

Governor Phil Murphy

# First Lady Tammy Murphy Hosts 23rd Nurture NJ Family Festival, Held in Plainfield

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## ***Family Festival Series Has Served Over 15,000 Families Across New Jersey Since 2019***

**PLAINFIELD** – First Lady Tammy Murphy today hosted a Nurture NJ Family Festival at Plainfield High School, connecting hundreds families with essential resources from state, county, and local partners. Since 2019, these festivals have provided services to more than 15,000 families across New Jersey – offering support for expectant and new moms, health care, housing support, food assistance, child care and more.

“I am so proud to bring our Family Festival series to Plainfield as we continue our work to support families across New Jersey,” **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. “These events are about connecting parents and caregivers with the vital resources they need to thrive. With this festival, we’ve now served over 15,000 families statewide, and we remain committed to lifting up every community we visit. I’m deeply grateful to our partners and local leaders for helping make these events possible and supporting our mission to make New Jersey the safest, most equitable place in the nation to deliver and raise a baby.”

Plainfield is an incredibly diverse community, with 33.4% of its residents identifying as Black and 55.6% as Hispanic or Latino. Nearly 56% of households in Plainfield speak a language other than English at home. Plainfield ranks 5th of the cities with the highest rates of Black infant mortality, and 6th of those with the highest rates of Hispanic infant mortality.

Launched by First Lady Tammy Murphy in 2019, Nurture NJ is a statewide program committed to reducing the maternal mortality rates in New Jersey and ensuring equitable care among women and children of all races and ethnicities. In January 2021, the First Lady unveiled the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan, a blueprint to make New Jersey the safest, most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby.

Since Nurture NJ’s inception, New Jersey has made significant progress in maternal and infant health care and outcomes including: seeing over 70 pieces of maternal and infant health legislation signed by Governor Murphy; starting or completing over half of the Nurture NJ Strategic Plan recommendations; establishing the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority, tasked with overseeing the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center based in Trenton and will be the arm of government that continues the vital work of Nurture NJ past the Murphy Administration; and launching Family Connects NJ, the most robust-in-the-nation universal nurse home visitation program to ensure that every new parent is visited by a nurse in their home for free within two weeks after bringing home a new baby. Through these groundbreaking policies and programs, New Jersey has become a national leader in the fight against the maternal and infant health crisis.

The Plainfield Family Festival was hosted by Nurture NJ, the First Lady’s statewide maternal and infant health initiative, in partnership with Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Assemblywoman Linda Carter, Assemblyman James Kennedy, County of Union, City of Plainfield, Plainfield Public Schools, Atlantic Health System, Central Jersey Family Health Consortium, Hackensack Meridian Health, HOPES Community Action Partnership, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, Neighborhood Health, New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority, Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern NJ, RWJBarnabas Health, Second Street Youth Center, Inc., The Burke Foundation, and United Way of Greater Union County.

"This was a great opportunity to showcase the qualities of the Plainfield community at the same time families were connected with state, county and local resources to improve their quality of life," **said Senate President Nick Scutari.** "The Family Festivals offer residents the opportunity to learn about the availability of a wide range of resources in an event that is fun for families and children. I want to thank First Lady Tammy Murphy for her dedicated work in organizing festivals like this since 2018 and all the service organizations that have participated. They are a true service to Plainfield and other communities throughout the state."

"The Family First Festival is about meeting families where they are, bringing critical support, care, and resources directly into the community," **said Assemblywoman Linda Carter.** "I am proud to see this level of collaboration in our district, working together to build healthier, stronger future for all."

"Government works best when it meets people where they are—and the Plainfield Family Festival is an example of that important principle, whether it's facilitating access to benefits, promoting local programs, and more," **said Lourdes Leon, Chairwoman of the County of Union.** "The Union County Board of County Commissioners is proud to be supporting this fantastic event, and we're grateful to First Lady Tammy Murphy and her staff for working so hard to get critical government and community organizations under one roof for our residents."

"Plainfield is a city built on the strength of its families, and events like the Plainfield Family Festival remind us of the power of coming together as a community. I'm proud to welcome First Lady Tammy Murphy to our city for a day filled with joy, resources, and unity. This festival is more than just food and fun – it's about ensuring every family in Plainfield feels seen, supported, and celebrated," **said Plainfield Mayor Adrian O. Mapp.**

"On behalf of the Plainfield Board of Education and Administration, we are honored to collaborate with First Lady Tammy Murphy and the Nurture NJ initiative for the Plainfield Family Festival," **said Rashon K Hasan, Ed. S., Superintendent.** "This event reflects our shared commitment to supporting families by providing access to essential resources in a welcoming environment. By bringing together community partners, we aim to empower parents and caregivers, ensuring that every child in Plainfield has the opportunity to thrive."

"It is an honor to be part of this wonderful event to celebrate health, wellness, and the vibrant community we are all a part of," **said Heather Veltre, Chief Nursing Officer at Atlantic Health System's Overlook Medical Center.** "At Atlantic Health, we are committed to providing exceptional care and support to our patients and their families. There is so much we can do together to help promote wellness in our communities and that can start today."

"Central Jersey Family Health Consortium is proud to partner with First Lady Tammy Murphy for the Plainfield Family Festival and highlight NJ's universal home visiting program Family Connects NJ. This program compliments the numerous public health initiatives available by CJFHC and supported by the First Lady focused on childbearing families," **said Robyn D'Oria MA, RNC, APN, Chief Executive Officer of Central Jersey Family Health Consortium.** "Family Connects NJ is available to all birthing families regardless of income, insurance or immigration status and provides a free home visit by a registered nurse during the first two weeks after birth to ensure our NJ families have the best possible start on a healthy future. Family Connects NJ is currently available in 11 counties with Union County coming onboard in January 2027. We are grateful for her foresight and commitment to keep NJ families healthy and safe."

"Hackensack Meridian Health is proud to partner with First Lady Tammy Murphy and Nurture NJ to support the Family Festival in Plainfield," **said Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health.** "We recognize the critical need for access to maternal and infant health resources. This event embodies our commitment to providing comprehensive, high-quality care to all families, and we are dedicated to working alongside our community partners to address the disparities that impact the health and well-being of mothers and babies. Nurture NJ's innovative approach, combined with the dedication of local organizations, is making a real difference in the lives of New Jersey families."

"We are thrilled to be part of the Plainfield Family Festival," **said Joselyn Estevez-Vargas, VP of Early Childhood Programs at HOPES CAP, Inc.** "This event aligns perfectly with our mission to empower communities and provide essential services that foster growth and development. We look forward to connecting with families and sharing the resources we have to offer."

"Improving maternal and infant health is central to creating a healthier New Jersey and that is what the Family Festivals are all about. Everyone deserves access to affordable healthcare no matter who they are or where they live and we are grateful for the opportunity to continue our partnership with the Governor and First Lady. As New Jersey's

health solutions leader, Horizon is meeting our neighbors where they live and helping them achieve their best health through partnerships like this one," **said Wendy Morriarty, VP and Chief Medicaid Officer, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ.**

"Neighborhood Health is honored to participate in First Lady Tammy Murphy's Plainfield Family Festival," **said Dr. Kerri Powell, CEO of Neighborhood Health Services Corporation.** "This event is a celebration of community, connection, and care—values that are at the heart of our mission at NHSC. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, we are proud to provide best in class comprehensive, patient-centered primary medical care to individuals and families throughout Plainfield and beyond. Events like this help us reach even more residents with the resources and support they need to live healthier lives."

"Improving maternal and infant health in New Jersey starts with bringing people together—and that's exactly what these family festivals are all about," **said Lisa Asare, President and CEO of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority.** "Events like this help turn connection into action, ensuring every family in New Jersey has the support they need to raise a healthy and strong baby. It's a privilege to lead the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority and to carry forward the vision of Nurture NJ beyond the Murphy Administration, ensuring these festivals persist and create lasting progress for the families we serve."

"We are thrilled to be a part of the Family Festival in Plainfield. These events bring together critical health resources while creating a free and fun event for families to enjoy the day," **said Mariekarl Vilceus-Talty, MA, BSN, President & CEO of the Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey.**

"It's an honor for RWJBarnabas Health to be part of the Plainfield Family Festival, alongside First Lady Tammy Murphy and so many dedicated partners," **said Deirdre A. Blaus, Chief Administrative Officer, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset.** "Events like this create critical touchpoints for individuals who may not have regular access to health care, and we are proud to provide essential screenings, assessments and resources to help community members take charge of their health. Our mission to build and sustain a healthier New Jersey extends far beyond the walls of our hospitals – it's about meeting people where they are and ensuring they have the tools, support and care they need to thrive."

"Second Street Youth Center is so excited to have the opportunity to partner with First Lady Tammy Murphy in her effort to educate mothers and families," **said Leah Cates Executive Director Second Street Youth Center.** "Information brings knowledge and knowledge empowers our community. Today's Festival will provide access to much needed services, knowledge and empowerment."

"The Burke Foundation is proud to support the First Lady's Nurture NJ Family Festivals – joyful, community-centered events that bring vital resources directly to families," **said Atiya Weiss, Executive Director of the Burke Foundation.** "We're investing \$15 million over five years to improve maternal and child health in New Jersey because we know how critical it is for parents to feel supported, especially during pregnancy and early childhood. These festivals help build the village of care every family needs to thrive by connecting them with trusted services close to home. We're honored to be part of today's celebration in Plainfield."

"We are honored to welcome First Lady Tammy Murphy to the Plainfield Family Festival. This event is a celebration of community, connection, and care," **said Julienne Cherry, President & CEO, United Way of Greater Union County.** "At United Way of Greater Union County, we believe in the power of coming together to support our families, and this festival is a beautiful reflection of that mission. We look forward to an inspiring and joyful day with our neighbors and partners."

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