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## First Lady Mary Pat Christie Spotlights Domestic Violence Awareness as Drumthwacket Goes Purple On Thursday To Support Victims of Domestic Abuse

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

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In support of domestic abuse victims and their families, First Lady Mary Pat Christie announced today that Drumthwacket, the Governor's Official Residence in Princeton, will glimmer in purple on Thursday evening, October 20 to spotlight Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

"Every survivor of domestic abuse is a compelling story of tragedy, triumph and hope," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "Today, the issue of domestic violence transcends age, race, religion and economic status, and is found in all of our communities. So, it is critically important that we help victims overcome the lasting impacts of the violence they have endured and empower them with confidence and courage to rebuild their lives. During this Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I want to thank the many unsung organizations throughout New Jersey that are giving abuse victims safety, support, assistance and more importantly, hope for the future."

Domestic abuse is a repetitive pattern of behaviors, including – physical abuse, sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse and economic deprivation – utilized to maintain power and control over an intimate partner. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) estimates that every 9 seconds in the United States, a woman is assaulted or beaten.

In New Jersey, there were 62,055 domestic violence offenses reported by police in 2014, a four percent decrease compared to the 64,556 reported in 2013, according to a 2014 report on domestic violence prepared by the New Jersey State Police. Assaults accounted for 43 percent (26,780) and harassment accounted for 43 percent (26,463) of the reported offenses in 2014. Overall, females were victims in 75 percent (46,399) of all domestic violence offenses. Additionally, children were involved or present during 29 percent of all domestic violence offenses occurring in 2014.

Through her Foundation, New Jersey Heroes, First Lady Mary Pat Christie has honored four organizations for their commitment and advocacy on behalf of domestic abuse victims.

Katelyn Darrow, founder of *Angels of God Clothing Closet* in Pitman, along with her mother and sisters, were victims of domestic violence, escaping from their abuser in the middle of the night, with only the clothes on their backs. Years later, tragedy struck again when a house fire displaced her family. Darrow started the 501(c)(3) organization in 2009 at the age of 12, as a way to give back to those in need in her community who helped her family through hard times. *Angels of God Clothing Closet* has assisted more than 27,000 families since 2009 and has grown the non-profit into a true community outreach organization. Activities include an onsite Food and Toiletry Bank; The Angels Pet Food Pantry for pet owners unable to purchase pet food; a Bless This Dress Prom Dress Drive to help girls with financial hardships attend their High School proms; a Back-to-School Project where children receive backpacks and back-to-school items; a socks and underwear campaign for children in need at the start of the school year as well as various holiday events to help celebrate Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. For more information, visit <http://angelsofgod.org/>.

After her own personal experiences with domestic violence as a child, Cathy Stephens, director of client services for *Jersey Battered Women's Service (JBWS)* in Morristown, became a champion for thousands of abuse victims over the past 25 years. For nearly four decades, *JBWS* has worked diligently to protect victims of domestic violence and their families and has served more than 20,000 people through its residential services, community counseling and legal advocacy, professional training, community outreach and education, and batterers'

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program. Cathy Stephens has been instrumental in developing and leading many of these programs from hotline and shelter to counseling, legal advocacy, children's programming as well as the organization's nationally-recognized transitional housing center, and more recently Morris' Family Justice Center, which opened in March 2016. For more information, visit <http://www.jbws.org/>.

Asia D. Smith, also a survivor of domestic violence, is founder and CEO of *Purple R.E.I.G.N.*, a non-profit advocacy agency specializing in programs and services for those impacted by physical and sexual assault. Smith works daily to heal and empower victims, especially those in underserved communities. *Purple R.E.I.G.N. Social Services*, operates in partnership with the Bessie Mae Women's Health Center in East Orange, and provides a comprehensive range of services that includes: preventative strategies, crisis intervention counseling, advocacy, educational workshops, training classes, safety planning, resources/transitional services, referrals, restraining orders, and assessments. For more information visit <http://purplereignss.org/> or call 973-93PURPL (7-8775).

Jane Hanson co-founded *Partners for Women and Justice* in Montclair, a non-profit that provides legal assistance and guidance to women endeavoring to break away from abusive relationships and begin a new life for themselves and their children. The organization has assisted thousands by empowering and providing hope to low-income women and victims of domestic violence. Since 2002, *Partners for Women and Justice* has offered quality legal assistance in domestic violence and family law matters to low-income, abused women in Essex, Morris and Union counties. Staff works with pro-bono attorneys to serve clients in a variety of ways, including protective orders, visitation arrangements and fair awards of child and spousal support. Over time, this work has translated into millions of dollars of free services to women in need. For more information about *Partners for Women and Justice*, visit <http://www.pfwj.org/>.

While domestic violence is considered to be a chronically under-reported crime, there are tools that people in New Jersey can use to take action.

New Jersey's Department of Children and Families has in place an array of programs that provides shelter, a phone hotline, and emergency response. Information and referral, counseling, support groups, children's advocacy services, community education, as well as financial, legal, housing, and general advocacy are also available. The Statewide Domestic Hotline operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week to serve domestic violence victims and provides information about domestic violence. The Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline is **1-800-572-SAFE (7233)**.

Governor Christie has proclaimed October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in New Jersey. A copy of the [Governor's Proclamation](#) is attached.

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