



PHOTOS BY SARAH SCHILLACI/FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

From left, Robert L. Parker, NewBridge Services executive director; Ed Abelew, president of the Rose House board of trustees; and Mark Kramer, Rose House executive director, attend yesterday's groundbreaking for the Rose House Community Residence in Hanover Township.

## Anticipating a place of their own

### Ground broken for apartments for developmentally disabled

By Sarah Schillaci  
FOR THE STAR-LEDGER

After 24 hours of rain, the muddy, puddle-ridden property on Cedar Knolls Avenue in Hanover Township wasn't much to look at yesterday afternoon.

But Cedar Knolls resident Lisa Markey knew exactly what was coming to the vacant lot in the residential neighborhood off Ridgedale Avenue: an apartment that would provide her the first chance to live away from her parents.

"I'm excited!" said Markey, 29, one of 12 young adults with developmental disabilities who will move into the Rose House Community Residence, a home that will give its residents the opportunity to live independently.

Officials with the Rose House, a Morris Plains-based nonprofit corporation that helps adults with disabilities, held a small but exuberant groundbreaking ceremony at the Cedar Knolls property yesterday afternoon, with many of the home's future residents present.

#### TWO HOMES OPEN ALREADY

The Rose House was founded in 1999 by Mark Kramer in an effort to provide residential and vocational opportunities to adults with special needs. Kramer's daughter, Abby, has Down syndrome.

The Rose House has already opened two group homes in Morris County, but Kramer said the planned apartment building was unique in that it didn't provide full-time support — resulting in a lower operating budget and more autonomy for its residents.



Stephen Somich, 28, and his girlfriend Lisa Markey, 29, plan to live in the new apartment building when it opens.

The residents "have a right to lock their doors and say, 'This is my home,'" Kramer said.

Robert L. Parker, the executive director of NewBridge Services, a nonprofit community group that consulted with the Rose House to plan and fund the building, called the residence a "model alternative to group homes."

Markey, who works in the Hanover Township building department, said she is prepared to live away from her parents when the residence opens this summer.

"I do my own laundry. I can cook. I know I can grocery shop," she said.

Markey's mother, Pat, smiled at her daughter. "It sounds like you don't need me anymore!" Pat Markey said.

*Sarah Schillaci is a reporter with the New Jersey Local News Service. She may be reached at sschillaci@njlnews.com or at (908) 243-6234.*