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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 2, 2013

ECLC Chatham Teacher Named State's 'Educator of the Year!'

CHATHAM -- One of ECLC of New Jersey's veteran teachers, Judy McGrath, has been named the state's "Educator of the Year," by ASAH, a nonprofit that represents 135 private, special education schools and agencies serving students with disabilities across the state.

This prestigious, statewide honor is a long time in coming for McGrath, who joined ECLC's Chatham school in 1989. In the subsequent 24 years, she has made an enormous difference in the lives of so many, from her classroom lessons to creating weekend activities and championing outside programs.

At ECLC Chatham, McGrath teaches a class of graduating students and focuses on ensuring they will be ready for the adult world by incorporating the latest technology tools; popular novels; current events, and business skills into her daily lessons.

She empowers students to raise money by organizing fundraisers, including plant and wreath sales, a rummage sale and annual walk-a-thon. Over the years, these efforts have raised an estimated \$200,000 for the school and various other worthy charities.

Beyond those practical lessons, McGrath instills old-fashioned values of generosity, thoughtfulness and kindness to her charges.

She has gone above and beyond the classroom, creating new programs to benefit the entire school. For example, she developed a weekend respite program that allows students to stay overnight at the school and enjoy a social activity -- movies, bowling, shopping, dinner and/or breakfast out -- with

their friends. She also started the yearbook, ECLC Angels and the prom, among her many other accomplishments.

And, there's even more to brag about. Outside of ECLC, McGrath is a co-founder of SOAR, a program offering weekend activities to adults with disabilities. Recently, she was elected Board president of Bethel Ridge, a comprehensive community-based support for people with developmental disabilities. She also became the guardian of three adults with disabilities and continues to advocate for them to ensure they get all the services they deserve.

About ECLC

Established in 1970, ECLC of New Jersey offers lifelong services -- education, enrichment and employment -- to children and adults with special needs, including those diagnosed with autism, Down syndrome and severe learning and/or language disabilities. ECLC has schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus enrolling more than 300 students.

As students prepare to graduate, employment specialists from ECLC's affiliate Community Personnel Services (CPS), take over, guiding them into the next chapter of their lives. CPS specialists find meaningful jobs for students in their communities and provide ongoing support and advocacy in the workplace.

Graduates who are not ready for work are guaranteed a spot P.R.I.D.E., ECLC's day/evening program where adult client enhance their independent living skills, socialize with peers, volunteer and have an opportunity for paid work. A defining hallmark of the program is that clients choose their weekly activities and are rarely in the center all day. P.R.I.D.E. is in the midst of a major fund-raising campaign to expand and renovate its center in Florham Park. Learn more about ECLC at www.eclcofnj.org.

ECLC is a member of the Alliance of Private Special Education Schools of North Jersey, a coalition of more than 30 state-approved private special education schools dedicated to helping parents and educators better understand and access appropriate program options. Learn more about the Alliance at <http://specialeducationalliancenj.org>.