



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Whitman and Kmart Corporation Bring War Against Drugs to New Jersey Youth

Gov. Christie Whitman and the Kmart Corporation launched a youth anti-drug initiative that will keep children off the streets by involving them in fun and competitive events while Kmart raises \$50 million in donations to drug prevention programs by the year 2,000.

"During the past four years in schools around the state I've been talking to young people about the dangers of drugs and the benefits of staying healthy," Gov. Whitman said. "The program we are launching today illustrates that much can be done for the children of this state."

The "Kmart Kids Race Against Drugs" program is designed to educate children about the dangers of drugs while involving them in fun competitions. The Governor joined the children as they participated in a lawn tractor competition on a race track specially built for the program. Children ages 7 to 12 competed in the race which featured modified safety-equipped lawn tractors. Kmart has pledged to donate \$5 to a local drug prevention program for every child who participates in the race.

"We know what harm drugs can do," Gov. Whitman said. "They break apart families, ruin the bright futures of many children and lead to the worst kinds of violent crimes. That's why programs like this are so important to help the state fight back against crime."

During her administration, the Governor has taken a number of actions to crack down on illegal drugs and keep them away from children.

The Governor has called for drug education programs to be conducted in schools as part of the core curriculum standards. These programs will begin this September.

Under her direction the Department of Health and Senior Services instituted the Peer Leadership Training program. By fall, 45 middle schools will participate in the program in which students will be trained as peer

leaders who will teach their peers how to resist the pressure of using drugs or alcohol. They are expected to reach 10,000 of their fellow students.

The Governor has also launched several attacks in the war against drugs at the street level. She recently outlawed the use and possession of Rohypnol and Gamma hydrobutyrate, two sedatives not legally sold in the U.S., that are believed to be used to facilitate sexual assault.

The Governor also stepped up the penalties for the use of and or possession of ketamine hydrochloride, more commonly known as "Special K." Legally sold as a veterinary sedative, the drug is a dangerous hallucinogenic that has become popular in night clubs.

Gov. Whitman has also signed legislation outlawing booby traps set by drug dealers meant to harm law enforcement officers who raid their drug dens and stiffened the penalties for dealers who distribute large quantities of drugs.

During her administration the Governor has also enacted strong anti-crime laws: Megan's Law; Three Strikes; Joan's Law; the Law Enforcement Officers' Protection Act; and the No Early Release Act.

On Tuesday she signed into law seven bills that strengthen the New Jersey parole system while giving victims greater influence over the conditions of parole for inmates who may be released from prison.

"The real race against drugs is more than an annual event," Gov. Whitman said. "It is a constant, uphill battle that we are all fighting and will continue to fight. My administration has put together some very strong anti-drug programs. With the citizens of this state and the help of our state government, together, we can win the war against drugs."