

Governor Christie Pardons Philadelphia Man Who Has Reclaimed His Life From Addiction

Wednesday, November 25, 2015

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John Berry Serves as a Symbol of Hope for those Overcoming Substance Abuse

Trenton, NJ - Acting on his commitment to helping people reclaim their lives from the destructive cycle of substance abuse and crime, Governor Chris Christie today granted a pardon to Philadelphia resident John F. Berry, who was convicted more than 40 years ago in New Jersey for robbery and possession of stolen property as a result of his extensive drug use. For the last 36 years, Berry has transformed his life, focusing his commitment to addiction programs that serve adults and children separating from correctional facilities.

"John's story is the reason why I believe that no life is disposable," said Governor Christie. "Through the years, he has overcome many hurdles and set a positive example of what can be achieved when given a second chance to make things right in your life. I want to thank John for his courage and commitment, for giving back to others through his advocacy and by serving as a symbol of hope and influence to those overcoming the disease of addiction."

Born and raised in Philadelphia, John Berry is 61 years old and is married with three children. Over 40 years ago, Berry was convicted of Robbery and Possession of Stolen Property in Atlantic County. In 2012, Mr. Berry received a pardon from then-Governor Corbett for prior offenses in that state occurring during the time of his addiction.

Berry has made tremendous inroads to successfully manage his addiction, completing a detoxification program and joining a 12-Step recovery program.

He earned a Bachelor of Science degree from St. Joseph's University in 2007. Today, Berry is a Case Manager for the Philadelphia Treatment Court Unit, where he has worked continuously for the past 17 years, touching and impacting the lives of more than 1,000 individuals who sought treatment through the Treatment Court program.

He has been honored for his work as a drug counselor receiving numerous awards, including the Honorable Lucien E. Blackwell Guiding Lights in the Community Award.

Mr. Berry sought the Governor's action because he believes that his example could help others find hope that they too can be productive members of society by seeing that positive conduct is rewarded. He also believes a pardon will help him further his career in criminal justice.

Since the beginning of his administration, Governor Christie has placed a strong emphasis on changing the conversation on drug addiction and put the focus on treatment and recovery.

Action taken includes:

- Expanding New Jersey's Drug Court Program so that first time nonviolent offenders have the opportunity to get the treatment they need rather than jail time;
- Implementing a groundbreaking one-stop model for re-entry that connects comprehensive services to ex-offenders re-entering society;
- Forming an Interim Management Entity - as a single point of entry for individuals and families to access drug treatment services as quickly as possible.

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Press Contact:

Brian Murray
Nicole Sizemore
609-777-2600



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Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000