



**Amalia Duarte**  
**Public Relations Director**  
ECLC of NJ  
Tel: 973-635-1705 X26  
Cell: (973-902-8390)  
E-mail: [aduarte@eclcofnj.org](mailto:aduarte@eclcofnj.org)

## **Unexpected iPad Gift Opens Doors for Young Randolph Man with Autism**

### **IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CHATHAM, N.J.** – An unexpected gift of an Apple iPad2 this holiday season will do much more than just let Jared Lewis, 21, of Randolph, download cool apps and watch the latest movies.

Lewis has autism and won the device in a nationwide contest sponsored by Autism Speaks, the world's leading autism science and advocacy organization. He says the iPad2 will help him connect with friends as well as let him research and pursue hobbies during his leisure time.

“I am very happy to have the iPad! Using the iPad will allow me to get in touch with school friends, so I can find out when the alumni dances are,” said Lewis, who graduated in June, from the ECLC of New Jersey School in Chatham for students with special needs. “I also plan to e-mail some teachers and the school psychologist.”

Lewis was one of 650 deserving winners chosen from a pool of 12,000 applicants who competed in the nationwide contest. His application was submitted by Community Personnel Services (CPS), the employment arm of ECLC of New Jersey. CPS helped Lewis land a job at American Vending in Randolph, prior to graduation, and his CPS employment specialist visits him in the workplace on a regular basis and offers on-the-job support and advocacy, as needed.

But, like any young person, Lewis has outside interests and believes the iPad2 will help him develop those hobbies and achieve personal goals. “I have a woodshop in my basement,” he said, “and I will be able to get ideas for building things from my iPad. Bikes are another hobby, and I will be able to research different bikes.”

For people with autism, the iPad has been a key to opening up the outside world. It has allowed them to communicate with others and better understand their environments. There are dozens of apps especially designed for children with autism, including ones for music and reading, and the device supports spoken text and other aids for those with special needs.

New Jersey has the second highest rate of autism in the country, with one in 49 children and one in 29 boys being diagnosed with the disorder, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with an estimated one in 88 children in the United States on the autism spectrum.

Autism is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders – autism spectrum disorders – caused by a combination of genes and environmental influences, according to Autism Speaks. These disorders are characterized, in varying degrees, by communication difficulties, social and behavioral challenges, as well as repetitive behaviors.

### **About CPS**

CPS was established in 1995 by the nonprofit ECLC of New Jersey to help their graduating students and other adult clients find meaningful employment. Based on their skills, abilities and interests, students sample jobs prior to graduation with the goal of identifying the best match. For students who may not be ready for employment, the CPS staff arranges tours of programs and helps clients navigate through the maze of state and federal agencies to access aid, services and transportation.

Clients work for dozens of area employers, including Acme Markets of Randolph, the Home Depot in Parsippany, Ashland Chemical of Chatham, Marshalls of Paramus, Morris View Nursing Home in Morristown, Panera Bread in Florham Park, Sears of Rockaway and Shop-Rite of Parsippany. They do everything from driving forklifts to corralling shopping carts in parking lots to stocking shelves. Learn more about CPS at <http://www.cpsfnj.org>.

### **About ECLC**

Founded in 1970, ECLC of New Jersey offers lifelong support and services – education, employment and enrichment – to people with special needs.

The Chatham-based nonprofit has grown from a small, early-intervention program into a comprehensive network of nonprofit agencies serving nearly 700 people with special needs, including autism, Down syndrome, severe learning and/or language disabilities or multiple disabilities.

ECLC runs schools, for students ages 5-21, in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus, and for adults with special needs, offers job placements through CPS, also based in Chatham, and day/evening programs at its P.R.I.D.E. Centers in Chatham and Paramus. Learn more about ECLC at [www.eclcofnj.org](http://www.eclcofnj.org).