

## Residence for Adults with Autism Set to Open in November

Airmount Woods, a residence for adults with autism, is set to open in November.



According to a report in the New York Times, Airmount Woods, an eight unit residence for adults with autism located in Ramsey, is set to open in November. The 600,000 sq. foot housing development is being built by the Bergen County United Way as an affordable housing unit on a 1.3-acre plot of land owned by the borough.

The results of a March 2012 study on Autism Spectrum Disorders by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimated that one in 88 children in the United States have been diagnosed with autism with an estimated one in 49 diagnosed in New Jersey--one of the highest rates in the nation. New Jersey's rates have been attributed, in part, to earlier detection as a result of heightened awareness by health providers and educators.

The findings provided by the CDC study assists communities and schools in planning for services since the cost of sending children out of district for services has proved to be costly. When and where they can, many school districts provide in-district services for children on the spectrum not only as a cost containment measure, but, more importantly, to keep the children in their own community. However, as the population grows, the question becomes what is available to them once they age out of the system. Specifically, housing since many of these children live at home with their parents.

Bergen County United Way President, Tom Toronto, told Patch in 2012 that the housing development that addresses the needs of people diagnosed with autism "makes sense" in Ramsey because the borough owns the land and was "interested in creating this kind of development on it," and because the Ramsey "school system has a celebrated special needs program." Toronto emphasized that there was a value in the community of "supporting people with different abilities."

According to Mayor Chris Botta, no direct borough funds are being used to complete the project. With an estimated total cost of \$2.2 million, the project is being funded by a combination of Ramsey's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and grants from the NJHMFA Special Needs Trust, and the Bergen County Division of Community Development HOME and CDBG programs.

The development is owned by Ramsey Housing, Inc., which Botta said is a "non-profit corporation created and formed by Ramsey residents to oversee the development of special needs housing for young adults with autism."

New Horizons in Autism will staff the development 24 hours a day. Residents who apply to live in Airmount Woods will be chosen from the state's Division of Disability Services list of over 8,000 people waiting for special needs housing.