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First Lady Mary Pat Christie Honors Abby Daly for her Commitment to Bring the Joy of Reading and Access to Books to At-Risk Children throughout the Garden State

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Monmouth Resident is 28th New Jersey Hero

Trenton, NJ - First Lady Mary Pat Christie today honored Abby Daly, founder and executive director of the non-profit Bridge of Books Foundation as her 4th New Jersey Hero of 2014. Ms. Daly and her all-volunteer group are responsible for putting more than 425,000 books into the hands of at-risk children across the Garden State in an effort to support literacy skills and encourage a love of reading.

"Books are powerful tools that open doors to learning, expand our imagination and help to understand the world around us," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "Since 2003, Abby Daly has been working to ensure that all children throughout New Jersey have this same opportunity through her Bridge of Books Foundation. I'm amazed by the thousands of students she has been able to impact by changing their lives through reading books. I am proud to name Abby Daly as our 28th New Jersey Hero."

Ms. Daly was inspired to help underserved children through her professional experience as a lawyer in Office of the Attorney General, where she worked with the Division of Youth and Family Services. A graduate of Smith College and Dickinson School of Law, Ms. Daly left the practice of law in 2001 to be at home with her two children. Through Bridge of Books New Jersey, she found the perfect vehicle to remain involved with at-risk children, pursue a love of reading and expose her children to the concept of giving back to the community.

"Our success over the last 11 years is a measure of the tremendous amount of support that we receive from the community at large," said Abby Daly. "Books have the power to change lives. The over 425,000 books we've distributed have touched only a fraction of the children in the state who need books to call their own. This award is great honor and, with greater visibility, we will hopefully inspire more communities to join us in making sure that all children in New Jersey have plenty of books to call their own."

Bridge of Books collects donations from all over the Garden State. Once the books are received, volunteers review them to make sure they are in good condition and then sort the books by age. Thousands of books are then matched with agency requests from around the state. Recently, over 7,500 books went to schools/agencies in three different New Jersey counties over the course of 9 days.

More importantly, any New Jersey agency or institution that provides services to underprivileged or at-risk children can receive books. The distribution network is more than 100 agencies strong. Recipients include: schools, after-school programs, shelters, community fairs, food banks and both juvenile/adult detention facilities. Many agencies receive between one and four donations per year.

A large part of the statewide reach of Bridge to Books is due to its ongoing partnership with New Jersey Youth Corps. Each of the eleven Youth Corps groups distribute the books to areas in their respective communities where books are needed most. In fact, the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum and its Youth Corps have been distributing Bridge of Books donations in northern New Jersey counties for 11 years.

In addition, Bridge of Books provides Spanish and Bi-lingual books to agencies and organizations throughout the state as requested.

More information about Bridge to Books can be found at <http://www.bridgeofbooksfoundation.org/>

To learn more about donating books, visit <http://www.bridgeofbooksfoundation.org/what-we-do/got-books/>

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, go to newjerseyheroes.org and follow the application instructions to submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.



Photo Caption 1: First Lady Mary Pat Christie and New Jersey Youth Corp volunteers honor Abby Daly, founder and executive director of the Bridge of Books Foundation at a ceremony held at the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum in East Orange.

Photo Caption 2: First Lady Mary Pat Christie with New Jersey Hero Abby Daily and children attending the Jersey Explorer Children's Museum Book Fair in East Orange.

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