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NEW TRANSITION PROGRAM TAKES YOUNG ADULTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO REAL WORLD

Chapel Haven Abilis , a transition to independent living day program for young adults with autism and related disorders, is scheduled to open in January 2010 on the UConn/Stamford campus. The program is a collaboration between Abilis, lower Fairfield County's nonprofit service provider for children and adults with developmental disabilities, and Chapel Haven of New Haven, a nationally recognized provider of transition programs. Both agencies are well respected for providing high-quality services for children and adults in Connecticut.

Program Overview

Chapel Haven Abilis will serve young adults age 18 to 24 who are on the Autism Spectrum or have a related disorder. This unique initiative unites the strengths and experience of each agency to help students on the Autism Spectrum and with related disorders reach their highest level of independence and optimize opportunities for employment.

The Chapel Haven Abilis program is built around a social-communicative core. The program will focus on education, career exploration, independent living skills, community access and recreation. The University of Connecticut campus in downtown Stamford will be the main site for the program, with access to classrooms, media center, fitness center, café and other areas. Community-based experiences will be an integral part of the program. The campus is within walking distance of a variety of community options, such as the Ferguson Library, large retail outlets, movie theaters, restaurants and recreational facilities.

Chapel Haven Abilis will be a year-round, five-day program but can be tailored to meet individual needs. Abilis may be a resource for families needing assistance with residential options. The curriculum is built around a two-year time frame, with an optional third year as needed to enhance independence for each student. Using the Chapel Haven curriculum, the first year emphasizes functional academics, vocational skills and community independence. The second year provides opportunities for the student to increase his or her independence and to begin application of vocational skills in real-world work environments.

Admission to Chapel Haven Abilis begins with a phone call to Dr. Susan Izeman, director of the Abilis Autism Program. After the initial contact, application materials will

be sent to the student and family. Dr. Izeman and Chapel Haven's VP of Admissions will review intake materials, including current IEPs, psychological and educational evaluations, functional adaptive assessments and vocational assessments. Next, prospective students and their parents will be invited for an interview and campus tour.

Admission is based on the applicant's skills and interest to participate in the program. Chapel Haven Abilis will successfully serve young adults with:

- A diagnosis of Autism, ASD, PDD or a related language or social disability;
- Intellectual functioning in the mild to low average range;
- No serious behavioral or mental health concerns;
- An ability to work in small- to medium-sized groups with minimal assistance; and
- A motivation for increased independence.

For more information about Chapel Haven Abilis or to begin the application process, please contact:

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About Chapel Haven: Based in New Haven, Conn., Chapel Haven, Inc. has been a leader in transition programming since 1972. Chapel Haven has maintained a strong local and national reputation for successfully teaching adults with cognitive disabilities to live independently in the community. Chapel Haven has strategically aligned itself with internationally recognized experts in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorders, creating a unique curriculum specifically to meet the needs of this population.

About Abilis: Since 1951, Abilis has set the standard in Fairfield County for person-centered, community-based supports and services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Abilis has developed strong relationships with area school districts, community agencies and families throughout Fairfield County. In 2000, Abilis created the Abilis Autism Program in response to increasing needs of children and teens on the Autism Spectrum and their families.