



OUR STORY

Empowering people with psychiatric disabilities to transition to independent living by engaging them in housing, job training, mentoring, counseling and advocacy programs that inspire healthy, productive lives.

“ I have a home,
new friends, and
a strong support
system. ”

-Wilhemina



History

For decades, individuals with chronic psychiatric disabilities were housed in psychiatric facilities where they received little to no socialization, life skills, rehabilitation, or employment services. In the early 1970's, a movement swept across the nation to deinstitutionalize psychiatric patients and discharge them to community care—an event that resulted in thousands of formerly hospitalized individuals living on the streets, in homeless shelters or in prisons.

Community Access was founded in 1974 as a bold response to the mass release of patients from New York's psychiatric hospitals. Our founders pooled their energy, money and efforts to assist residents in obtaining housing, reconnecting with the community, finding work and rebuilding social ties. These early efforts became the prototype for one of the nation's first supportive housing programs.

Thirty-six years later, Community Access has expanded beyond housing to offer comprehensive support services and job training to meet the needs of individuals who include people living with HIV/AIDS, veterans, and the formerly incarcerated. We are proud that our award-winning programs are being replicated across the country—and that, each day, we are able to empower individuals to lead healthy, productive lives.

Housing

We provide housing to nearly 1,000 low-income individuals, more than 50% of whom are consumers of mental health services. We own and operate 16 buildings in Manhattan, Brooklyn and the Bronx, and we lease units in other buildings throughout the city. More than 250 new units of supportive housing in four buildings are scheduled to open during 2010-11.

Job Training and Employment Services

In 1995, Community Access introduced a model for job training and placement of individuals with a history of mental illness, homelessness, substance abuse, and incarceration. With nearly 800 graduates to date, our Howie the Harp Peer Advocacy and Training Center (HTH) provides opportunities for people to develop the skills and knowledge they need to find jobs and to pursue their education.

East Village Access

At East Village Access, Community Access offers curriculum-based, structured learning opportunities for adults with mental illness to become knowledgeable about employment, housing, life skills, and social opportunities that can help them lead healthy, productive lives. Using PROS—Personalized Recovery Oriented Services—East Village Access helps people identify their strengths, overcome barriers, and build skills for goal-setting, growth, recovery and self-directed living.

The Art Collective

The Art Collective uses art as a healing tool for helping people recover from psychiatric disabilities. Our studio offers an encouraging and supportive environment that expands opportunities for personal and artistic development in visual and literary arts. We are proud that our program is the only one of its kind that specializes in teaching Book Arts: the process of creating, designing, writing, binding and exhibiting unique and limited edition handmade books.

With an annual operating budget of over \$21 million, Community Access' programs and services are made possible because of the generosity of individuals, foundations, corporations and government agencies.

