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First Lady Mary Pat Christie Names YouthBuild Newark Founder Robert Clark A New Jersey Hero for Work to Prepare At-Risk Youth for Future Self-Sufficiency

Friday, February 17, 2012 • Tags: [Other](#)

Trenton, NJ – Today, First Lady Mary Pat Christie honored Robert Clark for his commitment to improve the lives of at-risk youth and named him the second New Jersey Hero of 2012. Robert, a graduate of Boston's YouthBuild program has transformed his keen awareness of the challenges faced by at-risk youth in to action, founding YouthBuild Newark in 2003. During her visit, Mrs. Christie toured the Newark facility and participated in a roundtable discussion with YouthBuild students.

"Robert and his work exemplify the true meaning of giving back to the community," said Mrs. Christie, who has championed programs for at-risk communities throughout New Jersey. "He is an important part of a network of dedicated individuals who are working everyday to positively impact our state's young people by helping them develop the much needed skills that will inspire personal pride. His work to help build a future of self-sufficiency and a pathway to achieve life success for the young people he serves deserves recognition. I am proud to name Robert a New Jersey Hero.

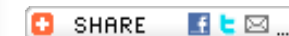
Based on the national YouthBuild model, YouthBuild Newark enables low income youth ages 16 to 24 to complete their secondary educational goals and lead productive, self-sufficient lives. Through an intensive, year-long program, students increase literacy and numeracy skills, learn life skills and train for construction trades. All students have individual development plans that consider short, mid, and long-term goals, including employment, pre-apprenticeship and post-secondary education tracks. Individual and group counseling is also an important focus of the overall program. In addition, students are required to participate in community service activities that improve their neighborhoods - from

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battered women's shelters and tree planting to volunteering at soup kitchens.

"I am humbled by the recognition and excited that the tireless efforts of our staff, board of directors and most importantly the young people are being highlighted by the state's highest office," said Robert Clark, founder and Executive Director of YouthBuild Newark, who is the first YouthBuild graduate to start a YouthBuild program. "We see ourselves as custodians of hope for young people who are often forgotten, and welcome ALL to join our efforts to break cycles of poverty and empower individuals to transcend circumstance. I am proud to be a YouthBuild graduate. It was here that I learned the importance of education and service."

Since 2003, 83 percent of YouthBuild Newark's students have achieved gains in literacy and/or numeracy and 80 percent have received their high school equivalency diploma. Additionally, 83 percent have obtained gainful employment and/or enrolled in post-secondary education or training. For information about Youthbuild Newark, visit www.youthbuildnewarknj.org.

New Jersey Heroes is an initiative of First Lady Mary Pat Christie that showcases the positive ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey in their own unique ways. 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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