**COMMUNITY ACCESS**

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 1970s, a movement swept across the nation to deinstitutionalize 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 proactive and bold response to the mass release of patients from New York's psychiatric hospitals. The founders pooled their energies, monies 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.

* Community Access provides a range of housing, job skills, employment placement and professional support services for the population they serve.
* The people they help include homeless individuals; HIV/AIDS patients; veterans; individuals struggling with substance abuse; formerly incarcerated individuals; and youths aging out of foster care.
* They currently own and operate 13 buildings and 60-scattered site apartments located throughout Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. Eight hundred apartment units provide homes for 955 people, 500 of whom are consumers of mental health services. They currently have 261 units in development and have another 90 units in pre-development.
* Community Access has since expanded beyond housing to offer comprehensive support services, job training, and counseling, education, and advocacy programs to meet the needs of individuals.
* Every day, 1,600 consumers is given the opportunity to live independently in one of their transitional or permanent housing programs, to connect with a community at East Village Access, or to resume their education and pursue a new career at the Howie the Harp Advocacy Center.
* Community Access strives to be a place where individuals and families can come together for learning, support and opportunity.
* Community Access’s mission is to assist people with psychiatric disabilities in making the transition from shelters and institutions to independent living by providing safe, affordable housing and support services. They advocate for the rights of people to live without fear or stigma.