

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Names Brick Stars Coach Alex DePalma a New Jersey Hero for Empowering Individuals with Developmental Disabilities with Important Life Skills

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Trenton, NJ – With 25 years coaching experience, Alex DePalma was searching to make a difference in a new arena. So in 2009, he began the Brick Stars Challenger Program to bring together children and adults with developmental disabilities for an hour each Sunday to teach them to play and enjoy the game of ice hockey. To honor the commitment, success and remarkable growth of the Brick Stars Challenger Program, First Lady Mary Pat Christie today joined Alex DePalma on center ice at the Ocean Ice Palace in Brick to name him the fourth New Jersey Hero of 2012.

“Through the game of hockey, Alex has found a creative opportunity to encourage children and adults with Autism and other developmental disabilities to learn valuable life skills that will help these players overcome challenges in becoming more confident and independent individuals,” said Mrs. Christie. “Seeing the joy each skater is experiencing as well as the pride expressed by their parents makes this an incredibly inspiring program. I am proud to name Alex DePalma our New Jersey Hero for the month of April.”

The Brick Stars Challenger Program is for participants between the ages of 5 and 21 who have a developmental disability, such as Autism. The program, which helps players learn fundamental skills, began with just 8 players in 2009. By the end of the first season, it had a total of 25 players, making it the fastest growing special needs program in New Jersey.

“When I received a call that I had been selected as the New Jersey Hero for the month of April by First Lady Mary Pat Christie, I was extremely honored and very proud to represent our Stars Challenger Hockey program,” said Brick Hockey Club ACE & Stars Director Alex DePalma. “The players and parents involved in the Stars program show amazing courage and determination every week, inspiring and enriching the lives of all who volunteer their time to teach these amazing kids how to play hockey. They are truly our heroes.”

The Brick Stars Challenger Program is part of the Brick Hockey Club Organization and is a 501c (3) organization. Coaches are USA Hockey certified and the program is operated by volunteers consisting of local coaches, current and past Hockey Club members as well as local high school players.

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 to submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

In addition, Autism Awareness is an advocacy area embraced by Mrs. Christie to bring greater understanding of the developmental disability. Throughout the year, she highlights the innovative work being done by organizations throughout the state to serve people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

For more information about Brick Stars Challenger Program, visit www.brickhockeyclub.org.

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Photo Caption 1: First Lady Mary Pat Christie honors Alex DePalma, Director and Coach of the Brick Stars Challenger Hockey Program as her fourth New Jersey Hero of 2012

Photo Caption 2: First Lady Mary Pat Christie is joined by Brick Star players, coaches and volunteers in honoring New Jersey Hero Alex DePalma.

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