



## **A Collaborative Effort to Further the Science of Improving Lives**

Somerset Hills Learning Institute is a unique autism intervention program dedicated to providing intervention to its students with autism using research-proven behavior analytic procedures. Regrettably, the Institute is one of only a handful of schools in the world that have woven this research together to provide a blanket of treatment that takes away the stigmatizing symptoms of autism.

“The lack of educated professionals in New Jersey capable of providing proven intervention to children with autism is truly a tragedy,” remarked Valerie Mariano, parent of a recent enrollee at Somerset Hills Learning Institute. “We feel beyond lucky to have been accepted to an effective program.”

Sadly, as autism diagnoses increase, the number of trained professionals to effectively work with these individuals has not kept pace and existing programs simply cannot accommodate the ever-increasing number of children diagnosed each year.

The fact is that effective autism intervention requires a near 1:1 staff to student ratio. “I have seen programs attempt to reduce their staff to student ratio in an effort to serve more people. This decision leads to significantly reduced positive outcomes for students with autism,” explained Dr. Kevin Brothers, Executive Director of Somerset Hills Learning Institute.

As part of its mission, the Institute endeavors to respond to the lack of trained autism interventionists by preparing more professionals to effectively serve the population beyond the walls of the Institute.

“Through the Institute’s relationship with Caldwell College, we are now providing distance-learning opportunities to Caldwell students and our staff enabling them to remain full-time interventionists at the Institute while becoming credentialed professionals,” said Brothers. The Distance Learning Project, made possible in part by the NJSIM Foundation, will further the dissemination of effective autism intervention services to an exponentially increased number of people with autism throughout New Jersey.

Currently, Caldwell College is the only accredited college in New Jersey offering a doctoral program in Applied Behavior Analysis. “The program at Caldwell graduates about 20 students each year. Each student we graduate will be able to provide effective services for about 50-100 people with autism. So, in just 10 years, we can effect meaningful outcomes for up to 20,000 people with autism,” said Dr. Sharon Reeve, Director of Applied Behavior Analysis Graduate Programs.

Because the program at Caldwell College is full, Somerset Hills Learning Institute’s Distance Learning Program comes at a pivotal time. “People with autism need more colleges and distance learning sites to provide advanced education in Applied Behavior Analysis,” said Dennis Machado, graduate student at Caldwell College and Assistant Director of Somerset Hills Learning Institute. “We need more trained professionals to sufficiently meet the need.”