



First Lady Mary Pat Christie Awards \$120,000 in Grants to New Jersey Heroes Organizations

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Expanded Program Will Help Eighteen Groups Enhance Services in their Communities

Trenton, NJ - First Lady Mary Pat Christie today announced over \$120,000 in New Jersey Heroes grants to eighteen organizations previously selected as New Jersey Heroes. The grants, which must be used within twelve months from the date of the award, will help the recipients to further enhance the mission of their respective organizations through new programs and services.

"I am proud our New Jersey Heroes Foundation was able to expand its grant program for 2015 to help these remarkable organizations continue to do good work in their respective communities throughout the Garden State," said Mrs. Christie. "Our New Jersey Heroes recipients represent such a broad coalition of causes that touch many people in so many ways. With these grants, we're providing these groups with an opportunity to make an even greater difference by giving them the ability to improve and expand their programs to further reach community members in need."

Since 2013, the New Jersey Heroes Grant program has increased from \$100,000 to \$120,000 and from twelve recipients to eighteen. Overall, approximately \$320,000 in grants has been awarded to twenty-four organizations over the past three years.

The 2015 NJ Hero Grantees are:

Breast Intentions, Middletown, Monmouth County (Erika Rech and Mike Ruane) — \$2,769: Breast Intentions provides crisis intervention for women facing financial hardship during their battle against breast cancer. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$ 2,769 to help continue the organization's program, called "Pink Pact", which focuses on awareness by educating young women in college and high school about breast health, the need for regular breast examinations, and other preventative measures. Breast Intentions added three more high schools to its Pink Pact program in the fall of 2014 and hopes to add five more in the fall of 2015.

Brick Stars Challenger Hockey, Inc., Brick, Ocean County (Alex DePalma) — \$3,400: Brick Stars Challenger Hockey provides an ice hockey program designed specifically to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, mental challenges, or learning delays and is a continuation of their initiative, Hockey is for Everyone. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$3,400 to Brick Stars for helmets, sticks, uniforms, and other equipment, as the program continues to expand. Currently, the program serves 57 special needs individuals, a large expansion from the 8 players the program began with five years ago.

Bridge of Books Foundation, Rumson, Monmouth County(Abby Daly) — \$3,500: The Bridge of Books Foundation aims to provide an ongoing source of gently used and new books to underserved and at-risk children throughout New Jersey in order to support literacy skills and encourage a love of reading. New Jersey Heroes is awarding

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\$3,500 to Bridge of Books for the purchase of books for juvenile detention centers, as well as pre-school bilingual books which are hard to come by through book donations alone.

Community Soup Kitchen & Outreach Center, Morristown, Morris County (Alan Weinstein) — \$7,500: The Community Soup Kitchen (CSK) serves roughly 300 men, women, and children every day, 365 days a year. They provide nutritious meals and access to nurses, social workers, and various other counselors in a warm, safe, and caring environment free of charge for the homeless, working poor, elderly, and disabled in the community. CSK relies solely on private donations to keep its doors open. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$7,500 to the CSK to help fund the addition of a 4th day to their Free Farmers Markets program. Already running three times a week, this program offers fresh produce to the community and ensures that healthy choices are available to those who need it most.

GlassRoots, Inc., Newark, Essex County (Kate Twyla Dowd) — \$3,189: GlassRoots provides instruction in the art of glass-making to under-served youth to help foster life-long learning and self-expression. The organization serves close to 2,000 young people in the Newark area annually. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$3,189 to GlassRoots to purchase a piece of equipment used for glass-blowing. This new tool will be used in their studio during training programs, to expand program offerings and increase income from custom made products the students create.

Hope & Future Inc., Union City, Hudson County (Gian Paul Gonzalez) — \$7,500: Hope & Future provides opportunities for at-risk youth in Union City to proactively become empowered members of their respective communities through extracurricular activities, events, and programming while also bridging gaps between individual growth, strengthening families, and unifying communities. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$7,500 to help the organization open a fully operational youth-focused community center in central Union City, which has been a dream for Gian Paul since starting the Hope & Future Foundation. This community center will provide programs for Union City youth throughout the summer and after-school hours during the school year to serve as a dedicated safe space young people can call their own.

Interfaith Food Pantry, Morris Plains, Morris County (Rosemary Gilmartin) — \$1,508: The Interfaith Food Pantry (IFP) provides access to food, nutrition education and related resources to improve the health and well-being of Morris County residents in need. IFP offers a wide array of programs for its clients, from a Healthy Choices Program to a Youth Involvement Program, to address all the needs of the community. One of the newest programs, the Food Rescue and Gleaning Program, retrieves food from supermarkets that is perfectly safe and nutritious but can no longer be sold, such as meat that can be kept safely in a freezer. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$1,508 to help cover gas expenses, allowing IFP to expand the number of grocery stores the Food Rescue and Gleaning Program can reach and collect food items.

Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization, Mahwah, Bergen County (Eric Fuchs-Stengel) — \$4,000: The Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO) focuses on providing ecological solutions to environmental problems through its Earth Crew, Clean-Ups, and Farm to Live Programs. MEVO also provides educational classes to help inspire and empower people to become environmentally conscious. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$4,000 to the Farm to Live program to help with start-up costs for the Bergen County Educational Farm - the biggest farm MEVO has ever built. This farm will be an innovative community farm that can serve as a model for sustainable and ethical agriculture throughout New Jersey, as well as provide produce to those in need.

Operation Beachhead, Manasquan, Monmouth County (Michael Ricci) — \$5,900: Operation Beachhead provides adaptive all-season sports activities to veterans, troops, disabled civilian individuals, and their families for the purpose of rehabilitation, inspiration, and recreation. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$5,900 to Operation Beachhead for the purchase of adaptive equipment to help disabled participants take part in the program, such as beach wheel chairs for summer or mono-skis for winter activities. The program which has expanded vastly over the years, now benefits over 400 participants and their families.

Operation Shoebox New Jersey, Somerville, Somerset County (Rod Hirsch) — \$15,000: Operation Shoebox New Jersey is a volunteer organization dedicated to collecting donated supplies and shipping care packages to US military personnel deployed overseas. New Jersey Heroes is awarding Operation Shoebox \$15,000 so that soldiers will continue to receive the personal supplies they need while serving our country. Operation Shoebox New Jersey estimates that some 12,000 boxes will be assembled in 2015 and shipping charges are upwards of \$22 per box.

Partners for Women & Justice, Montclair, Essex County (Jane M. Hanson, Esq.) — \$10,000: Partners for Women & Justice works to empower low-income and abused women build safe and secure futures for themselves and their children by providing quality legal assistance in domestic violence and family law matters, as well as guidance in promoting financial competence and independence. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$10,000 to the organization to help fund its Partner in Hope Fellowship, which will enable 120 women a year to navigate the legal system with the assistance of a knowledgeable attorney.

Pass It Along, Inc., Sparta, Sussex County (Diane Taylor) — \$6,550: Pass It Along, Inc., builds confident, resilient, compassionate teenagers through self-discovery, volunteer, and leadership opportunities. Pass It Along's *Tilly's Kids* program provides mentorship and environmental education to children from Newark and Irvington who are living below the poverty level. This program consists of a 4-week summer program and a monthly school year program. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$6,550 to help cover the cost of food and transportation for the *Tilly's Kids* program, which will help 30 inner-city children develop their leadership skills and enhance their confidence through social and emotional learning.

Pony Power Therapies, Mahwah, Bergen County (Dana Spett) — \$10,000: Pony Power Therapies gives special needs and at-risk children and adults a unique opportunity to ride, care for, and interact with horses. New Jersey

Heroes is awarding \$10,000 to help fund the organization's newly piloted Pony-Assisted Life Skills (PALS) Program for Developmentally-Delayed Adults. The PALS program uses interactions with horses and the farm environment to help developmentally-delayed adults strengthen life skills while fostering a greater sense of self-respect, confidence, and esteem.

Project Self-Sufficiency, Inc., Newton, Sussex County (Beverly Gordon) — \$10,000: Project Self Sufficiency provides a broad spectrum of comprehensive social, health, and educational services that enable low-income families in Northwest New Jersey to achieve economic self-sufficiency, family stability, and a strong and stable future for themselves and their children. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$10,000 to the organization to provide healthy and nutritious snacks to students participating in Project LAUNCH: Newton, a program that provides over 150 participants with homework assistance and positive activities that highlight social development.

Roots & Wings, Denville, Morris County (Irene DeGrandpre) — \$5,000: Roots & Wings provides young adults who age out of New Jersey's foster care system with safe housing, education, counseling, and the life skills needed in order to empower them toward self-sufficiency. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$5,000 to the organization to assist in covering the direct costs associated with education for the aged out foster youth in the program such as tuition fees, educational testing, books and school supplies, and tutoring. Roots & Wings' Residential Program currently services aged-out foster youth from Essex, Sussex, Morris, Union, Ocean, and Somerset Counties, although there are no limitations to the communities within New Jersey where they will accept clients.

Urban Promise Ministries, Camden, Camden County (Jodina Hicks) - \$14,000: Urban Promise sets out to equip Camden's children and young adults with the skills necessary for academic achievement, life management, spiritual growth, and leadership. New Jersey Heroes is awarding Urban Promise \$14,000 to support their new Street2Leader (S2L) Program, which provides training, employment, and support to particularly high-risk youth in Camden. The S2L Program focuses specifically on youth with prior arrests and convictions, in an effort to get and keep them on a positive life course and prevent recidivism. Urban Promise's focus on achievement has led to a 100% graduation rate and 93% college acceptance and attending rate.

Women's Opportunity Center (WOC) - YMCA of Burlington and Camden Counties, Burlington, Burlington County (Cathi Rendfrey) — \$5,000: The Center is committed to helping women gain economic self-sufficiency through education, job readiness, networking, outreach, referrals, and emotional support. WOC focuses its aid on displaced homemakers, women who have left a marriage where their spouse was the sole breadwinner, rendering them ineligible for many government programs. New Jersey Heroes is awarding \$5,000 to the organization to assist women within the program in purchasing food, clothes, and gasoline for themselves and for their children while they attempt to become self-sufficient.

Your Grandmother's Cupboard, Toms River, Ocean County (Clark & Jean Paradise) — \$6,000. Your Grandmother's Cupboard helps to provide the homeless and working poor in local communities with basic needs such as clothing, shoes, blankets, and personal care items. New Jersey Heroes is providing \$6,000 for the organization to assist with the purchasing of a more fuel-efficient vehicle and to help cover the costs of gasoline, as the organization expands its reach further across the state. Your Grandmother's Cupboard now serves approximately 4,000 people per month at various soup kitchens and shelters all over New Jersey.

To be considered for the New Jersey Heroes grant, several applicant criteria were required:

Being a prior New Jersey Hero Award recipient from the New Jersey Heroes Foundation.

Demonstrating a continued commitment to community contribution, in the spirit of New Jersey Heroes.

Submitting copy of 501c3 status, IRS tax determination documenting status, or explanation of provided on status as well as a copy of most recent audited financials.

Summarizing how the grant will be put to use, including a description of the program with goals, objectives, and timeline to achieve the project.

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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