



Alexander Roberts: Banks are not living up to their obligations to homeowners that are struggling financially.

## Attacking homelessness by reducing foreclosures

By KENNETH R. CERINI

Community Housing Innovations Inc. has taken steps to address the homeless problem on Long Island since 1991. In the past, the homeless were often subject to living in welfare motels, with families placed in one room and exposed to vermin and drug abuse. After witnessing these troublesome conditions in the early '90s, CHI developed a "supervised motel model," in which CHI negotiated agreements with motel owners to introduce case management services so that the agency could quickly relocate the families to permanent housing.

"By 1996 we had emptied the welfare motels and put ourselves out of the welfare motel business," said Alexander Roberts, executive director of CHI. "Shouldn't putting yourself out of business be the aim of a social services agency?"

**You were formerly a TV reporter. How did you make the transition to founding CHI?** In the late '80s, I covered the welfare hotel scandals. It was a terrible situation that was difficult for these struggling individuals and families, costing the government and taxpayers a lot of money. In just four years, we had successfully moved the families out of the motels and placed them into permanent or transitional housing in apartments.

**How has the mission of CHI evolved over the last few years?** Today, we stand as a HUD-approved housing counseling agency because of the high rate of foreclosures on Long Island. To address this, many banks have events where people line up and wait hours to speak with a counselor regarding their loans and paperwork. Last month we pioneered something we don't think has ever been done before – we started having our counselors go through their paperwork before they meet with the banks to try to make the process more efficient. In three days

we saw 98 different families who are on their way to loan modifications.

**Are banks responding?** We're working with banks to try to enforce the Making Home Affordable Act that was passed in 2008. We're finding that banks are not living up to their obligations. Many families are struggling with their loans and mortgages, and instead of getting the relief they expected, they're being treated without dignity and respect. We're hoping to change that through counseling and advocacy.

**Do you foresee the housing situation changing for the better?** It comes down to will from our leaders, who should be requiring all municipalities to meet their fair share of affordable housing, and they're not being the advocates Long Islanders need them to be. I think that when the lack of affordable housing starts to impact the economy through the loss of a young work force, people will begin advocating for affordable housing. In order to combat homelessness, we need to be proactive: We need to provide affordable housing, work with those who are threatened with foreclosure and we need people to stand up and say that affordable housing is for the good of the community.

**Organization** Community Housing Innovations Inc.

**Address** 55 Medford Ave., Suite B, Patchogue, NY 11772

**Executive Director** Alexander Roberts

**Phone** (631) 475-6390

**Website** www.chigrants.org/

**Founded** 1991

**Paid staff** 180

**Annual budget** \$16 million

**Fundraised budget** \$2.71 million

**Program service** 93 percent

Cerini is the managing partner of Cerini & Associates, a full-service CPA firm. If you are a nonprofit agency and have an interesting story to tell, call (631) 582-1600 or send an e-mail to [kenc@ceriniandassociates.com](mailto:kenc@ceriniandassociates.com).

### Two records fall at JDRF golf outing

"Tee Up to Cure Diabetes," the recent golf outing hosted by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's Long Island Chapter, raised \$175,000, the highest tally in the 12-year history of the event.

Held at the Muttontown Club in East Norwich, the Melville-based chapter's outing was also historic in that its first-ever hole-in-one was recorded. Robert Donaldson, managing director of Scotia Capital, accomplished the feat on a par-3, 140-yard shot.

The event featured 19 corporate and individual sponsors, including presenting sponsor SL Green Realty Corp.

### WORC by the Midtown Tunnel

If you've taken the Queens-Midtown Tunnel recently, you may have caught Life's WORC's new billboard ad.

The Garden City-based organization, which provides support for individuals with developmental disabilities, is hoping the highly visible ad (on the Queens side of the tunnel) will help raise its profile. The billboard, which features a photo of happy-looking, developmentally disabled individuals, includes a quote from TV journalist Geraldo Rivera, inviting the public to support Life's WORC and to help make a difference.

Rivera has been involved in the organization since 1977, when he did an investigative report on the abuses and neglect of residents at Willowbrook State Institution. Life's WORC's first group home, the Geraldo Rivera Residence, opened not long afterward in Queens.

The billboard space was donated by Cityoutdoor USA.

### Huntington's bash was a smash hit

In its recent Bash on the Bay, Huntington Hospital raised more than \$75,000 toward prenatal diagnostic equipment for the hospital's Women's Health Center.

More than 425 people dined, danced and played casino games at the July event, held at the waterfront Thatched Cottage in Centerport and sponsored by Bethpage Federal Credit Union, the Huntington Hospital Medical Staff and the Huntington Hospital Nurses Association.

"It is gratifying to see so many of our employees, physicians and members of the community come out to support the hospital's mission of providing excellent medical care," Robert Mottola, vice president of development and community relations, said in a statement. "Their generosity will directly impact on the health and well-being of newborns in our community."

### The Retreat in a national contest

Each month, Pepsi is giving away \$1.3 million in Pepsi Refresh Grants to support good ideas and projects of nonprofits, businesses and individuals.

The Retreat, an East Hampton-based provider of support and shelter for victims of domestic violence, is currently in the running to receive \$50,000 for its project to provide healthy meals and encourage healthier lifestyles for its shelter residents. The projects that get the most votes during the month of August will receive a grant; visit [www.refresheverything.com/theretreat](http://www.refresheverything.com/theretreat) to vote for The Retreat.

### Sunrise gets a lift from 600 walkers

This year's Walk to Help the Sun Rise for Children with Cancer raised more than \$235,000 for Sunrise Day Camp, a dedicated camp that is offered free of charge for children with cancer and their siblings.

More than 600 people participated in the walk, which was held at the Kaufmann Campgrounds in Wheatley Heights. A program of the Friedberg JCC in Oceanside, Sunrise Day Camp is located at the campgrounds.

### Vote for the best burb

Who has the best ideas for creating a better suburb? In the Build a Better Burb contest, sponsored by The Long Island Index, a project of the Rauch Foundation, 23 finalists have been selected from 212 entries. The public is invited to view the proposals and vote for their favorite at [www.buildabetterburb.org/gallery](http://www.buildabetterburb.org/gallery).

Proposed projects address several issues, including environmental viability, social inequalities, public transportation, public engagement, agriculture and tourism. The deadline for votes is Aug. 31; the winners will be announced Oct. 4.

### Two facilities are patients' top picks

In its 2010 rankings, HealthGrades, the independent health care ratings organization, gave Eastern Long Island Hospital in Greenport and St. Francis Hospital, The Heart Center in Roslyn top marks for Outstanding Patient Experience.

The pair were the only hospitals in Long Island and among only eight in the state recognized as outstanding in this category. The results are based on an analysis of patient surveys.

— BERNADETTE STARZEE

Please e-mail nonprofit releases and photos to [nfp@libn.com](mailto:nfp@libn.com).

