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Trenton, NJ – First Lady Mary Pat Christie and the New Jersey Heroes Foundation today announced the launch of the first-ever online selection of the next New Jersey Hero to celebrate Women’s History Month. Three deserving women – Julianna Furfari of Marlton, Burlington County, Yvette Long of Chester, Morris County and Beth Stefanacci of Merchantville, Camden County – have been designated as New Jersey Hero nominees in recognition of their contributions and commitment to their communities and the Garden State.

The public will have an opportunity to choose the next New Jersey Hero beginning today through 10:00 am March 31, 2015 by visiting <http://newjerseyheroes.org/index/poll/> to cast their selection.

“New Jersey’s history is filled with strong women who have been role models for future generations,” said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. “Julianna, Yvette and Beth truly exemplify those same qualities. From encouraging self –esteem in girls with special needs and mentoring inner city youth to fighting pediatric cancer, each of these remarkable women has committed themselves to a movement that is making a real difference in their respective communities and this state. They are each a hero in their own right and all are worthy of becoming our next New Jersey Hero.”

Voters can cast their ballots once per day until the poll ends at 10:00 am on March 31. The March New Jersey Hero will be announced later that afternoon via press release.

The March New Jersey Hero nominees are:

Julianna Furfari- Tiara’s Loving Children (TLC): Tiara’s Loving Children was founded in the fall of 2012 by Julianna Furfari and Sammi-Jo Danze with a cause to make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities. Our mission is to offer a special needs pageant at no cost to the contestants so every child has the ability to feel amazing about themselves and shine on a stage. Fundraisers and events held throughout the year in order to cover the costs of our main event, Miss Belle of the Ball. Hair and makeup services are donated, as well as lunch the day of the pageant, to pamper the contestants. Choreographers work with the children, teaching them an opening number while they learn to interact with each other. Our first Miss Belle of the Ball was crowned in October 2013. TLC’s goal is to continue to expand our special needs pageant nationally within five years, as we have already expanded to four additional states. All of this is accomplished through donations and countless hours of help from dedicated volunteers. <http://tlcnp.org/>

Yvette Long – Platinum Minds: Yvette Long of Chester is the Executive Director and Founder of Platinum Minds, a non-profit leadership development organization dedicated to providing education opportunities to inner-city boys, assisting them with achieving their full academic potential, and becoming leaders in their communities to effect positive change. In Morristown, Asbury Park, and Newark, they provide local secondary school placements, mentoring, monthly workshops, which include reading tutoring for younger boys, and summer camp experiences. Platinum Minds is changing how inner city boys see themselves, interact in their communities, connect with their suburban brothers, and aspire to greatness. With a small staff and volunteer team, they have assisted over 300 boys. They have a 100% percent graduation rate with all receiving full or part academic scholarships to college. Yvette states “A proactive approach to improving our inner cities, building a stronger educated work force, and a more united nation of people, starts with intelligent, compassionate, ethical and confident leadership, and this is the vision of Platinum Minds. One nation working together.” <http://platinumminds.org/>

Beth Stefanacci – Go4theGoal: Go4theGoal’s unwavering mission is to help make the lives of children affected by cancer as normal as possible by providing financial support, developing and implementing unique hospital programs,

funding grants for innovative research, and granting personal wishes. Go4theGoal was born in 2006 when Merchantville, NJ resident Richard Stefanacci, 13-years-old at the time, was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma. His family quickly learned that there were not enough resources available to families with children battling cancer and immediately set about changing that. 15,000 children diagnosed with pediatric cancer every year in the United States and approximately 40,000 are in active treatment, with a majority of these kids right here in NJ. While finding cures is the ultimate goal of any cancer foundation, those cures are a long way off for children battling cancer today. Go4theGoal is a different cancer foundation focusing on children's needs today and finding cures tomorrow. Go4theGoal is a different foundation making a real difference in the lives of children with cancer.
<http://www.go4thegoal.org/>

New Jersey Heroes is an initiative First Lady Mary Pat Christie began in 2010 to showcase the positive and unique ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey and their communities. To nominate a hero, go to newjerseyheroes.org and follow the application instructions to submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

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