



Amalia Duarte, Public Affairs Director

ECLC of New Jersey

Cell: (973-902-8390)

E-mail: aduarte@eclcofnj.org

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Litinger Family of Short Hills Leads Campaign

to Raise \$5 Million for Adults with Special Needs

FLORHAM PARK – Every day, adults with autism, Down syndrome and other special needs go into the community for volunteering and work opportunities, exercise, cook meals and become more independent, through ECLC of New Jersey's P.R.I.D.E. program. Their busy days are filled with laughter, camaraderie, and meaning, while they strive to become as independent as possible.

The program was an instant success when it opened in 2008 with just a handful of clients and has rapidly expanded. Today, there are more than 130 adults at two centers – in Florham Park and Paramus -- with a fleet of vans to keep them active throughout the community.

To ensure P.R.I.D.E. and its clients stay on the move for many years to come, a fund-raising campaign has kicked off led by ECLC Executive Director, Bruce Litinger, of Short Hills, and his entire family. They are hoping to raise \$5 million through an endowment named for the family.

"Our goal is to ensure that the promise of P.R.I.D.E. is fulfilled for clients now and long into the future," said Bruce Litinger, who has led ECLC for 18 years. "We want this labor of love, which we have created together, to live on and be there for anyone who needs our services in the years ahead."

The endowment was established in December and has quickly brought in some \$330,000 from P.R.I.D.E. supporters. One of the first donors, Anthony Traina of Cedar Grove, whose daughter attends the Morris P.R.I.D.E. program, contributed immediately. He said, "I would not be able to have the quality of life I do without your program. You provide the excellent care, education and life skills that I cannot. My daughter thrives at P.R.I.D.E., and I have all of you to thank for that."

New Endowment Established for P.R.I.D.E.

The "Renee and Bruce Litinger and Family P.R.I.D.E. Endowment" will act as a safety net against an uncertain future. P.R.I.D.E. is facing financial pressures, as the program evolves from a state- to federal-funding model. Meanwhile, demand for P.R.I.D.E. is escalating. More and more young adults who graduate from ECLC's schools for students with special needs in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus choose to enroll in the well-regarded and dynamic P.R.I.D.E. program.

ECLC has a separate Foundation that subsidizes the after-school, evening and weekend enrichment classes and events for students and alumni as well as ECLC's employment affiliate, Community Personnel Services (CPS). By creating a new endowment for P.R.I.D.E., the ECLC Foundation moneys will be left intact for use by the other entities.

To accommodate new clients, the P.R.I.D.E. Morris Center was recently expanded and renovated after a \$450,000 capital campaign, supported by a matching "challenge" donation of \$125,000 from Toby and Leon Cooperman of Short Hills. The new center is cheery and bright with activity rooms, a teaching kitchen, a model apartment, and a technology center. The center also includes a dedicated work area where adult clients earn a paycheck by completing contracted work, such as shredding and packaging, for local businesses. The acronym stands for "Promoting Responsibility, Independence, Decision-making and Employability," and the program lives up to its name every day.

If you want to join this special campaign to sustain the P.R.I.D.E. program, please consider making a donation at the ECLC Website www.eclcofnj.org. For more information, contact ECLC Foundation Director, Heather Alonge (973-635-1705 X17).

About ECLC

Established in 1970, ECLC of New Jersey is an accredited, nonprofit offering education, careers and lifelong community to children and adults with special needs, including those diagnosed with autism, Down syndrome and severe learning and/or language disabilities.

The P.R.I.D.E. program started seven years ago for graduates of ECLC's special-needs schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus. While the schools place a strong emphasis on transitioning from school to work, for some students, the workplace is not an immediate option. Some ECLC graduates were struggling, languishing at home, isolated from their peers and the community. P.R.I.D.E. was launched to help those young adults continue growing and enhancing their independent living skills. Learn more about ECLC at www.eclcofnj.org.