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Extra Steps to a Better Life: Marrakech and the Connecticut Center for Child Development Join Forces in Providing Local Respite Program for Individuals with Autism

Extra Steps Program Provides Safe, Functional Respite for Individuals and their Families Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders

WOODBIDGE, CT— According to the latest statistics, Autism affects approximately 1 out of every 150 children in the United States. In response to the vital need to provide locally based services for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, as well as much needed respite for the families who care for them, two local organizations have come together to develop the Extra Steps Wrap-Around Service Program—a specially designed program for individuals ages 3-21 with autism spectrum disorders and/or other developmental disabilities who require intensive support and instruction during non-school hours.

The Extra Steps program incorporates leisure, recreational, social, safety, daily living skill development, vocational and pre-vocational opportunities and training in home, school, work and community locations. Candidates for this program are those who require regular supervision or who face other challenges in their environment and/or who may be at risk of placement in a residential setting.

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The Extra Steps Program operates through a collaborative initiative by Marrakech, Inc., a non-profit organization based in Woodbridge, CT, that provides a wide range of human services to children & adults throughout Connecticut, and the Connecticut Center for Child Development, Inc. (CCCD), a private, non-profit organization based in Milford, CT, that is dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and other pervasive developmental disorders throughout their lifespan.

Working in partnership, Marrakech provides individual instructors with expertise in disability services, carrying out educational and instructional plans, behavior management and modifications, safety, cultural competence community resources and recreation. In addition, Marrakech also provides facilities, administrative support and oversight as well as vehicles and personnel for community transportation. CCCD provides clinical supervision and individual program development, data collection systems and analysis. CCCD also provides training and supervision to all team members. Additional training may extend to training parents, siblings, extended family, other professionals, and/or other members of the greater community.

"It is important to remember that the individuals we provide functional respite to in the Extra Steps Program have families that they go home to. These family members often struggle with a myriad of challenges that go along with autism spectrum disorders," said Frank McCarthy, executive director, Marrakech, Inc. "Being able to provide safe, functional respite during after school hours, nights, weekends, snow days, school vacations and holidays, has become invaluable to these families who have come to trust and depend upon our staff."

"The long term goal of this program is to increase each person's level of independence, and to positively impact the quality of life of the children we work with and their families," said Suzanne Letso, co-founder and chief executive officer of the Connecticut Center for Child Development.

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Extra Step Program services are provided at the CCCD facility in Milford, as well as Marrakech facilities in New Milford, Cheshire, Torrington, and New Haven. Additional settings include a family's private home, public school sites, and/or other community settings as needs dictate. Together, Marrakech and CCCD will work with families, and other professionals to determine appropriate environments, activities, schedules, duration of time spent on various locations, and the learning objectives in each environment.

About Marrakech:

Marrakech, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that provides a wide range of human services to children & adults throughout Connecticut. Founded in 1971, Marrakech established the first halfway house in Connecticut for women with mental retardation. They have continued developing programs and services which are located throughout the State of Connecticut encompassing support to people with a wide range of disabilities, families with complex needs, youth who are at risk, and people without disabilities who are economically disadvantaged. For more information about Marrakech and its programs, please visit www.marrakechinc.org

About the Connecticut Center for Child Development, Inc. (CCCD):

The Connecticut Center for Child Development is a premier agency in the field of autism and has a national reputation for excellence and positive outcomes. Their goal is to help people with autism lead their lives with dignity and purpose. For more information about CCCD and its programs, please visit www.cccdinc.org

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