

## First Lady Mary Pat Christie Honors Purple R.E.I.G.N. Founder Asia D. Smith as a New Jersey Hero for Empowering Survivors of Domestic Abuse

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**Trenton, NJ** – First Lady Mary Pat Christie named Asia D. Smith her 19th New Jersey Hero for her commitment to make a difference in the lives of domestic abuse survivors. As a survivor of domestic violence, Asia is a powerful example that anyone can be a victim and there is life beyond abuse. As founder and CEO of Purple R.E.I.G.N., a non-profit advocacy agency specializing in programs and services for those impacted by physical and sexual assault, she works daily to heal and empower victims, especially those in underserved communities.

"Asia has such a compelling story - one of tragedy, triumph and hope," said Mrs. Christie. "She has overcome perilous acts of domestic violence that no individual should have to endure. In doing so, Asia has become a role model for other survivors and I am so inspired by the work she and her organization, Purple R.E.I.G.N., are doing in the community to educate and empower the lives of so many victims. I am proud to name Asia Smith a New Jersey Hero."

Purple R.E.I.G.N. Social Services, which operates in partnership with the Bessie Mae Women's Health Center in East Orange, provides a comprehensive range of services that includes: preventative strategies, crisis intervention counseling, advocacy, educational workshops, training classes, safety planning, resources/transitional services, referrals, restraining orders, and assessments.

"I am honored beyond words to receive the New Jersey Heroes award on behalf of the more than one billion victims globally, and on behalf of an incredible aunt that I never had the opportunity to know, because at the age of 24, she was viciously attacked as she left work and murdered by her estranged husband," said Asia Smith. "Today, I proudly accept this award on behalf of the millions of tenacious advocates and survivors who vigorously 'fight' domestic violence and sexual assault every waking moment of their lives. I also accept this award on behalf of myself for having the courage to take the most horrific experiences of my life and not only overcome them, but use them as fuel to help others globally do what I've done: turn tragedy to triumph."

During her visit, Mrs. Christie met with clients and participated in a roundtable discussion about the obstacles they face and the types of assistance they are receiving from Purple R.E.I.G.N.

Domestic violence affects more than four million Americans every year. In fact, one in four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime and women are more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than men. In addition, more than 3 million children witness domestic violence in their homes.

According to the 2011 Domestic Violence Offense Report prepared by the New Jersey State Police:

There were 70,311 domestic violence offenses reported by police in 2011, a 5 percent decrease from 2010. Assaults accounted for 42 percent and harassment accounted for 44 percent of the reported offenses in 2011.

Wives were the victims in 18 percent and ex-wives were the victims in 3 percent of the reported domestic violence offenses in 2011. Domestic violence offenses arising from a dating relationship accounted for 14 percent of the state total.

The most frequent day of domestic violence occurrences was Sunday.

The most frequent hours of domestic violence incidents were between 8:00 p.m. and midnight, when 26 percent of the offenses were reported.

For more information about services provided by Purple R.E.I.G.N., visit <http://www.purpleignss.org/> or call 973-93PURPL (78775).

New Jersey Heroes is an initiative of First Lady Mary Pat Christie that showcases the positive and unique ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey and their communities. To nominate a hero, go to <http://newjerseyheroes.org> and follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

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**PHOTO**

**CAPTION:**

First Lady Mary Pat Christie honors Purple R.E.I.G.N. founder and CEO Asia D. Smith as her 19th New Jersey Hero. Pictured (left to right) are Esney Mae Sharpe, President & CEO of the Bessie Mae Women's Health Center, First Lady Mary Pat Christie and Asia D.



Smith, Purple R.E.I.G.N. founder.

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