

## A new lease *Housing for those with special needs*

**C**RESCENT COMMONS in Allendale held a ribbon-cutting ceremony this week, opening its doors for its new residents to have a look. Beginning in the new year, the housing development for adults with special needs will be home to 24 people who will be able to live on their own while still near to their families.

It's a wonderful addition to the small cache of special-needs housing around the state, and joins Orchard Commons, another apartment complex in the borough that houses 10 people with disabilities. Both were built through a partnership by Allendale's non-profit housing organization, Bergen County United Way and Madeline Corp., a non-profit affordable housing developer.

The lucky few who will call Crescent Commons home will live in an attractive development that not only meets their needs, but fosters a sense of community and independence. Unfortunately, there are 8,000 more people with disabilities on the waiting list for supportive housing and unless a widespread effort gets under way soon, they will be relegated to waiting years, if not decades, for a place to live. The only chance waiting-lis-

ters have of skipping to the top is if the person taking care of them dies.

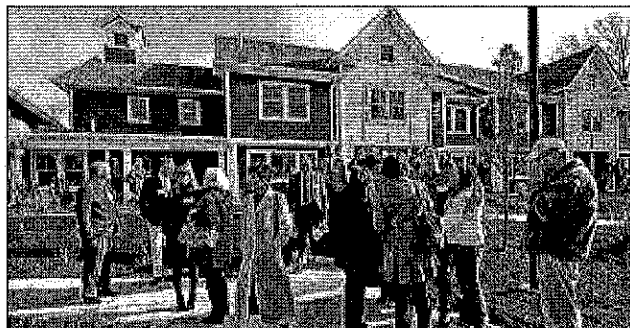
Parents of special-needs children know they have a network of supportive services until their son or daughter reaches 21 years old. Services for adults are far harder to secure. Then there's the daunting fact that adult children may very well live at home until their parents are too feeble to take care of them. Parents have to face the excruciating idea that they may not know where their kids will end up.

"It's a tremendous step forward for him and a little bit of a relief for us - to know he will be OK if something happens to us. That's something every parent here feels," the mother of a Crescent Commons resident told Staff

Writer Allison Pries.

The good news is that the tide may be slowly turning. Allendale has been among the leaders in supportive housing, but other municipalities are moving forward. Ramsey is building the first housing project in the state for adults with autism; Tenafly plans on constructing affordable housing for people with disabilities; Demarest, Woodland Park and Emerson have also signed on to homes spearheaded by United Way.

The more common it becomes, the more likely other towns will be to build special-needs housing. But with 8,000 people waiting for somewhere to live, time is a luxury. United Way and other organizations have become adept at accessing state and federal funds for their projects. We urge more towns to work with these non-profits to build supportive homes and reduce the list.



Crescent Commons.

