

**CP of NYS Annual Award Recipient**

**EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR AWARD**



**Daniel P. O'Neill – CEO & President,  
Beechwood Continuing Care, Getzville, NY**

As President and CEO of Beechwood Continuing Care, Daniel O'Neill has welcomed high school age youth with disabilities to be mentored in an unusual program. Project SEARCH™ of WNY at Beechwood is a business-led partnership that offers a school-to-work program alternative for students with disabilities who are in their last year of high school. The program is provided by Beechwood Continuing Care in conjunction with Erie 1 BOCES, Aspire of WNY and Summit Educational Resources, with original funding from The Peter and Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation.

Project SEARCH™ ([www.projectsearch.us](http://www.projectsearch.us)) is an international program operating more than 150 program sites in 42 states and four countries. The program is approved by the New York State Education Department, focuses on transitional education and takes place entirely at the workplace. The person-centered philosophy of Project SEARCH™ helps students build skills that will lead to a career and allow them to graduate with a work credential.

Beechwood provides a classroom for the participating interns along with employees who serve as professional mentors. By combining real-life work experience with training in employment and independent living skills, the goal is for each intern to obtain competitive, integrated employment. Upon successful completion of the program, interns may be offered employment at Beechwood that aligns with the skills they've learned.

Mr. O'Neill's staff mentors the students, makes accommodations and modifications to the work sites and enlists the cooperation of outside vendors to provide support to the individuals in the program and their families. He is also an advocate, speaking to other employers about how the work culture at Beechwood has benefited by hiring people with disabilities.