TNC Chocolate Lab

RECOGNIZED FOR ITS IMPACT ON LONG ISLAND

Submitted by Lee Anne Vetrone on behalf of The Nicholas Center
Photos provided by The Nicholas Center

FOR THE TEAM AT TNC CHOCOLATE LAB, making chocolate is about much more than creating delicious treats. It's about creating opportunities.

The Port Washington-based social enterprise of The Nicholas Center has been named a 2026 Nonprofit of the Year by Long Island Business News as part of its Corporate Citizenship Awards. The recognition honors organizations making a meaningful difference in the economic and social well-being of Long Island.

TNC Chocolate Lab provides Autistic adults with opportunities to develop career skills, earn competitive wages and gain valuable workplace experience in a supportive environment. With the guidance of dedicated job coaches, team members take part in nearly every aspect of the operation—from handcrafting chocolates and preparing orders to greeting customers in the retail shop.

The team also has the opportunity to share its experiences and accomplishments through the TNC Media Lab, further building communication and professional skills.

The work addresses a significant challenge facing the Autistic community. An estimated 85 percent of adults with autism spectrum disorder are unemployed, making programs that provide meaningful employment and career development especially important.

"Receiving this recognition is a testament to the talent, heart and dedication our team brings to work every single day," said Stella Spanakos, co-founder of The Nicholas Center and TNC Chocolate Lab. "It proves that when we focus on ability and provide the right support, Autistic adults excel, earn competitive wages and make invaluable contributions to our community."

The award is part of *Long Island Business News*' annual Corporate Citizenship Awards, which recognize organizations and leaders demonstrating a commitment to strengthening their communities. According to Suzanne Fischer-Huettner, managing director of BridgeTower Media/Long Island Business News, this year's honorees exemplify how partnerships and community-focused initiatives can address important needs across Long Island.

TNC Chocolate Lab is part of The Nicholas Center, a Port Washington-based organization dedicated to helping Autistic individuals learn, live and work more independently in their communities. Through vocational training, community projects and social enterprises, The Nicholas Center creates opportunities for employment, connection and personal growth.

The 2026 honorees will be celebrated at an awards event on September 17 at Cr Hollow Country Club in Woodbury. Th most certainly be a night to remembe this business and its employees.