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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**ECLC Students Bring on the 'Bling'**  
*Special-Needs Youngsters Gain Work Experience by  
Packaging Gifts for Hospitalized Cancer Patients*

**CHATHAM, NJ** -- At ECLC of New Jersey's campus in Chatham, special-needs students are getting invaluable work experience, while bringing on the "bling" to cancer patients in area hospitals. The youngsters are supporting the New Providence-based, Operation Bling Foundation, by preparing the packaging for sparkly costume jewelry and an inspirational poem that's sure to brighten the day for women, men and children undergoing cancer treatment.

It's a win-win project for the school and foundation. The students enhance their work skills, and the growing Operation Bling Foundation gets much-needed assistance. "ECLC has been enormously helpful to us. Putting together the packages was starting to become overwhelming for my group of volunteers," said Bling founder Christine Ferdinand, owner of Ferdinand Jewelers in New Providence. "Now, we are able to continue expanding our program and reach as many cancer patients as possible."

The Bling project is part of a work-readiness program called SKIL (Seeking Knowledge for Independent Living). Through SKIL, students learn how to manage mailings, collate newsletters, create custom invitations, T-shirts, mugs and menus, and even run the school lunch program! These projects support both outside clients and in-house needs. Once students have mastered the basics, they move out into the community to "sample" jobs, from child care and retail to food service, maintenance and office administrative support.

"This program helps transition students from the classroom to work by not only giving them practical experience but also the good work habits and attitudes that are critical to success in the workplace after graduation," said SKIL teacher Karen Giordano.

SKIL is always seeking new projects. Interested organizations or companies can contact Giordano at (973-635-1700) or by e-mail [kgiordano@eclcofnj.org](mailto:kgiordano@eclcofnj.org).

Meanwhile, Operation Bling extends an invitation for a relaxing afternoon of "Wine, Bling and All That Jazz" at Il Capriccio restaurant in Whippany on Sunday, April 25, from 2-6 p.m. Tickets are \$40. For reservations and more information, call (973-884-9175).

Celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, ECLC has grown from a small, early-intervention program into a comprehensive network of non-profit agencies serving special-needs children and adults throughout central and northern New Jersey. ECLC educates more than 300 students at schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus. And, for its graduates and other clients, ECLC provides job placements and transition services through Community Personnel Services, Inc., and vocational skills and independent living skills training in its P.R.I.D.E. adult program.