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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: November 16, 1999

Governor Advances Her Vision of New Jersey as *Many Faces, But One Family*; Takes Members of Cabinet on Road in Essex County

Governor Christie Whitman today, joined by members of her Cabinet, met with children, mothers and their babies, bus drivers and firefighters, and many others, during a full day of events and meetings in Essex County - with one stop in Union County. In the evening, the Governor delivered remarks and answered questions at a town meeting at Livingston High School.

"Our strength is in our diversity. We are a state of abundant talents, backgrounds, cultures, languages, religions and lifestyles," said Gov. Whitman before opening up the floor for questions at the town meeting in Livingston.

"It's great to be here in Essex County. I have enjoyed my day here. As my Cabinet travels around the state on days like this, it makes me proud to see how - though we come from so many different backgrounds, there is more that unites us than that divides us," the Gov. said.

Governor Teaches Fourth Grade Class in Irvington

Gov. Whitman, who teaches a fourth grade class at a different school each month, started her day by speaking to children at Chancellor Avenue School in Irvington about state government and the legislature. A general assembly followed where the Governor covered topics, from the value of keeping promises to her V-Free initiative, which helps young people make their neighborhoods and schools safe and free from violence.

"I like being Governor because I can make a difference in people's lives," said Gov. Whitman. "But you don't have to be Governor to do that. Each one of you can set an example for others to follow. You can work hard in school. You can be kind, understanding and tolerant."

In defining what being tolerant implies, Gov. Whitman said "It means realizing that we are different in some ways, but there are more things about us that are alike. I like to say that New Jersey is one family with many faces. We all have something to contribute to making New Jersey a better place."

Gov. Whitman's V-Free Initiative is the first major program of the Center for Youth Policy and works to rid schools of violence, vandalism and victimization. Bringing together existing programs, resources and materials with new initiatives, V-Free targets students from kindergarten through high school.

Governor Tries Bus Safety Simulator, Another Outcome of Transportation Trust Fund

Gov. Christie Whitman also took the wheel of a bus during her day in Essex County, but not on an actual road. The Governor was touring the New Jersey Transit (NJT) Facility in Maplewood where she visited a class of bus drivers who were training at a bus safety simulator, one of three simulators funded through the Transportation Trust Fund.

As the nation's third largest provider of bus, rail and light rail transit, NJT makes New Jersey a better place to live, work and raise a family according to Gov. Whitman. It's programs like its Bus Safety Simulator Training Program that help contribute to its success.

The Bus Safety Simulator Training Program, which was initiated in 1994, teaches NJT drivers and those from the state's private transit, charter and school bus companies. Topics covered in the 18-day training course include defensive bus driving techniques, fare collection, customer service and relevant issues regarding the American with Disabilities Act. Simulators reduce the amount of training time spent in actual buses, allowing NJT to save money on fuel, parts and other operating expenses. In the simulator's first year, NJT was able to save \$250,000; savings currently amount to \$375,000 annually.

Governor Visits East Orange WIC Clinic; Expanded KidCare Program is Highlighted

Gov. Whitman toured the East Orange WIC Clinic in Belleville and spoke with clinic staff about its supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children - a valuable resource in promoting the state's KidCare Program. The Governor used some time at the WIC clinic to discuss the NJ KidCare Program which can apply to those WIC families without health insurance.

NJ KidCare, created in 1997, is a state and federally funded program that provides free or low cost health insurance to children in low and moderate income families. This health insurance is available, based on family income, to children through age 18 for free (or for a minimal monthly premium and modest co-payment).

This past July, Gov. Whitman signed legislation to broaden the eligibility requirements of NJ KidCare and boost enrollment through expanded promotional efforts. At the East Orange WIC Clinic, a KidCare representative, for instance, is available at the clinic on Mondays to offer assistance in completing the application.

Governor Visits South Orange Fire Headquarters; Emphasizes State's Recruitment Efforts

Gov. Whitman watched a demonstration of the state's physical performance test for entry-level fire fighters and delivered remarks on the unrivaled role of this profession in protecting the public's safety and making New Jersey a great place to live, work and raise a family.

"Your training demonstration gave some indication of the level of strength and skill required to be a fire fighter - but nothing can adequately convey the unique courage of the men and women who risk their lives to save others," said Gov. Whitman to the audience of fire fighters at the South Orange Fire Headquarters in South Orange.

The Department of Personnel, remarked the Governor, is conducting the first statewide, comprehensive entry-level fire fighters' test in 20 years.

"It's encouraging that it has already received approximately 13,000 applications for this test," said Gov. Whitman. "I'm proud that throughout our recruitment, we've worked hard to reflect the diversity of our communities. By actively recruiting minorities and female candidates, we'll ensure that all qualified individuals get the career opportunities they deserve."

"What's more, it's another example of how our state's diverse population can work together for an even better New Jersey. Or, as I like to say, it's a great example of how our state has many faces, but is one family," she added.

Nearly 200,000 applications for the statewide entry-level examination were circulated this past summer, with an emphasis on recruitment in minority communities and non-traditional outlets. Of the 13,000 applications for this test, women comprised about seven percent of the new applicants. Today's demonstration highlights various components of the physical performance test for entry-level fire fighters.

Governor Demonstrates Meaning of Volunteerism at Community Food Bank of New Jersey

Gov. Whitman presented a check for \$5,000 to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey in Hillside to help make the holiday season a little brighter for those in need. The Governor also helped in the vegetable salvaging area with other volunteers, including members of her Cabinet.

"While winning the fight against hunger is our top priority all year long, I hope this check will help you spread some holiday cheer to those who may be most in need," said Gov. Whitman.

"I often think of our state as one 'many faces, but one family' - and when anyone in our New Jersey family goes hungry," continued Gov. Whitman, "it should concern use all. Working together, we can fight hunger, build a strong sense of community responsibility, and make New Jersey an even better place to live, work and raise a family.

The Community Food Bank provides food and grocery items to needy individuals on a year-round basis. It distributes between 12 and 15 million pounds of food to more than 1,500 organizations in 18 New Jersey counties. The state provided the Community Food Bank with a \$350,000 grant through its Department of Community Affairs' Shelter Support program to help expand the organization's capacity to deliver food to needy families.

