by 80 percent within five years and focus instead on community-based care, such as that provided by AMIB. Last year AMIB purchased two properties in Pine Beach, one on Merion Avenue and one on Midland Avenue, with the goal of turning them into accessible, barrier-free, four-bedroom group residences that will ultimately be home to eight individuals from state centers. As soon as the Pine Beach homes are completed, AMIB will temporarily move eight residents from our Bayville home into these homes, and take the opportunity to begin major renovations to Bayville. Opened to residents in 1982, Bayville was AMIB's second group home and is in dire need of renovation. When the Bayville renovations are completed, AMIB will move the original residents back to their home and open up the Pine Beach residences to eight individuals from state centers. We estimate that the renovations of these two homes will cost about \$665,000 and be completed this summer.



**Renovations to the Pine Beach home on Merion Avenue include widening doors and making existing bathrooms and showers wheelchair accessible.**

## From the President



Dear Friend:  
With your generous support, four women from state institutions are now leading productive lives in a safe and attractive environment in our sixth new group home in Howell.

AMIB is aggressively working toward expanding the number of group homes for the visually impaired and developmentally disabled population in NJ. This newsletter highlights our two newest group home purchases and renovations, which will permit us to bring an additional eight individuals from state institutions into the community.

With each new person we are able to accommodate, we save taxpayers money. Ultimately the two new Pine Beach group homes will deinstitutionalize eight individuals from state settings to AMIB group homes.

Because a community home can care for individuals for less than half the cost that the state must charge, this will result in considerable savings for taxpayers.

We're on a mission, and we invite you to join us by continuing your generous financial support. Thank you for being with us.

Kenneth J. Carson, Jr.



### In Memory of Eric Weber

Eric Weber, a resident of the Brick group home, passed away in November 2008. Eric joined AMIB on October 7,

2002, after moving from his parents' home in Toms River. One of his favorite activities after returning from his day program was to assist staff with cooking dinner. Eric thrived on his new-found independence at AMIB. He held a special place in the hearts of staff and residents alike, and is greatly missed.

## From the Director



Greetings, I hope this finds you doing well. As we mentioned in our last newsletter, AMIB has secured two additional residential sites in the Township of Pine Beach. Since then we have retained

Conant Architects of New York to create plans incorporating accessibility design features to meet the needs of the visually impaired and disabled population who will receive 24/7 services in these homes.

To implement the extensive renovations, we have selected the construction management company of Structure-Tone, Inc. out of Hamilton, NJ, and general contractor Scelfo Construction of Ocean County.

By the time this newsletter reaches you, we will have completed two thirds of the renovations to both Pine Beach homes.

Upon the completion of these renovations, our goal is to use the homes to temporarily relocate eight individuals from the existing group home in Bayville.

We then plan to upgrade the Bayville residence to provide one bedroom for each of the eight residents. We will add two barrier-free bathrooms, and make the layout of the house completely accessible for residents with physical disabilities as they age.

Once the original Bayville residents return to their upgraded home, AMIB will fill the two Pine Beach homes with individuals from the state waiting list.

In January, Assemblyman Louis Greenwald (Camden) introduced bill (A-3625) to the New Jersey Senate that would close five of the seven state developmental centers within the next five years. AMIB agrees with this initiative, and encourages all to speak to their local legislators to ask them to support it.

The waiting list for community-based services is in the thousands. When this project is completed, AMIB looks forward to doing its part by providing homes and services to eight more

individuals with developmental disabilities and visual impairments.

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 \*

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Polly Wilson \*

\* deceased

## AMIB Residents Celebrate Thanksgiving by Giving to Others



### Pamela O'Dell Named Caregiver of the Year

AMIB presented the 2008 Sister Mary Burns Caregiver of the Year Award to Brick Home Relief Manager Pamela O'Dell, who started with AMIB five years ago as a residential specialist.

Pam provides direct care services to the residents and leadership to the staff at the Brick home.

She exhibits extreme loyalty and patience — important qualities for AMIB — and demonstrates these qualities by encouraging residents to strive for and master their personal goals. Pam helps residents with their exercise and special diets, and recently helped one resident realize a long-held dream for a special vacation.

In addition to her work at the Brick home, Pam is always willing to go the extra mile to offer her services at other group homes when needed.

She is an outstanding employee with an exemplary record of loyalty, dependability and a sense of humor. Pam handles confusion and unsettling situations by taking the initiative to solve problems in a calm manner.

During the temporary absence of a program manager, Pam ran the Brick home with stability and leadership. She always ensures that residents' needs are met on all levels, and that they each have an active calendar of events and involvement in community-based activities.

Pam extends herself beyond her job description and is always available when needed. She is an exemplary role model, and we commend her for her positive outlook and enthusiasm.



This past Thanksgiving, as a way of celebrating the season, AMIB residents brought gifts to community residents. Above, Billy Holmes (front left) and Jody Segen (center) with staff member Peggy Sherman (right) bring canned goods for needy families to the food pantry at St. Barnabas Church in Bayville. They are welcomed by Church volunteers (seen in the background). Billy and Jody are both members of AMIB's self advocacy group DreamWeavers, which collected and purchased the goods.



Bayville resident Artie Koweek (left) presents a Thanksgiving basket to Lynn Griffin, school nurse at the Ocean Gate Elementary School. Lynn donated the basket to a local family. Each Bayville resident participated in this project by filling the 20-pound turkey basket with canned goods and desserts.

On behalf of the residents of Tall Pines Nursing Home, a staff member (center) accepts a donation of several large-print books from Bayville residents Brian Donahue (left) and Artie Koweek (right). Brian and Artie visited the home with staff members Linda Hires and Heather Roberts. The residents were very appreciative of the books and enjoyed the visit from Brian, Artie and the AMIB staff.



# Donors Making a Difference . . .

*In gratitude we recognize 2008 donors to AMIB, Inc., and the AMIB Endowment Fund, Inc. and to those who helped us purchase our sixth group home. All of you have helped to make a difference in what we have been able to accomplish in our group homes and in the lives of our residents.*

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*While every effort has been made to check the accuracy of this list, mistakes sometimes do occur. If we have made an error in spelling your name or omitted your name, please accept our apologies and call 973-376-6191, so we may correct the error. Thank you.*

## HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008

- ❖ AMIB opened its sixth group home in Howell Township and is now providing residential services to four women from the state waiting list. AMIB currently serves 34 individuals in Ocean and Monmouth counties.
- ❖ AMIB established the first self-directed day habilitation services for four women in the Howell home.
- ❖ On June 30, AMIB purchased two residential sites in Pine Beach. Programs in these homes are expected to open in 2009 for individuals moving to community-based living from state developmental centers.
- ❖ Mary Ann Miller of the Forked River home received the Cochran Award for her progress in self advocacy, independence and community integration.
- ❖ Pam O'Dell, Residential Relief Manager of the group home in Brick, received the third annual Caregiver of the Year Award in recognition of her dedication and devotion to AMIB, its residents and staff.
- ❖ AMIB honored and recognized staff members Evelyn Burns and Peggy Sherman of the Bayville home for completing 20 years of committed service to AMIB residents.



**Katherine Durante, Executive Director of OceanFirst Foundation in Toms River, presents a check for \$10,000 to Aaron Soto for the purchase of the sixth group home in Howell.**



### Mary Ann Miller Receives Cochran Award

AMIB presented Mary Ann Miller, a resident of the Forked River home, with the 2008

Cochran Award in recognition of the progress she has made in self-advocacy, independence and community integration.

Mary arrived at her AMIB home from the Vineland Development Center in 2003. She loved having her own room and cherished her new privacy. After a few months at AMIB, Mary began to trust the people around her and tried to help her housemates in any way she could. Her new-found independence helped Mary overcome her shyness and blossom into a vivacious person. She was also able to quit smoking.

Mary has battled many obstacles in her life, but she does not let any of them keep her from thinking of others. As an active member of AMIB's self advocacy group, DreamWeavers, she takes pride in advocating for her own rights as well as assuring that her housemates' needs are heard.

Recently Mary donated ten inches of her hair to the Locks of Love Foundation, which uses hair to make wigs for children and women with cancer. Last year, she showed her patriotic side by voting in the presidential election.

### Employees Honored for 20 Years of Service

In a health care professional field that traditionally experiences high turnover, AMIB is proud to recognize the loyalty of its employees. Last October, we honored two employees who have given over 20 years of dedicated service.

They are: Evelyn Burns (left) and Peggy Sherman (right) of the Bayville home. The two started working with AMIB in 1988.

AMIB is grateful for the commitment of these two dedicated people and for their long-time tenure in service to our residents.



### Giftback.com: Another way to give back

AMIB is happy to announce a new donor partnership with **giftback.com** in which 10 percent of your purchases are donated to AMIB. At **giftback.com** you can get your Easter, Mothers' Day and other gifts. You will, at the same time, help AMIB and the people we serve. **Giftback** sells flowers, baskets, electronics, etc.



— perfect items for last-minute and thoughtful gifts. All you have to do is go to AMIB's website — [www.amib.net](http://www.amib.net) — and click on "Donations" in the yellow column on the left. The link to Giftback will ensure that 10 percent of your purchases are donated to AMIB. Also look for the AMIB flower arrangement which provides an additional \$3 donation.

### AMIB, INC. Expenses for Year Ending June 30, 2008

<input type="checkbox"/>	Program Services .....	73.5%
<input type="checkbox"/>	General & Administrative ...	10.5%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Capital Acquisition .....	15.5%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fundraising .....	0.5%



### AMIB, INC. Income for Year Ending June 30, 2008

<input type="checkbox"/>	Dept. of Health & Human Services* .....	88.5%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Private Contributions .....	10.5%
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interest/Other .....	1.0%



\* Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)



## Renovations to Pine Beach Home on Midland Avenue Take Shape

**Left:** A worker inspects the hole that has been dug for the foundation of the 480-square-foot addition to the group home on Midland Avenue in Pine Beach.

**Below:** The addition takes shape. It will contain an additional bedroom and an accessible shower to accommodate a fourth resident.



**Left:** Existing carpeting was removed from the floor of this residence to reveal a beautiful hardwood floor. AMIB will keep this floor, and sand and finish it. In addition, an existing HVAC system will be upgraded to improve heating, ventilating and air-conditioning in order to meet the demands of the larger home.

## Proud to Be American — AMIB Residents Go to the Polls



Mary Ann Miller and Janet Morris, both residents of the Forked River group home, were two AMIB residents who voted in last year's historic presidential election. Both had carefully followed the candidates' vision for America. They arrived early at the polling station to cast their ballots, and then stayed up late that night to listen eagerly to the results on the news. They were proud to have had the opportunity to exercise their rights as citizens.



**Above:** Mary Ann Miller studies the ballot.

**Right:** Janet Morris prepares to cast her ballot.



**AMIB, Inc.**

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**North Dover Residents Enjoy Karaoke at Cool Beans**



With an especially cold winter and limited outdoor activities available to them, the residents of the North Dover home found different indoor activities at a new place . . . a place with music, singing, good food and lots of laughs. Cool Beans in Toms River hosts karaoke on Monday nights, and the residents have been quite a hit there. Together with staff members, they participate in group chorus, solos and dancing. At Cool Beans they work up an appetite that is quenched by coffee and cake. If you happen to be in the area on a Monday night, join them for a night of karaoke and fun. Above left, John Ascarelli sings karaoke as house-mate Thomas Terry and Residential Specialist Shalonda Crutcher (above right) cheer him on.

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