



Amalia Duarte
Public Relations Director
ECLC of New Jersey
Tel: 973-635-1705 X26
Mobile: (973-902-8390)
E-mail: aduarte@eclcofnj.org

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Country Hoedown Raises a Record \$80,000 for ECLC of New Jersey

Summit couple opens their home and hearts to support new program for special needs adults

CHATHAM, NJ – From roasted pig, with all the fixings, to pie throwing and the twang of country tunes, the Gatwards' Summit backyard was transformed on Oct. 2 into a down-home destination to raise funds for ECLC of New Jersey, a non-profit that serves the special needs community.

Hosted by Katherine and Richard Gatward, an ECLC board member, the private party raised \$80,000, a record-breaking night for ECLC. "The event was unprecedented for us," said ECLC's Executive Director Bruce Litinger. "We are so grateful and humbled by the Gatwards' generosity of spirit – and that of their friends."

Under clear skies after days of rain, some 200 friends and neighbors gathered for the party, outfitted in their best fringe, cowboy hats and boots, along with many ECLC Board members and staff. The evening featured silent and live auctions, plus a pie-throwing "contest" aimed at the good-natured host, Richard.

Vans Purchased for Expanding Program

The fund-raiser supported the critical purchase of two vans for the new P.R.I.D.E. II Center in Chatham, an expansion of an existing day and evening program for adults with special needs, which opened on Oct. 4. The vans will allow clients to venture into the community for volunteering and other activities, such as fitness at the Madison Y and book club at Panera Bread in Livingston. These trips are a regular and important component of the clients' habilitation program.

"It's not often that you hold an event and two days later make a major purchase like this," said Litinger. "We will refer to one van as the 'Richard' van and the other as the 'Katherine' van."

About ECLC

In its 41st year of operation, ECLC has grown from a small, early-intervention program for children into a comprehensive network of non-profit agencies serving the special-needs community across central and northern New Jersey. ECLC students and adult clients have severe learning and/or language disabilities, autism, Down syndrome or multiple disabilities.

Services begin with two schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus that enroll more than 300 students, ages 5-21. For its graduates and other adult clients, ECLC provides job placements and transition services after high school through Community Personnel Services, Inc., and vocational skills and independent living skills habilitation in its P.R.I.D.E. day and evening programs. Both adult services programs are headquartered in Chatham.

About P.R.I.D.E.

P.R.I.D.E.® (Promoting Responsibility Independence Decision-making and Employability) is the newest program in ECLC's network of services. P.R.I.D.E. was launched in September 2008 and quickly reached capacity. It was created for ECLC alumni who are not candidates for supported employment and are in need of habilitation. Activities target four key areas: social skills, independent living, vocational training and community participation. From cooking to computers to music appreciation and money skills, days at the center are dynamic, full and engaging.

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