

Project Case Study:

Airmount Woods Autism Home



Project Name

Airmount Woods

Project Location

Ramsey, NJ

Project Size

Eight unit housing complex

Building Type

First facility in the state of New Jersey to be specifically designed as a residence for adults with autism

Project Team

New Horizons in Autism, Inc.

The Whalen Berez Group

Norix Group, Inc.

Product List

Forté™ Series Lounge Arm Chair with wood base, Forté™ Series Guest Armless chair, Leg Style Table with Nor-Stone top, Forté™ Occasional Table and Sierra Couch

CASE STUDY

WWW.NORIX.COM

DESCRIPTION:

Airmount Woods is an eight-unit residence in Ramsey, NJ for adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The 6,000-square-foot housing development was built by the Bergen County United Way as an affordable housing facility on a 1.3-acre plot of land owned by the Borough of Ramsey. New Horizons in Autism, Inc., a not-for-profit organization that is “Dedicated to serving individuals with autism and their families in New Jersey,” oversees the home and services and provides care for the service recipients who live there.

The home includes eight bedroom housing units – four each in two identical two-story buildings that are connected by an outdoor walkway. The eight units are ADA compliant and provide each of the residents with their own bedroom, bathroom and other amenities, while a common living and dining area are shared among the residents and staff members in each of the buildings.

OVERALL PROJECT GOAL / PHILOSOPHY

The thought process behind developing a resident home like Airmount Woods was to give men and women with autism the opportunity to live a dignified life in a normalized environment that had a sense of home. The residence would be staffed 24/7 and service recipients could receive the care they needed at any time of the day.

Additionally, the service recipients would be near their families, an added benefit since “most of the same adults that will be moving in to the two new homes had to leave the state to get the supports that they needed,” according to a blog titled Autism Speaks.

Aesthetic Goals – As a whole, the exterior and interior of the facility – along with the furniture, fixtures and equipment – needed to provide a sense of normalization and home – a concept that is in stark contrast to the institutional feeling that once was found in many behavioral healthcare facilities.

Furnishing Goals – The facility sought tables, beds, chairs and other furnishings much like those you would find in residential settings that would fit in well with the aesthetic of the normalized architecture and interior design. Additionally, the facility wanted furniture that could be used in multiple settings and provide the facility the option of moving the furniture around for different uses when needed.



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Safety and Security Goals – Furniture that contributed to a safe and secure environment was a must. Since furniture in autism settings sometimes becomes damaged, it was imperative that the facility find pieces that were durable, easy to clean, hard to move or lift, while still contributing to a sense of home.

“In addition to the aesthetics, the furniture needed to be able to withstand different behavioral and sensory concerns that effect people with autism,” said Sarah Poplyansky, Northern Region Director of New Horizons in Autism, Inc. “The chairs and furniture needed to have security features that allow everyone in the facility to be safe.”

SELECTION PROCESS

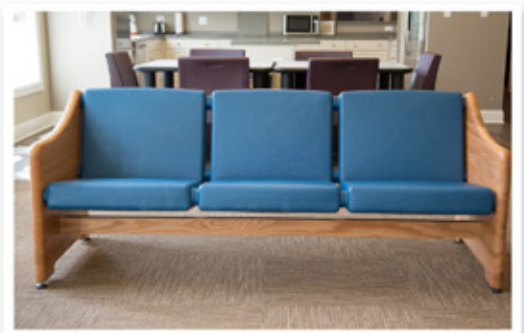
Jim Whalen, owner of the Whalen Berez Group and an independent consultant who provides complete furniture, fixtures and equipment solutions for facilities, was selected to work on the Airmount Woods project. Before presenting furniture selections to New Horizons in Autism, Inc., Whalen contacted Norix Furniture, a company he was familiar with based upon its reputation as a manufacturer of durable products.

“I was familiar with Norix products and knew that they produced tough furniture that also had a soft feel and look,” Whalen said. “Like most facilities, Airmount didn’t want to have to replace their furniture in a couple of years, so I was interested in seeing which of the Norix products could potentially fit in this environment.”

Whalen met with Norix consultative sales representative Dave MacKinnon and asked for a budget proposal and suggested products for the project. Eventually, MacKinnon was asked to drive his mobile showroom to the New Horizons in Autism, Inc. offices and present different options that were applicable to the facility and its goals for furnishings.

At a later date, MacKinnon was asked to bring his showroom to the Airmount Woods location so he could meet with the parents of the residents who would be living there and give them the opportunity to provide input before any decisions were made.

“We are big believers in making sure that when possible, we present the actual product so that everyone is certain that the right decision is being made for those that will actually be using the furniture,” MacKinnon said.



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One of the products MacKinnon showcased was the Norix Furniture Forté™ Series of Lounge Seating. Forté™ chairs are made of rotational molded tops and the choice of wood, metal or molded bases. The line offers both guest and lounge chair options and a variety of colors to choose from. The chairs are highly durable, easy to clean, are GreenGuard Gold certified, come with an upholstery option and can be ballasted down so they cannot be moved or picked up.

THE RESULTS:

Airmount Woods opened its doors and welcomed service recipients in June of 2014. With its residential appearance, the exterior architecture of the building assists the facility in blending in with the rest of the suburban neighborhood, including shingled exterior walls, professional landscaping, the choice of soothing green exterior paint and the spacious walkway with attractive paver stones between the two buildings.

On the inside, the facility features Norix Furniture's Forté™ Lounge and Guest chairs, Forté™ Occasional tables, Sierra bench seating and laminated-top tables. The pieces fit in well with the facility's common area, with its cream painted walls, white trim and brown carpet, along with the kitchen area and its tiled floors and residential cabinets and appliances.

"The furniture flows very nicely with the facility. We have a lot of open space and the furniture allows us to mix and match the chairs and tables from the kitchen to living room. We can turn our living room into a movie theater using the furniture, or we can have it in a circle in another room for another purpose," Poplyansky said. "Working with Norix has been a special collaboration. It was very important for us to have durable furniture in a facility like ours. If we aren't constantly replacing furniture we can spend that money on other services for our residents. And we haven't been disappointed with the products in our facility. They have proven to be highly durable and have assisted us in creating that sense of home that we were looking for."

ABOUT NORIX:

Norix designs innovative, robust furniture that meets the real-world need for humanizing challenging environments. For more than 30 years, the company has served the behavioral healthcare, corrections, higher education, fire/rescue, military, shelter, public safety and variety of commercial industries by providing uniquely reliable furnishings for every application. All furniture is designed for safety, security and extreme durability. Norix furniture is extraordinary by design, surpassing industry standards for strength, safety and long-term performance. Aside from its durability, Norix products also come in aesthetically pleasing designs and colors and are made especially for facilities that require furniture that can humanize their environments. The privately held company is headquartered in West Chicago, IL with consultative sales representatives and dealers throughout the U.S. In 2012, Norix launched Safe Environments, a news and information blog serving architects, designers, administrators and facility managers involved in the design, construction, and operation of challenging environments. For more information, call 800-234-4900 or visit www.norix.com.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

New Horizons in Autism, Inc. - <https://www.nhautism.org>

The Whalen Berez Group - <http://www.thewbg.com>; email Jim Whalen at jwhalen@thewbg.com to learn more about his services.



Norix Blog