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**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ECLC of NJ Thanks Local Businesses for Offering Students Job ‘Sampling’ Opportunities**

*Program helps special-needs students make decisions about life after school*

**CHATHAM, NJ** – Recently, ECLC of New Jersey invited two dozen local businesses to its Chatham school for a special breakfast served with a generous portion of appreciation and thanks. The employers were recognized for offering ECLC’s special-needs students a chance to sample different jobs while completing school, trying everything from food preparation to filing to office cleaning and working with preschoolers.

The program, coordinated by ECLC’s Karen Giordano, helps graduating students make more informed choices as they begin the transition from school to the next chapter in their lives. ECLC Board Chair Dr. Joe Murphy, a Chatham-based chiropractor, thanked the employers, saying, "What you're doing is helping us provide more to our students than just an education. You're helping them become productive members of society."

After working in the bakery at Madison's Stop&Shop, Sara Hansen of Oak Ridge discovered that cooking is her calling. "I was able to learn to be responsible and recognize that my true field of interest is in the culinary arts," said Hansen, who was the breakfast’s student keynote speaker.

One of the largest employers, Summit’s Overlook Hospital, provided more than 20 students with opportunities to work in several departments. In the Mulreany Health Sciences Library, students copied articles for the physicians, shelved books, kept newspapers in order, completed filing and made trips to the mailroom. "They really helped us a lot," said Pat Regenberg, the library’s manager. "When they weren't there, we missed them."

Christian Mayers of Elizabeth said working at the library was a "great experience." He added, "I was nervous at first, but then I got used to it. It was exciting."

It seemed the employers were just as grateful for the experience. "This was my first year with ECLC," said Steve Barrett of PNY Technologies in Parsippany, "and I learned a lot from you guys. The job you did for us was excellent, and we hope to continue to progress in this way." (PNY even went an extra step by paying the students for their work.) Another employer, Abby Berenbak of the Mount Pleasant Animal Shelter, said simply, "Every student here is extraordinary."

The other employers honored were: Alfred's Sports Shop in Madison; Bargain Box Thrift Shop in Morristown; Care One at Madison Avenue in Morristown; the Chatham Sports Shop; the Connection for Women and Children in Summit; F.M. Kirby Children's Center in Madison; Imagine That of East Hanover; King James Care Center in Chatham; Library of the Chathams; Liquid Church in Morristown; the Madison Public Library; the Madison YMCA; Morristown Memorial Hospital; Nearly New Shop in Morristown; New Eyes for the Needy in Short Hills; New Jersey Center for the Visual Arts in Summit; Saint Anne Villa in Madison; St. Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston; Stepping Stones Preschool in Livingston; and Suburban Wholesale Florists in Chatham.

### **About ECLC**

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. For its graduates and other disabled adult clients, ECLC provides transition services after high school and job placements through Community Personnel Services, Inc., and vocational skills and independent living skills training in its P.R.I.D.E. adult day and evening programs.