

[Home](#) [Newsroom](#) [Media](#) [Administration](#) [NJ's Priorities](#) [Contact Us](#)
[Press Releases](#) [Public Addresses](#) [Executive Orders](#) [Press Kit](#) [Reports](#)
[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > 2014 > [First Lady Mary Pat Christie Names Camp Acorn Co-Founder a New Jersey Hero](#)

## First Lady Mary Pat Christie Names Camp Acorn Co-Founder a New Jersey Hero

Wednesday, April 23, 2014

Tags: [First Lady](#)
**Stay Connected**  
with Social Media

**Stay Connected**  
with Email Alerts

**LIKE THIS PAGE? SHARE IT  
WITH YOUR FRIENDS.**
 [f](#) [t](#) [e](#) ...

### *Lodi Resident Cathy Carisi is 27<sup>th</sup> New Jerseyan to be Honored for Making a Difference in the Lives of Others*

**Trenton, NJ** – Recognizing a passion to serve children and adults with special needs, First Lady Mary Pat Christie has named Cathy Carisi, co-founder and executive director of Camp Acorn, as her 27th New Jersey Hero. Located in Allendale, Camp Acorn provides summer and winter social recreational programs for children and adults with a wide range of developmental disabilities, including those with autism spectrum disorder.

"Cathy Carisi is a true inspiration," said Mrs. Christie. "I admire Cathy's commitment to volunteering, which ultimately fostered in her a passion to serve those with special needs that has grown deeper and stronger for more than 20 years. Her dedication and genuine compassion for all the participants has made a difference in the lives of not only the campers, but their families, staff and volunteers at Camp Acorn. I am proud to name her our third New Jersey Hero of 2014."



Founded in 2001, Camp Acorn empowers children and young adults with special needs through programs that address their physical, emotional and social well-being. Camp participants learn and grow at their own pace, building self-esteem, confidence and life skills that touch every aspect of their lives.

"I am honored to receive this award on behalf of Camp Acorn's past and present staff," said Cathy Carisi, co-founder and executive director. "Through our collaborative efforts and friendship, we have turned this little idea into a thriving community that has forever changed the lives of our campers."

Ms. Carisi is a school psychologist with 25 years of experience working with children and adults with special needs. She is also the co-coordinator of the Bergen County Flight Team, a volunteer program that provides extra counseling support to school communities dealing with tragic events. In 2011, Ms. Carisi was bestowed with the Russ Berrie Unsung Hero Award for her work at Camp Acorn. Currently, she is working to expand Camp Acorn to a full-time, year round 21 and over program.

Mrs. Christie added, "It is fitting to recognize Cathy's efforts in April because it is also Autism Awareness Month in New Jersey. Camp Acorn is one of so many organizations in our state that serve people with autism while promoting greater understanding of this developmental disability."

Mrs. Christie added, "It is fitting to recognize Cathy's efforts in April because it is also Autism Awareness Month in New Jersey. Camp Acorn is one of so many organizations in our state that serve people with autism while promoting greater understanding of this developmental disability."



Camp Acorn offers four program sessions throughout the year. Winter Sessions are comprised of a Saturday respite (1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.), After-School (Tuesdays/Thursdays -4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.) and Dances (first Friday of each month). Summer Session consists of 9 weeks, full-time Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. While most campers range in age from teens to early 30's, Camp Acorn serves children as young as 5 to adults in their early 50's.

The camp is operated by certified special educators with more than 60 years of combined experience working with individuals with disabilities. In addition, more than 150 student volunteers help at camp throughout the year.

For more information about Camp Acorn, visit

[www.campacorn.org](http://www.campacorn.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 [newjerseyheroes.org](http://newjerseyheroes.org) and follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

**PHOTO CAPTION 1:** First Lady Mary Pat Christie and NJ Hero Cathy Carisi (right) help Camp Acorn campers prepare baked goods.

**PHOTO CAPTION 2:** First Lady Mary Pat Christie honors NJ Hero Cathy Carisi with Camp Acorn campers, volunteers and parents.

###

**Press Contact:**  
Michael Drewniak  
Kevin Roberts  
609-777-2600



[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Notice](#) | [Legal Statement & Disclaimers](#) | [Accessibility Statement](#) | 

Statewide: [NJ Home](#) | [Services A to Z](#) | [Departments/Agencies](#) | [FAQs](#)  
Office of the Governor: [Home](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Media](#) | [Administration](#) | [NJ's Priorities](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2017  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000