



### **From Our Students to Your Colleagues**

From the first day of enrollment, Somerset Hills Learning Institute is preparing its students for meaningful inclusion. For some, that means transition back to the public school system to finish their education; for others, it means transitioning to adulthood as productive members of the community.

Committed to its students' lifelong learning, the Institute is ensuring successful adult living and future employment through its development of an Adult Services program. "I am so proud to be part of an organization which strives for the meaningful inclusion of their students," said Paul Shreiber, Institute Assistant Director.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects areas of social interaction and communication skills. Adults with autism typically display difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities.

Somerset Hills Learning Institute will begin serving adults in May of 2012 when its eldest student turns 21. The Institute's Adult Service providers will be termed "Life Coaches" as their responsibilities will far exceed those of a Job Coach. To adequately prepare students for adult living, Life Coaches will continue to teach a variety of self-help, home/community-living, language, and functional academic skills. Currently, these students are learning to prepare meals, shop for groceries, engage in social interactions, make medical appointments, use ATM machines, and a vast number of other skills that many of us take for granted.

In preparation for employment, the Institute has developed a job-sampling program for its students approaching adulthood. Job sampling allows students to gain a diverse set of employment skills and will help Life Coaches assess student employment preferences.

Somerset Hills Learning Institute's job-sampling program began in the Fall of 2009 with students Michael, JP, Steven, Tommy, and Matthew sampling jobs at The Wee People Daycare in Bound Brook, NJ.

"We are so grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve as a job sampling site for the students of Somerset Hills Learning Institute," said Sarah Graham, Director of Wee People. "Their janitorial and grounds maintenance work is of professional grade."

Most recently, Somerset Hills Learning Institute students sampled jobs at Three Meadows Farms in Bedminster, NJ. Their duties include greenhouse work like filling flats and transferring seedlings and orchard work like picking apples. “These tasks are integral parts of cultivating the produce that we ultimately sell to local businesses,” explained Katie Rupert, owner of Three Meadows Farm.

Just as they did at Wee People, the students of Somerset Hills Learning Institute have proven themselves skillful. “I am so impressed with the quality of the work they have shown,” said Rupert, who is eager for the students to sample positions in at her Farm Stand store.

“I feel such a sense of relief to know that my son is learning the skills he will need to live as an adult,” said Kathy Jablonski parent of Somerset Hills Learning Institute student, Tommy. “I hope that more local businesses will follow the leadership of those involved and offer themselves as job sampling sites.”

###