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First Lady Mary Pat Christie Encourages New Jerseyans to Nominate Local Heroes through Newly Launched New Jersey Heroes Program

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Four New Heroes Recognized for Their Community Efforts

Trenton, NJ – First Lady Mary Pat Christie today kicked-off New Jersey Heroes, an initiative that showcases the positive ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey in their own distinctive ways – big and small. Every month, a new local hero will be designated from nominations submitted by residents through the First Lady’s website, www.nj.gov/governor/firstlady.

“New Jersey is about the people who live here,” said Mrs. Christie. “I’ve been inspired and moved by so many outstanding individuals who are truly making a difference in communities throughout the Garden State. Now, each month, we will salute a New Jersey Hero to thank them for their dedication, kindness, and willingness to go the extra mile.”

The state’s first five New Jersey Heroes were selected in January 2010 during Governor Christie’s inaugural. They are Caroline B.T. Wallace of International Youth Organization in Newark; David Girgenti of Wish-Upon-A-Hero in Cherry Hill; Tammy Evans-Colquitt of Image and Attitude in Pennsauken; Jim Benedict of St. Peter’s Church Lunch Kitchen in Freehold and Chip Paillex of Grow-A-Row in Franklin.

Calling them everyday people doing remarkable things for their communities, First Lady Mary Pat Christie today recognized four more individuals for their compassion and humanity during the ceremony held at Drumthwacket. The four new Heroes include:

John W. King of the Center for Educational Advancement (CEA) in Flemington: Since 1970, CEA has been meeting its mission to educate, empower, and employ individuals with special needs. More than 4,000 people with physical and developmental disabilities have achieved a measure of personal and financial independence training through the work of the center. John King was introduced to the Center for Educational Advancement in 2007. Since that time, he has made it his personal campaign to raise awareness of this not-for-profit organization and its value to the community, both as an individual and through “31 Views Marketing”, a direct marketing services company of which he is the CEO.

Kate Dowd, Assistant Program Director, GlassRoots in Newark: Founded in January 2001, *GlassRoots* provides multiple opportunities for at-risk youth, ages 10-18, to realize their potential through the creation of glass art. The organization provides a nurturing environment where underserved children can achieve self-esteem and creative expression while also learning basic business skills and valuable life lessons through the unique art form of glass making. As a teaching artist, Kate Dowd instills self discovery and a sense of achievement in her students while helping them to discover their potential for success. Since beginning at GlassRoots in 2005, Ms. Dowd has worked with over 500 youth teaching them glass beadmaking, mosaic, and kilnformed glass. She most recently worked with local youth to design and create the 2010 National Christmas Tree Ornament for the State of New Jersey.

Gerald Marcus, Co-Chair, Morristown Neighborhood House in Morristown: Through programs provided by Neighborhood House, an average of 1,500 local children, youth and adults receive services daily to help confront economic challenges and foster cross cultural acceptance. Mr. Marcus joined the Neighborhood House Board in September 1998 and since that time has served in a variety of Board roles. Mr. Marcus is a private investor having been a Managing Director of Hilltop Capital Management, LLC and a Director in the investment area of MetLife, Inc.

Beverly Gordon, Project Self Sufficiency in Newton: Founded in 1986, Project Self-Sufficiency helps families achieve stability as well as personal and economic self-sufficiency. Ms. Gordon, who knows through firsthand experience the struggles of a single parent, is a champion of the organization’s programs and links to support services. She has served as a member of the Project Self-Sufficiency Board of Directors since 1998 and as its President since 2004. Under her leadership, the organization currently provides comprehensive services to over 1,300 local families annually and has partnered with more than 18,000 families since its inception.

“If you know someone who has made an impact on your life or on the lives of others, we want to hear about it,” added Mrs. Christie.

To nominate a hero, go to the bottom of the page of the First Lady’s website at www.nj.gov/governor/firstlady and click the NJ Heroes tab. Follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

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