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The Children's Institute's Film School Offers "Acting for the Camera" Classes

For Immediate Release:

LIVINGSTON – High school students and young adults on the autism spectrum are learning social skills through a special "Acting for the Camera" program offered through TCI Film School Productions at The Children's Institute in Livingston.

The classes, offered on Thursday afternoons, helps teach special needs students and students on the spectrum important social skills along with acting skills.

Film school Director David Dilanni said the classes have been very successful and give students experience both behind and in front of the camera as well as experience working with an acting coach, a film/video expert and behavioral expert. Individualized instruction is stressed.

The class has made a significant impact on the students who take it, Dilanni said. "Students and teachers have described improvements in our students' social skills including more self-confidence, better eye contact, clearer speech and appropriate posture. Our techniques include acting for the camera as well as strategies like "fake it till you make it".

"Teachers, peers and family notice a change in students after mastering on-camera performance," he said. "Our behavior consultants are internationally known figures who work with students with Asperger's and autism. They are tracking the progress of this program and support the results."

TCI Clinician Sarah Caverly, who serves as the class acting coach, said the class teaches students acting techniques which help students improve eye contact and makes them much more at ease with their conversation skills and keeping conversations going.

Leila Ganjaei of Short Hills, who attends the Center for Independence, the adult program at The Children's Institute, said the classes have taught her a great deal about acting and video. "I have learned how to stay focused on the camera," she said. "I have learned how to use your voice and what role the character plays.

Paul Silliere of Maplewood, who attends the young adult program at The Banyan School in Little Falls, said he feels that the classes have made a difference for him. "I like it because the classes help me with social skills," he said.

The students formed groups and took turns performing comic scenes.

Since 1963, The Children's Institute has been committed to developing the academic, social, behavioral, communication, life and career skills of children, adolescents and young adults on the autism spectrum and with related disabilities. We serve individuals on the spectrum from preschool to adults at our schools in Verona and Livingston and our Center for Independence, our adult program in Livingston. For more information, please visit www.tcischool.org. For our adult program, visit tciadults.org.

The Acting for the Camera class, as well as other after-school and Saturday TCI Film School programs will be offered in August and the fall. For more information, go to www.tcifilmschool.org, www.facebook.com/tcifilmschool or email ddianni@tcischool.org. To register, call 973-509-3050, ext. 441.

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