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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Facility Dog Gino Among New Teachers at ECLC's Special Needs School in Chatham

CHATHAM, NJ – The special needs students at ECLC of New Jersey's campus in Chatham are sure to get a warm and fuzzy feeling from a new staff member this school year, facility dog Gino.

Gino was obtained from Canine Companions for Independence (CCI), a nonprofit that provides service dogs to disabled people. Gino is a real working dog – not a pet -- who will spend his entire day at the school with trainer and teacher, Pat Lenzo.

ECLC has utilized a service dog, named Patrina, at its sister campus in Ho-Ho-Kus, for two years to help students in their physical or occupational therapy sessions. ECLC is the only provider of special needs school in the state to "employ" service dogs.

ECLC has found that service dogs make connections and breakthroughs with special needs students, such as those with autism, who did not respond to other therapies. The dogs also lift the children's spirits and help them to succeed.

The Chatham school also welcomed three other new staff members this September: teachers Katelyn Luke of Summit and Cheryl Paolino of Union as well as speech therapist Gabrielle Mahar of Summit.

ABOUT ECLC

ECLC is a Chatham-based nonprofit that runs special-needs schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus for more than 300 students, ages 5-21, with severe learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, Down syndrome, and other intellectual disabilities. Students are referred to ECLC when their local public school determines that an out-of-district placement is indicated. In addition, ECLC provides supported employment services to special needs adults, through Community Personnel Services, and day and evening programs for other special-needs adults who are not ready for the workplace. Learn more about the nonprofit at www.eclcofnj.org.