

Governor Phil Murphy

First Lady Tammy Murphy Hosts 20th Nurture NJ Family Festival with Event Held in Elizabeth

05/4/2024

Festival Served Over 3,500 Families from the Greater Union County Area

ELIZABETH – First Lady Tammy Murphy today hosted a Nurture NJ Family Festival in Elizabeth, connecting over 3,500 families with essential state, county, and local resources including services for expectant and new moms, health care, housing support, food assistance, child care and more. The gathering marked the 20th successful Family Festival hosted by the First Lady since 2018, when the inaugural event took place in Paterson. The Family Festival event series targets cities with high rates of Black and Hispanic infant mortality and over the past six years has connected over 12,350 mothers, fathers, grandparents and anyone else involved in taking care of a child with resources in a fun atmosphere –essentially creating a one-stop shop for care, support, resources and relief.

“As we reach the milestone of our 20th Nurture NJ Family Festival hosted statewide, I am so proud of the work we have achieved together in just over six years,” **said First Lady Tammy Murphy.** “Thanks to our many dedicated partners, many of whom have been with us since our first festival in 2018, thousands of New Jersey families have been able to access services and resources necessary to house, feed, nurture and otherwise support their children in the most essential ways.”

“Bringing these resources directly into the communities most in need is one of the most commonsense ways we can support our families and improve maternal and infant health. I look forward to continuing to host these festivals across our state as we simultaneously implement a wide variety of innovative initiatives and elevate New Jersey’s quality of maternal and infant health care for all mothers and babies. Our work does not stop until New Jersey is the gold standard for maternal and infant health care and the safest and most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby,” **continued the First Lady.**

Nearly 66 percent of Elizabeth’s residents are Hispanic or Latino and there are an estimated 47,000 undocumented immigrants, 36 percent of whom have lived in the United States for 15 years or more. New Jersey’s Maternal Mortality Report for the years 2016-2018 showed that Hispanic mothers were three and a half times more likely to die of maternity-related complications than white mothers, and according to data from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, the mortality rate for Hispanic babies is nearly one and a half times that of white babies. Elizabeth ranks in the top ten of New Jersey’s cities with the highest rates of Black and Hispanic infant mortality. Over 15 percent of people live in poverty, compared to 9.7 percent of all people in NJ, and over 25 percent of people in Elizabeth under the age of 65 are without health insurance, compared with only 6.8 percent in New Jersey residents overall.

Launched by First Lady Tammy Murphy in 2019, Nurture NJ is a statewide program committed to reducing the maternal and infant mortality crisis in New Jersey and ensuring equitable care among women and infants of all races and ethnicities. Since its inception, Nurture NJ has seen over 60 pieces of maternal and infant health legislation signed by Governor Murphy. The initiative has also developed and implemented groundbreaking programs and policies, such as the first-of-its-kind in the nation Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (MIHIA), which is tasked with overseeing the groundbreaking New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center based in



Trenton, and will be the arm of government that continues the vital work of Nurture NJ past the Murphy Administration.

Under First Lady Murphy's leadership over the past six year, Nurture NJ has made significant policy achievements including: developing the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan – of which over half of its more than 80 recommendations have been started or completed; becoming the second state to expand Medicaid coverage to 365 days postpartum; establishing Medicaid reimbursement for doula care; increasing all perinatal Medicaid provider reimbursements to 100 percent of Medicare rates; and launching the most robust-in-the-nation universal nurse home visiting program so that every new parent is visited by a nurse in their home for free within weeks after bringing home a new baby. Through these innovative policies and more, Nurture NJ has positioned New Jersey as a national leader in the fight against the maternal and infant health crisis.

The Elizabeth Family Festival was developed in partnership with the Office of First Lady Tammy Murphy, Nurture NJ, Congressman Rob Menendez, Senator Joe Cryan, Assemblywoman Annette Quijano, Assemblyman Reginald W. Atkins, Union County, Elizabeth Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, United Way of Greater Union County, The Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey, the City of Elizabeth Board of Education, Superintendent and Public School District, Make the Road New Jersey, RWJBarnabas Health and Trinitas Regional Medical Center, The Burke Foundation, Jersey Mike's, and Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey.

"For the 20th Nurture NJ Family Festival, it's great to see the progress made in connecting families with essential resources," **said Congressman Rob Menendez.** "From its humble beginnings to now, this festival stands as a testament to our dedication to supporting families in our community, especially those in the Eighth District and Elizabeth. As we celebrate this milestone, I look forward to many more years of ensuring that every family has access to the resources they need to thrive."

"This was a great opportunity to showcase the attractive qualities of the Elizabeth at the same time families were connected with state, county and local resources to improve their quality of life," **said Senator Joe Cryan.** "Residents were able to learn about the availability of healthcare, childcare, pediatric services and assistance with housing, utilities and nutrition in a festival of food and activities for families and children. This truly was a family festival that was fun, informative and very helpful. I want to thank First Lady Tammy Murphy, all the service organizations that participated, and the City of Elizabeth for working together to make this event a success."

"Equipping families with information about available resources is crucial in the fight against maternal and infant mortality," **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano.** "Today's Family Festival in Elizabeth connected families with vital pre- and post-natal support, addressing challenges that many New Jersey residents face."

"Assembling our community and sharing healthcare resources has significant impact in mitigating the disparities that exist in maternal and infant health outcomes," **said Assemblywoman Reginald W. Atkins.** "I am honored to have today's Family Festival in our district, underscoring our commitment to ensuring every mother and child receives the care they deserve."

"Community is the heart of Union County, and events like the Elizabeth Family Festival signified that spirit of togetherness and support," **said Union County Commissioner Chairwoman Kimberly Palmieri-Moued.** "I was honored to stand alongside First Lady Tammy Murphy, continuing our commitment to bringing resources directly to our neighborhoods. The event not only offered free food, music, and activities but also a diverse range of resources designed to uplift and support all of our residents. Thank you to everyone who joined us as we came together to ensure that every individual has the tools and opportunities they need to thrive."

"Bringing valuable resources to mothers and families is not just an act of generosity; it's a testament to our commitment to building strong, supportive communities. Hosting this festival amplifies the importance of empowering families with the tools they need to thrive," **said Elizabeth Mayor J. Christian Bollwage.**

"The United Way of Greater Union County is grateful for its collaboration with the Office of First Lady Tammy Murphy and anticipates the positive impact it will have on the community," **said Julienne Cherry, President & CEO United Way of Greater Union County.**

"We were thrilled to collaborate with First Lady Tammy Murphy for the Family Festival to share critical resources with residents of the greater Elizabeth area! It was a terrific day, incorporating family fun and health," **said Mariekarl**

Vilceus-Talty, MA, BSN, President & CEO, Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey.

"On behalf of Elizabeth Public Schools and the Elizabeth Board of Education, I would like to thank First Lady Tammy Murphy along with our local officials and the many organizations and people who helped bring Elizabeth Family Festival to our community," **said Elizabeth Public Schools Superintendent Olga Hugelmeyer.** "It is vital that we support our families, especially our mothers and babies, by providing them with information about the many resources available to them so that they have the best opportunity to achieve a healthy and successful future. Ensuring the health and security of our community's children through supporting the needs of families allows them to attend our schools with the sole focus of learning and growing to be able to fulfill their full potential and achieve their dreams."

"We were happy to collaborate with Nurture NJ and First Lady Tammy Murphy's team to connect local families with vital resources during the Family Festival event held in Elizabeth. Together, we are empowering families to access state, county, and local resources easily making sure that no family is left behind. We are building stronger, more resilient communities by providing the vital support families need to thrive," **said Stephanie Rivera, Service Program Coordinator of Make the Road NJ.**

"Trinitas Regional Medical Center is committed to improving the health and well-being of our community. We are excited to be part of First Lady Tammy Murphy's Family Festival in Elizabeth. This fun-filled event gives us the opportunity to interact with the public outside of the healthcare setting, provide valuable information, and offer free screenings and vaccinations to those in need," **said Dr. Nancy DiLiegro, FACHE, President & CEO, Trinitas Regional Medical Center, RWJBarnabas Health.**

"Connections to community resources are crucial for the success of New Jersey families. The Burke Foundation is proud to support the First Lady's Nurture NJ Family Festivals because we see how effective they are at bringing together the village that it takes to raise a child and providing families with the support they need. We're honored to be part of today's community celebration in Elizabeth," **said Atiya Weiss, Executive Director, The Burke Foundation.**

"Improving maternal and infant health is central to creating a healthier New Jersey and that is what the Family Festivals are all about. Everyone deserves access to affordable healthcare no matter who they are or where they live and we are grateful for the opportunity to continue our partnership with the Governor and First Lady. As New Jersey's health solutions leader, Horizon is meeting our neighbors where they live and helping them achieve their best health through partnerships like this one," **said Wendy Morriarty, VP and Chief Medicaid Officer, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ.**

"We love our families and community," **said Elizabeth Board of Education President Charlene Bathelus.** "We were thrilled to see so many families receive necessary resources. We couldn't have done this without our partners and staff and in particular First Lady Tammy Murphy, Superintendent Hugelmeyer and her staff. Today demonstrated the need in Elizabeth and we look forward to working with Mrs. Murphy on a return visit."

Governor Phil Murphy

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