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Gov. Christie On Drug Addiction: Miracles Can Happen, If We Choose To Be A Part Of Them

Tuesday, September 27, 2016

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Gov. Christie On Drug Addiction: Miracles Can Happen, If We Choose To Be...

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Transcript:

Governor Christie: Today with these added initiatives we're taking our fight against opioid addiction and the destruction it brings to a new level. It's been my commitment as Governor to make New Jersey a national leader in fighting drug addiction. During the time I was running for president I spent a lot of time talking about this issue across the country, and what I learned during that period of time is that this problem is not unique to our state. It is a problem that's happening all across the country and destroying lives and the families that go along with them. We need to continue to push here in New Jersey for more availability of treatment for a greater understanding of this issue. In the end we still have an enormous problem with stigma in this state. People are afraid to come forward and admit that they have this problem. It's a disease. It is a disease, and we need to continue to remind folks that the good news is that it's a disease that is often treatable. Too many diseases we've come across in our families or amongst friends get a death sentence. They're not treatable, and we lose those folks. In this instance, the sin here is that it is treatable but we're not giving people the permission they need to seek that treatment like any other victim of a disease in our society. I've often used the analogy and I will do so again today of my own mother, who was an addict as well. She was addicted to nicotine and she smoked from the time she was fifteen years old until she died at the age of 71 from lung cancer, and when my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer no one said she's getting what she deserves. Don't treat her. She made the choice. She knew smoking was bad for her health and so let her go because this is the predictable result of what happened. No. They said she had a disease. She had lung cancer and they did everything they could to try to

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treat her and extend both the length and the quality of her life. The treatment was unsuccessful, but no one suggested to our family that somehow it was her fault. No one suggested to our family that somehow we should be ashamed for the fact that my mother contracted this disease. All we got in return were prayers, good wishes for her recovery, and a sense from everyone that they understood that she was a victim of a disease no matter what the cause. If my mother had been a heroin addict I don't believe we would have gotten the same response universally from people. We need to make that transformation, and I'm going to continue to talk about it in that way and in a very personal way for as long as I have a public platform to do it, because if we can change that that's the real monumental step, the accelerator that will save lives in our society. All the rest of these things we're doing are good, but that will be the moment that will really change things, and so we all as a group, as leaders in all the various capacities that I see here, law enforcement, the health care industry, social services, other government officials, we all need to be talking about it, because you never know what life you're going to affect and change, but the one thing I can tell you for sure is that all of you are seen as leaders, and leaders are people who others look to for advice and counsel and direction, and so let's provide that advice and counsel and direction and let's use folks like Rich as an example of what's possible. I am willing to bet that two years ago, August 27th, Rich didn't think that two years later he'd be standing in the Governor's Office with a current governor and a former governor and a roomful of people and cameras talking about his continuing successful journey to combat his disease, but the fact that he is standing here should tell all of us that miracles can happen if we choose to be a part of making that miracle happen. Miracles don't happen just from God in my opinion. In my opinion God placed us here to be part of the miracles He wanted to see happen, and Rich is one of those folks, and he is just representative, I'm sure he would tell you, of a number of people who he's come across in his life who have inspired him to take the steps that he's taken today, and I will tell him that you inspire us, because if you can combat the disease that you're combatting successfully and become an absolutely contributing member of our state, then it's possible for all of us to do more as well with the gifts that God's given to us, so this is really important to me. It's important to me personally, and I'm going to continue to fight for this every day that I'm Governor to try to make sure that I work with people on both sides of the aisle to put forward the types of programs and approaches and conversation that will help to make this better.

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