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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# **PANERA BREAD TO DONATE 100% OF PROCEEDS FROM ITS ‘PIECES OF HOPE FOR AUTISM’ COOKIE CAMPAIGN APRIL 9-15 TO PROJECT REX, MUSC’S AUTISM INITIATIVE**

**SOUTH CAROLINA/GEORGIA – 04/01/18**– Covelli Enterprises, the largest franchisee of Panera Bread, is proud to announce the launch of its “Pieces of Hope for Autism” cookie campaign during Autism Awareness month in its newly acquired South Carolina/Georgia cafés. Monday, April 9 through Sunday, April 15, 100% of the proceeds from all ‘Pieces of Hope’ cookie sales will be donated to PROJECT REX, MUSC’S AUTISM INITIATIVE. The puzzle piece cookie, made from Panera Bread’s famous shortbread and topped with sweet white icing and an edible sugar decal, has been specially designed to represent the symbol for autism and will be sold in all cafes in the South Carolina/Georgia area.

While this is the first year for the campaign in the South Carolina/Georgia cafés, Covelli Enterprises has hosted “Pieces of Hope for Autism” cookie sales in its other markets since 2010. Since then, the company has donated more than \$1.4 million to autism organizations in the areas it serves, and through this year’s campaign the company expects that total to surpass \$1.7 million with the addition of the North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia markets. The company acquired 22 cafés in South Carolina and Georgia at the end of the 2016, and acquired 15 more in North Carolina in May of 2017.

“We’re excited to launch the ‘Pieces of Hope for Autism’ campaign in our newly acquired South Carolina/Georgia market, because I know how much good this campaign does in our communities,” said Sam Covelli, Owner/Operator of Covelli Enterprises. “This special cookie campaign allows us to make such a positive difference in the community, which is what we aim to do every day through our products and our bakery-cafes.”

Throughout the month of April, Panera Bread will also be collecting Community Breadbox donations at the registers of all of its local cafés to raise additional funds for the cause as part of its *Covelli Cares* community support.

“Panera Bread has been an amazing support to our program! Not only have they provided numerous opportunities to boost awareness and resources for individuals with Autism, they have allowed our program’s participants to gain real-world experience in promotion and marketing,” said Dr. Frampton Gwynette, Director, MUSC Project Rex Program. “Our participants actually had the incredible opportunity to record a radio commercial and film video promoting Panera’s Autism support campaign! This has helped build their social abilities and vocational skills. We are so grateful for Panera’s incredible support. Thank you, Panera Bread!!!”

Panera Bread is encouraging ‘Pieces of Hope’ campaign supporters to share photos of their cookies on social media using #everycookiecounts. Cookies may be pre-ordered online at [www.covelli.com/autism](http://www.covelli.com/autism). The cookie was reformulated in 2016 to align with Panera Bread’s clean food policy. It is made completely free of any artificial colors, flavors, additives or preservatives.

### **About Project Rex**

The Project Rex Team consists of doctors and therapists with a passion for helping children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their loved ones. Project Rex provides support and treatment for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their parents. Their goal is to help children and young adults to reach their highest potential by enhancing their social skills, their ability to understand emotions, and their adaptability

### **About Covelli Enterprises**

Covelli Enterprises operates more than 300 Panera Bread bakery-cafes in eight states. Headquartered in Warren, Ohio, Covelli Enterprises is the single largest franchisee of Panera Bread, LLC. In 2017, Covelli Enterprises donated more than \$32 million to hunger relief agencies and non-profit organizations through *Covelli Cares*. [www.covelli.com](http://www.covelli.com)