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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Jan. 16, 2013**

**ECLC Executive Director Recognized by ASAH for  
Lifetime of Supporting People with Special Needs**

**CHATHAM, NJ** – Walking down the corridors of ECLC of New Jersey’s special needs schools or through the P.R.I.D.E. Centers for adults, Executive Director Bruce Litinger recognizes everyone – from the students and adult clients to the staff and volunteers. Not only does he recall their names, he also asks about family members by name and remembers recent events and milestone in their lives.

This genuine, caring touch with people is part of what makes Litinger an exceptional leader and has helped propel ECLC’s growth beyond schools to encompass an array of adult services and programs. On Jan. 15, Litinger was given the ASAH President’s Award for a lifetime of advocacy on behalf of people with special needs, starting from the beginning of his career as a special education teacher through to his leadership role today. ASAH is a non-profit organization of private schools and agencies serving students with disabilities.

The award was given at the annual ASAH conference, which brings together teachers, administrators and other professionals from special needs schools, programs and agencies across the state. “Bruce has given outstanding service to ASAH as a long-standing member as well as serving on the executive board,” said Gerry Thiers, ASAH executive director. “His leadership and advocacy on behalf of the private special education schools and the families they serve is invaluable.”

Litinger decided to become a special education teacher during his senior year at Colonia High School after volunteering to help neurologically impaired students. “I just fell in love with the kids and empathized with their struggles to learn,” recalled Litinger. “It was an epiphany.”

He earned his B.A. degree at Newark State College and landed a job as a special education teacher in the Woodbridge Township School District. In his second year of teaching, he started taking classes to earn an M.A at Kean University. He stayed in the district and over the years served as a school social worker on the child study team and as the district-wide director of special education. But, he never lost touch with the students or teachers. He made it a point every day to visit a classroom and stay connected with the field as part of his concern for others and his deep belief that you have to connect – one-on-one – with the people in an organization to be an effective leader.

In 1997, Litinger joined ECLC as executive director and managed the revitalization and expansion of the nonprofit's supported employment agency, Community Personnel Services (CPS), and launch of P.R.I.D.E., a day and evening program for adults with special needs. In 2011, he was tapped to serve on Gov. Chris Christie's Education Transformation Task Force and provided that group with the perspective of the special education school community.

"The implementation of the Governor's Education Transformation Task Force findings will have a tremendous impact on the private special education community in New Jersey for years to come. We were very fortunate to have a gentleman of Bruce's caliber representing our interests on the Task Force," said ASAH President, Dr. Dorothy Van Horn, who is the executive director/superintendent of the Brookfield Schools.

Litinger lives in Short Hills with his wife, Renee, and has three grown children. During his leisure time, he enjoys gardening and landscaping and walking his dog, Blake.

### **What is ECLC?**

ECLC is a Chatham-based, nonprofit that provides education, enrichment and employment to nearly 700 children and adults with autism, Down syndrome, severe learning disabilities and other special needs. ECLC's two schools, in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus, educate children with special needs from ages 5-21. In addition to academics, students enjoy many typical school experiences, from playing on sports teams and performing in musical shows to taking a date to the prom. They also receive occupational, physical and speech therapies and learn essential job skills through volunteer and paid work opportunities.

As students prepare to graduate, ECLC's affiliate, Community Personnel Services (CPS), also based in Chatham, takes over, guiding them through the next chapter of their young lives. CPS's employment specialists help graduates and other adult clients find jobs and provide them with ongoing support and advocacy.

Graduates who are not ready for work can enroll in P.R.I.D.E., a dynamic, self-directed program in which clients choose their schedule of activities. They build a foundation for success by practicing daily living skills, such as food prep and cooking, music appreciation and money skills and leisure activities, including karaoke and yoga. They volunteer in the community and work through the P.R.I.D.E.CO micro-business, completing contracted jobs for local businesses.

The ECLC Foundation supplements funding for all entities and supports afterschool activities, respite weekends (overnights), alumni programs, adult services and capital projects. Learn more about ECLC at [www.eclcofnj.org](http://www.eclcofnj.org).