

[Home](#) [Newsroom](#) [Media](#) [Administration](#) [NJ's Priorities](#) [Contact Us](#)
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[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > [2014](#) > [First Lady Mary Pat Christie Names Jodina Hicks Of UrbanPromise As 26th New Jersey Hero](#)

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Names Jodina Hicks Of UrbanPromise As 26th New Jersey Hero

Thursday, March 13, 2014

Tags: [First Lady](#)

Ms. Hicks Honored For Commitment To Empower The Lives Of At-Risk Youth In Camden



Trenton, NJ – First Lady Mary Pat Christie yesterday honored Jodina Hicks, Executive Director of UrbanPromise in Camden, as her second New Jersey Hero of 2014. Through a series of programs and initiatives, Ms. Hicks works to provide at-risk children and young adults in the City of Camden with the tools necessary to succeed in life – from academic achievement and life management to spiritual growth and leadership skills. She is the 26th individual to be named a New Jersey Hero.

"I admire Jodina's commitment in helping our youth realize their true life potential," said Mrs. Christie. "From her early contributions in getting the UrbanPromise organization off the ground to her return as the agency's executive director, Jodina is shaping the next generation of young leaders who will ultimately represent change and pride in their community. For some, the path may be more

challenging but programs like this are doing real work to impact lives in profound and meaningful ways. I am proud to make Jodina Hicks a New Jersey Hero for her continued efforts to empower the youth of Camden."

Founded by Bruce Main in 1988, UrbanPromise has a 25 year history in Camden. The agency provides an array of programs that challenge youth to develop the skills they need to succeed in life through after-school and summer camps, two schools, job training, experiential learning, and a host of other initiatives. UrbanPromise serves approximately 640 children and teens from the Camden community each year.

"It's humbling and an honor for First Lady Mary Pat Christie to recognize UrbanPromise and me as a hero," said Jodina Hicks. "The definition of a hero, someone who displays courage and self sacrifice in the face of adversity, is very fitting for the staff of UrbanPromise, the families of Camden, and most of all the youth of our city, who, despite tremendous obstacles and traumatic conditions are living their lives with courage and are transforming our community."

During a twelve year span, Ms. Hicks helped to begin the organization's adolescent programs, including the Street Leader Program, Urban Promise Academy, and numerous college preparation and performing arts activities. From 2000-2010, she developed youth development programs, faith-based initiatives, and corrections reform with Public/Private Ventures and the Safer Foundation. She returned to Camden in 2010 to serve as the agency's executive director.

At UrbanPromise, nearly 100% of participating high school students graduate, with approximately 93% moving on to college. Nearly 85% of UrbanPromise alumni have graduated from an institution of higher education to become doctors, teachers, social workers, child care workers and business owners. In addition, it is not unusual to have former UrbanPromise participants return to the organization as employees or volunteers, or to enroll their children in Urban Promise activities.

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UrbanPromise is planning to add several new initiatives, including: the UrbanPromise Wellness Center and improved health and nutrition services, including a cafeteria and food co-op in East Camden as well as After-school programs and teen job opportunities in more Camden neighborhoods.

Urban Promise has expanded its message of hope in Wilmington, Delaware; Trenton, New Jersey; Miami, Florida; Vancouver, British Columbia; Toronto, Ontario; Copán, Honduras; and several areas of Malawi.

For more information about UrbanPromise, visit <http://www.urbanpromiseusa.org/>

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, visit <http://newjerseyheroes.org/index/> and follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.



Jodina Hicks, Executive Director of UrbanPromise greets First Lady Mary Pat Christie. Ms. Hicks is the 26th New Jersey Hero to be named.



First Lady Mary Pat Christie and Urban Promise Executive Director Jodina Hicks participate in a student roundtable.

PHOTO CAPTION 1: Camden Mayor Dana Redd, First Lady Mary Pat Christie and UrbanPromise students congratulate Jodina Hicks on being named the 26th New Jersey Hero.

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