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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ECLC of New Jersey Launches Major Capital Campaign to
Expand Center for Adults with Special Needs**

FLORHAM PARK – A new teaching kitchen, a model apartment and a larger space for clients to work and earn a steady paycheck are all on the drawing board as part of plans to expand and renovate ECLC of New Jersey’s P.R.I.D.E. Center, the home for day and evening programs for adults with special needs.

The expansion of the program’s space was approved by the Florham Park Planning Board on Aug. 26, and now ECLC is hoping to transform those dreams into reality through its first capital campaign in 16 years with a lofty goal of raising \$450,000.

With outreach just getting underway, the nonprofit organization already has reached \$100,000, thanks to generous gifts from parents of P.R.I.D.E. clients, ECLC board members and corporations!

“We are thrilled by the response to our campaign, but we still have a long way to go,” said ECLC Executive Director, Bruce Litinger of Short Hills. “Since we started P.R.I.D.E. six years ago, the program’s success has outpaced our expectations. We need this expansion and renovation, so we can give our parents -- and adult clients -- peace of mind that P.R.I.D.E. will continue for many years to come and be able to accommodate future graduates from our schools.”

The project will transform the P.R.I.D.E. Center in Florham Park with more space, bright, well-lit rooms and dedicated areas for different activities. The plan calls for:

- Adding 10,000 square feet of new space.
- Expanding the space for an in-house business called “P.R.I.D.E.CO,” so it can grow and offer all interested clients the opportunity for steady, paid employment.

- Creating a new "super center" with eight skill development rooms; and a teaching kitchen and a model apartment.
- Purchasing several 10-passenger vans to transport clients into the community for daily activities, such as book club, fitness and volunteering.

The program started six years ago for graduates of ECLC's schools in Chatham and Ho-Ho-Kus for children with special needs, including autism, Down syndrome and complex learning disabilities. While the schools focus on transitioning to work, an increasing number of graduates were not good candidates for jobs through ECLC's employment agency, Community Personnel Services (CPS), and they preferred to stay in the ECLC "family" with their peers.

P.R.I.D.E. was launched to accommodate those graduates and focused on enhancing their independent living skills and offering clients community integration, volunteer and work opportunities.

Right from the beginning P.R.I.D.E. – which stands for Promoting Responsibility, Independence, Decision-making and Employability – took off in popularity and quickly outgrew its original space in a former light industrial building located near the border of Chatham and Florham Park.

The center in Florham Park added space, and a second center opened last year in Paramus, but even that was not enough to keep up with demand for spots. Today, from a handful of clients, the program enrolls more than 100 adult clients, employs 35 staff members, uses nine vans for transportation and includes evening and work components.

"We made a commitment to guarantee a spot in P.R.I.D.E. to every graduate who wants to enroll," said Litinger. "This project will allow us to make good on that commitment for many, many years to come."

How You Can Help!

If you would like to support ECLC's capital campaign and make a difference in the lives of people with special needs, please visit the ECLC Website at www.eclcofnj.org to learn about how to make a donation. Any amount is appreciated and will help ECLC reach its goal of \$450,000.

About ECLC

Established in 1970, ECLC of New Jersey offers lifelong services -- education, enrichment and employment -- to children and adults with special needs, including those diagnosed with autism, Down syndrome and severe learning and/or language disabilities. Learn more about ECLC at www.eclcofnj.org.