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Group from page A1

"The whole goal of our program is to help a person learn skills, so they can reach their potential and be as independent as they can and want to be," said Christine Compton, executive director of Community Living Centers. She was named executive director June 1, working her way up since 1978 from her initial job as a weekend relief worker.

The CLC is a private, not-for-profit community residential program established in 1968 to create the best possible living environment and opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities.

During the past 30 years, the program expanded to include eight homes, an apartment training site, a senior citizens' house, a supported independent living program and an assisted living program. There are also locations in Southfield and Royal Oak.

Activities fill the days

Residents attend the Farmington Public Schools adult basic education program on two evenings a week, from September to May, at the 10 Mile School in Farmington Hills. They learn a range of skills, from writing to working with computers.

The school district also offers enrichment classes Monday nights, for which Compton is a coordinator. Residents are also members of the Farmington YMCA Guys and Dolls programs. They bowl every Saturday.

Residents shop at the Farmer Jack and the Dollar Store, make trips to Baskin Robbins and Livonia Mall and participated in the Rouge River cleanup.

Some residents who learned life skills in

group homes move on to independent living. They don't have rules, the way group home residents do. Assistance is based on need.

"We might be there just two hours for cooking and passing out medication," Compton said. "We have contact with them all at least weekly. Their dream is to live like you and I have the opportunity to do."

The CLC serves individuals who are at least 18 with developmental disabilities. Residents must have personal hygiene skills, the ability to communicate, receptive language skills, and the ability to follow directions. The youngest resident is 18, the oldest is 83.

Residents must be eligible to attend day programming outside the home, such as school, a sheltered employment, a work activity or community employment.

The group homes are staffed with trained personnel 24 hours a day. Each home has a manager, program coordinator, domestic aide and program assistant.

Shawn Pichler, a psychology intern from Michigan State University has worked at the home since May.

"They are productive members of the community and give back to the community," Pichler said of the residents.

Welcome additions

The centers take three interns each semester from Oakland Community College, Michigan State University, Eastern Michigan University and Schoolcraft College who stay for about three months. "The problem is that all of the residents become attached to

them and they to the residents and then they are off to the next internship." Compton said.

Still, the interns are welcome additions.

"Young people bring such great ideas," said Mabel Suddarth, a manager. "They are looking to see if this is the type of population that they want to work with."

Pichler worked with Michelle Chelka, 35, to send an e-mail to her father, Miles, the former master chef of the Golden Mushroom in Southfield. Michelle has lived at the home for eight years.

"She's gifted," Pichler said. One of the first things he taught her was how to set up an account to send an e-mail. "We went through how to open an e-mail and how to send an e-mail," Pichler said.

Michelle works at the Meijer store in Wixom as a bagger and a cleaner. "A driver drops me off in the morning," she said.

Carol Karpen, another resident, works at the Hotel Baronette in Novi. "I clean," she said.

Residents work in a number of establishments, like Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, Wendy's and Ponderosa Restaurants, Farmer Jack at Nine Mile and Farmington and Kroger stores at 11 Mile and Middlebelt and Eight Mile and Gill, the William Costick Activities Center which does the Meals on Wheels program, Botsford Hospital, the Oakland Community College cafeteria and Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi.

"Farmington and Farmington Hills people are so supportive of our folks," Compton said.

CLC seeks items for annual auction fund-raiser

After raising money for roof repairs last year, Community Living Centers Inc. is looking at replacement windows.

Community Living Centers' second annual fund-raising auction is scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 2, at Farmington Hills Manor on Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills. The \$40 ticket price includes a full dinner and desert buffet, entertainment, silent and live auctions, and a chance at a door prize.

Auction item donations are currently being sought. Groups or families may combine efforts to contribute toward a larger item.

"Even if it's not for the auction, our residents need those kinds of things constantly," said Christine Compton, executive director.

About \$30,000 was raised last year. This year organizers aim for \$45,000.

"Because we are an agency which has

been around so long, we were able to tap into our own families," Compton said. "As the years go by, our families are aging, and they are not as able to give us donations. We're finding we have to go outside of our own membership for donations."

For tickets, to donate items or for more information, call Community Living Centers at (248) 478-0870. Contributions are tax deductible as provided by law. CLC is at 33235 Grand River Ave., Farmington.

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