



Immediate Release:
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**First Lady Mary Pat Christie Visits P.R.I.D.E. Center in Chatham
to Promote Autism Awareness**

Trenton, NJ – First Lady Mary Pat Christie toured the ECLC of New Jersey’s P.R.I.D.E. Center in Chatham today to see first-hand the independent living skills and vocational training services provided there for people with autism and other special needs. The visit is part of Mrs. Christie’s agenda to focus on autism awareness during the month of April.

“As a mom, I know we always want the best possible future for our children whatever their age may be,” said Mrs. Christie. “I’m so impressed with how ECLC programs are empowering these young adults with the skills they need to lead more independent lives. I commend Dot Libman and her staff for the good work they are doing everyday to provide flexible programs that encourage individuality while helping to prepare these young people to be productive members of our communities.”

Mrs. Christie viewed several areas during the tour including the P.R.I.D.E. II Center to observe daily skills training activities as well as P.R.I.D.E. CO, which provides contracted work opportunities from the business community for program participants. Following the tour, she held a private roundtable discussion with parents of P.R.I.D.E. attendees.

“We are excited about this opportunity to showcase our P.R.I.D.E. programs for adults with special needs. At P.R.I.D.E., our clients are improving their independent living skills and social skills in a nurturing setting

within a community of peers,” said P.R.I.D.E. Director, Dot Libman. “While today there is more awareness about serving children with disabilities, we hope Mrs. Christie’s visit helps draw attention to the need for supporting our adults with special needs as well.”

Over the past 40 years, the ECLC has worked to educate students ages 5-21 with severe learning and/or language disabilities, autism spectrum disorder or multiple disabilities at two schools located in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus. Its Community Personnel Services program provides post-graduate transition services and job placements to any special-needs adult, while the P.R.I.D.E. program offers vocational training and independent living skills.

Autism awareness is a new advocacy area being embraced by First Lady Mary Pat Christie to bring greater understanding of the developmental disability. During Autism Awareness Month, she is highlighting the innovative work being done by organizations throughout the state to serve people with autism spectrum disorder.

Mrs. Christie recently toured the EPIC School in Paramus to see the structured educational programs that are teaching new skills and increasing independence for students with autism and she visited the Woodrow Wilson Middle School coffee shop in Edison, which is operated by students with autism and other developmental disabilities.