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ICYMI: “You In Recovery Are The Light That Gives Them Hope. You In Recovery Are The Example Of How Wonderful Life Can Be”

Thursday, December 7, 2017

Tags: [Addiction Taskforce](#)*In Case You Missed It*

“You In Recovery Are The Light That Gives Them Hope. You In Recovery Are The Example Of How Wonderful Life Can Be”

—Governor Chris Christie

Governor Christie's Full Remarks At The 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

“The lights that you are holding tonight represent the light of your spirit. That light which can provide hope to the person who tonight is where you once were. At their lowest point, not believing that their life had any value, not understanding that recovery was possible for them, believing that somehow they had failed themselves, their families, their loved ones and that life in fact may not be worth living. You, you in recovery are the light that gives them hope. You in recovery are the example of how wonderful life can be.”

Mayor Jim Perry's Remarks From Governor Christie's 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

“Within one year we lost two family members, and why I say I have a drug problem is because it is a drug problem. What my family has gone through, what my son went through, what my niece went through, it affects us all, and it's a major epidemic. It's worse than I even imagined. So, the other purpose of what I want to get out to people is the stigma of what a drug addict or somebody that has a problem with drugs is, it's not like when I was younger. It could be anybody, and obviously with what we're here for tonight there's people that have gone through it ... I've made it my, as President of the Conference of Mayors, to make it my mission to push awareness and support for this cause. And with Governor Christie has put out a pledge for all Mayors to sign, which I have my signed copy here and we have numerous Mayors across the state who have signed a copy of the pledge to support the fight against the opioid crisis, and I urge all Mayors throughout the state to please sign this, get it back, and do everything to can, work with us to fight this epidemic.”

Vance Johnson's Remarks From Governor Christie's 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

“Ten years in the NFL, three Super Bowls with John Elway, the Olympic team, never having a problem with addiction but then when I started, I couldn't stop. When I lost my son I ended up using myself into a coma. I was laying there dead and my sister took a deathbed picture of me. When I was laying there I realized that, you know, there must be something more than just going to the Super Bowl and being a great football player. There had to be a reason why I was wearing that #82 jersey for the Denver Broncos, and now I know what that was all about. So that I could have a mighty fall. So when I was offered an opportunity to come back to my home state and be a part of Trenton, to be a part of hope, to be a part of a community, that I was here to do that ... There's something we have to do when we leave from here, because someone's sobriety has your name on it.”

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Second Annual Candlelight Vigil
Wednesday, December 6, 2017

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Vanessa Vitolo's Remarks At The 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

"I am here to represent a light that is born in the defeat of this darkness. A year ago today, I spoke at this event begging to share my story, and to share my hope. And in that year, we've come so far, but we're all here tonight, because the problem is still so devastating. We need to continue to work together to create change in our communities. I draw strength from each and every one of you every single day and I thank you for all that you do. There is hope, and I'm living proof of that. I beg you all to spread that hope, to love more, to judge less. We are all in this fight together."

Pam Garozzo's Remarks From Governor Christie's 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

"I applaud Governor Christie for exhibiting the kind of leadership necessary to put opioid awareness and recovery efforts on the front burner, both at the state and national levels. The Governor speaks from his heart, with a fierceness and a compassion that is critical to fighting this epidemic, because that's what it is, an epidemic. And he works unceasingly to get programs in place to support those in recovery as well as their families and loved ones."

Kevin Meara's Remarks From Governor Christie's 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

"Ten years ago, Mary and I became members of a club we never asked to join when our son, Casey, 24, died of a heroin overdose. Your life changes forever. I would say to people since that time, when City of Angels formed, that you know you made it when you think more about their life than their death, and we're not there yet. But last night I feel I got a little closer ... Three thousand, three hundred and twenty-five, that number, beginning tonight up until Christmas Eve, will be the number of empty chairs at Christmas dinner tables, because we're losing 175 people a day to overdose. As I thank Governor Christie and Senator Vitale for what they do, I'm going to ask them to do more because we know that if we do more, even if just one chair is full with a young man or young woman we've made progress."

Michael Reilly's Remarks From Governor Christie's 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

"In 1993 when I became a funeral director I imagined doing funerals for grandparents and great grandparents, most of who had fulfilled their bucket lists, and occasionally a funeral for someone too young due to a tragedy. Today I sadly say the tragic funeral of young people who never had a chance to even create a bucket list is becoming too frequent due to drug overdose. Too much of my work is conversations now with parents asking them to pick out clothing for their children to wear during the viewing. Asking them to gather photos for the collages. Asking parents to pick out a casket to put their child in, and finally pick a cemetery where they're going to bury their child. My hope is that all families can have conversations about this horrible disease with no judgement and no fear."

Joshua Rodriguez's Remarks From Governor Christie's 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

"A night like tonight we can remember those who've gone before us, but also reach out and try to help those among us that are challenged with all kinds of substance abuse. Let us pray. When we go through tough times, although we may be shaken, and although we may even be struck down by drug addiction and all kinds of substance abuse, we're not destroyed. So today, God, we ask that you would help us to remember the lives of those who have gone before us. Men and women who fought the good fight. Who fought every day of their lives in order to overcome this bondage. Help us to continue to fight in their memory. Amen, God bless you, thank you."

Erik Coleman, Jessie Armstead, And Antonio Pierce's Remarks At Governor Christie's 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil For Addiction

Antonio Pierce: "I would urge everybody to do is instead of liking, instead of just writing little comments on social media, and everybody is on their phones at certain times, how about you ask somebody how they're doing? Do they need help? Is everything okay? Go a little bit more beyond the way we are in the world as far as how social media is dominating how we communicate to one another, and open up that dialogue to make sure that we bring other people in that may or may not need help, to make sure we handle this addiction."

Jessie Armstead: "This is one problem that we've got to stick together and fight together, and everybody in here like Antonio just said, you have social media, let's reach out to everybody and let's support each other."

Erik Coleman: "I am a child of two drug addicts, and growing up it is not easy. It effects your whole family, it effects your upbringing, and is something that needs to be addressed. And I commend you all for taking these steps to get rid of this drug addiction, to get rid of these drugs. I think it's important for us as athletes to use our platform to spread the word. It hits every home, it doesn't discriminate, drug abuse does not discriminate. We have to raise awareness, talk to one another, and spread the word that there is help out there."

###

Jim McGreevey @jim_mcgreevey

I was profoundly impressed by the courage and the strength of the families who shared the loss of their loved ones. In their pain and sorrow, they revealed wisdom as to the harsh realities of the #opioidcrisis. May we pray for them and for the souls of the departed. #Vigil2017

Kelly Kultys @kellykultys

Those in attendance at the #vigil2017 raised their candles in honor of the lives lost to addiction
pic.twitter.com/FLd8Wfa0iC

Kelly Kultys @kellykultys

"We're not defeated." - Kevin Meara of #cityofangels on fighting the #OpioidEpidemic at #vigil2017
pic.twitter.com/WJQESYZ0Fe

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NJ is national leader in the fight against the #opioid epidemic. The 2nd annual Candlelight Vigil enhances @GovChristie's record of helping reclaim lives in our state & across America. <http://bit.ly/2zX4n5D#Vigil2017>
#HealthyNJ pic.twitter.com/ktNd7wy2pF

UCPONJ @UCPONJ

Acting Prosecutor Tim Isenhour and 1st Ast. Prosecutor Ann Luvera are two of hundreds holding candles aloft at #vigil2017 in Trenton, remembering those lost due to drug addiction. We just heard from a mother who lost her son last Dec. 23 -- after attending last year's vigil. pic.twitter.com/KZqOO6gjz8

###

Christie joins hundreds at Statehouse for candlelight vigil on drug addiction

Matt Arco

Star-Ledger

Pam Garozzo was among the hundreds of people who went to a candlelight vigil for drug addiction around this time last year on the steps of the Statehouse in Trenton.

She was with her son, Carlos Castellanos, and the two were there to celebrate. Castellanos fought drug addiction for nearly seven years. He was more than 10 months sober. Both were excited to celebrate Christmas in four days.

But Castellanos relapsed two days later and died. He was 23 years old.

Garozzo returned to the Statehouse Wednesday evening for the second annual candlelight vigil. Rather than being with the crowd, she was behind a microphone. This time, she was the one who spoke to the hundreds holding battery-powered candles.

For anyone in recovery who could have been there to celebrate, she told the them, "you're) some of the bravest people we'll ever know."

"We are all here for each other to shine a light on substance disorders," Garozzo said. "This crosses all boundaries. All ages."

Gov. Chris Christie hosted the second annual vigil to continue to put the focus on fighting opioid and drug abuse. It's been a core theme of the governor's remaining time in office.

"You have my deepest sympathies and prayers," Christie said.

He addressed the crowd as a whole, then had words for people in recovery and then for those who work with people in recovery, and those who lost loved ones.

But recognizing his time left in office is limited, Christie had another message for the crowd: Make sure Gov.-elect Phil Murphy knows your story.

"Nobody gets the attention from government that they need without asking for it -- without demanding it," Christie said. "You need to tell your story to the next governor."

The vigil was held the same day a new Fairleigh Dickinson University PublicMind survey found people living in New Jersey have 50-50 chance their life has been touched by someone with an opioid addiction.

The poll showed a majority of New Jerseyans, 53 percent, say opioid addicts suffer from a treatable disease.

Christie headed a national commission on drug abuse that paved the way for President Donald Trump to waive Medicaid rules that allowed more people to get treatment.

Read the full article [HERE](#).

###

Njdeptofhealth - Instagram

NJ is national leader in the fight against the #opioid epidemic. The second annual Candlelight Vigil enhances @chrischristie's record of helping reclaim lives in our state & across America. DOH staff joined the Governor, community leaders, organizations, families and friends last night in support of those that have been impacted by the disease of addiction. #Vigil2017 #HealthyNJ

reach.nj - Instagram

Jessie Amstead and Antonio Pierce of the NY Giants are at the 2nd Annual Candlelight Vigil #IllBeThereWillYou

_donna_d_ - Instagram

Thank you to Jesse Armstead, Antonio Pierce, Eric Coleman and Vance Johnson for coming to the Governor's 2017

vigil and speaking out about addiction. It meant so much to all the families! #illbetherewillyou #vigil2017 #beaface #reachnj

Ckassick - Instagram

Attended Governor Christie's 2nd annual candle light vigil for people who have or are currently suffering from Addiction, to spread awareness and to end the stigma that comes with it. I had the honor of listening to people tell their stories, and absorbed energy from other individuals who feel just as passionate about this topic as I do. Judge less, understand more; that's what going to help beat this epidemic. Like Chris Christie said, we all have a story to tell. Never stop telling that story until actual change happens. I'll NEVER quit telling my dear friend's story. #KickAddictionsAss #OverdoseAwareness #Vigil2017 @chriscristie

###

Hundreds gather for Christie's last vigil for those suffering from addiction

Kelly Kultys

Burlington County Times

For second year, Gov. Chris Christie is hosting a candlelight vigil for the lives lost to addiction. This is Christie's last one, as his time in office comes to a close, and he has made fighting the heroin and opioid epidemic a priority.

New Jersey lost over 1,900 residents to a heroin or opioid overdose in 2016, and the country saw about 64,000 people die last year from overdoses.

...

Although many people lost their lives, they have not been forgotten. Gov. Chris Christie held his second candlelight vigil, "Bringing Addiction Out of the Shadows and Into the Light," on the steps of the Statehouse to remember the victims, as well as encourage those who are still battling addiction.

"You in recovery are the light that gives them hope," Christie told hundreds who had gathered Wednesday evening.

The governor made fighting the heroin and opioid epidemic one of his top priorities during his last years in office. He established the ReachNJ hotline, which helps people who are looking for treatment and detoxification find a bed. He also announced earlier this year 25 initiatives that will be paid through about \$200 million in state resources, such as expanding recovery coach programs at hospitals for overdose victims.

Outside New Jersey, Christie led the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, which released a preliminary report on the state of the country's epidemic.

...

"This message will get through," Christie said. "We have a new governor here in 41 days. You need to tell your stories to the new governor. You need to make sure that he understands that this isn't just the philosophy of one governor, that this is the need and the demand of the people of the state of New Jersey, and that we will not stand for any less attention being paid to this problem. In fact, we need even more. But he needs to hear that from all of you."

...

Christie was joined by numerous guest speakers, including former New York Giants linebacker Antonio Pierce and New York Jets safety Erik Coleman, and former Gov. Jim McGreevey, who was the master of ceremonies.

McGreevey complimented Christie for his advocacy efforts and for providing resources to those in need, saying no one else in politics has spoken out more on the issue.

"One person, one man long before it was accepted by most persons as the national scourge it is, understood it," McGreevey said.

Earlier in the day, Christie's office announced opioid curriculum resources for students in kindergarten to 12th grade, and an increase in access to instruction and treatment for students in recovery. His executive order called on the commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education to provide resources to educate students about the dangers of substance abuse through their health and physical education courses.

Some of the offerings included adding LEAD (Law Enforcement Against Drugs) programs, in which local law enforcement officials teach courses on alcohol and drug abuse and about the consequences of becoming addicted. At least two districts in Burlington County, Evesham and Medford Lakes, have LEAD programs.

...

Christie said even though he's leaving office, he will not stop advocating for the cause.

"I will not give in or give up. And you cannot, either," he said.

Read the full article [HERE](#).

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