

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Stresses Importance of Early Detection in Fight Against Breast Cancer, Declares May 4th "Mother's Day Mammogram Awareness Day"

With Mother's Day just around the corner, Governor Christie Whitman today declared May 4th "Mother's Day Mammogram Awareness Day" in the State of New Jersey and stressed the importance of getting mammograms and breast exams. The Governor emphasized that early detection increases the chances for successful treatment.

"Mother's Day started as one person's effort to honor a special woman. Let's enrich that annual tradition," said Gov. Whitman. "Getting a yearly mammogram, and encouraging friends and loved ones to do the same, could be the best Mother's Day gift we ever give or receive."

The Governor signed a proclamation recognizing the day of awareness at a Rite Aid in Hamilton Township. Rite Aid has been involved in the fight against breast cancer since 1990. The Governor also toured Cooper Hospital's Mobile Mammography Unit.

Rite Aid's "Mother's Day Mammogram Program" is sponsored by the Rite Aid Women's Health Foundation, a non-profit, charitable foundation sponsored by Rite Aid Corporation. The program reaches out to women across the country who do not have health insurance or the money to pay for mammograms and helps connect them with healthcare providers that offer free screenings.

Beginning in April, mammogram brochures are available in Rite Aid stores across the country. The bi-lingual language brochure tells women how they can qualify for a free screening and urges them to call toll-free 1-888-RITENOW (1-888-748-3669) before May 29. In 1998, more than 15,000 women called the toll-free number and nearly 5,800 women qualified for free screenings.

The Cooper Hospital Mobile Mammography Unit was on hand at today's event and provided breast cancer screenings. The mobile unit is equipped with private exam rooms and is handicapped accessible. There is an all-female staff of nurse practitioners, radiology mammographers and women's health educators.

As part of New Jersey's share of the tobacco settlement Governor Whitman has proposed using \$2.7 million in the FY'00 budget for screening and early detection efforts for breast and prostate cancer. This will allow for the expansion of screening sites targeting African-American women below the age of 50 and it will represent the first time support has been provided for prostate cancer screening.

Governor Whitman also signed legislation that created the NJ Breast Cancer Research Fund which is administered by the NJ Commission on Cancer Research. The fund supports innovative breast cancer research projects, training fellowships and education conferences. The Department of Motor Vehicles has made available "Conquer Cancer" license plates. Proceeds from the licenses are given to the NJ Commission on Cancer Research.

New Jersey also works to educate women about the importance of early detection through the NJ Breast and Cervical Cancer Control initiative. Created in 1996, the initiative has provided nearly 11,000 eligible women with free mammograms.

Last year, approximately 6,200 New Jerseyans were diagnosed with breast cancer. An estimated 43,300 women and 400 men will die in the United States this year from breast cancer. Mortality rates have decreased in recent years thanks to increased screening and more effective treatments.