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**Erik Becker of Waldwick Wins State Recognition for
Overcoming Disabilities in the Work Place**

WALDWICK, NJ – Job interviews are tough, but imagine having to answer questions by texting on your cell phone because you have speech challenges? That’s just what Erik Becker of Waldwick was prepared to do when he interviewed for a position at the Walgreens in Ramsey.

Becker impressed the hiring manager, landed the job and since then has taught his co-workers, managers and even customers that you don’t have to speak clearly to help others and to be successful in the workplace.

This determination and positive attitude led to Becker being recently recognized by the New Jersey Rehabilitation Association. Becker won the Tony Rocco Award, which is given annually to an outstanding individual with disabilities who has overcome significant barriers to become successfully employed.

Becker also deals with many other challenges, but his personal warmth and upbeat personality always shine through. “Erik is both an inspiration and a role model to everyone he meets,” said his job coach, Jennifer Rokosh of Community Personnel Services (CPS).

Becker is a graduate of the ECLC of New Jersey school in Ho-Ho-Kus, which enrolls students with autism, Down syndrome, severe learning and/or language disabilities or multiple disabilities. In his final year of school, Rokosh helped Becker transition to the workplace and helped him explore career

options. Becker had his heart set on finding a job where he could help people and be able to commute to work on his own. "I love working at Walgreens. My job gives me the opportunity to use my great social skills and be as independent as I can."

When he learned of the award, Edward Adams, the manager at Walgreens, wasn't too surprised. "Erik has a warm and wonderful personality. The customers in my store love how he is always helpful in finding items they are looking for and are always coming to me and telling me what a wonderful employee I have in him. I'm very fortunate to have Erik on my staff. It is a joy to have him."

About CPS

In these challenging economic times, CPS is able to place 93 percent of its clients, who are adults with special needs, in meaningful jobs. They do everything from driving a forklift to corralling shopping carts in parking lots to stocking shelves.

CPS was established in 1995 by ECLC of New Jersey to help their students with special needs and other adult clients find jobs in the community. Based on their skills, abilities and interests, ECLC students sample jobs prior to graduation with the goal of identifying the best match. For students who may not be ready for employment, the CPS staff arranges tours of programs and assistance in locating funding sources for those programs. CPS also helps clients navigate through the maze of state and federal agencies to access aid and services.

About ECLC

Founded in 1970, ECLC has grown from a small, early-intervention program into a comprehensive network of non-profit agencies serving more than 600 children and adults with special needs. ECLC students and adult clients have autism, Down syndrome, severe learning and/or language disabilities or multiple disabilities. ECLC has schools in Ho-Ho-Kus and Chatham and runs the P.R.I.D.E. independent living skills program for its graduates who are not ready for the workplace.