

## Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004  
TRENTON, NJ 08625

### NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor  
Steffanie Bell  
609-777-2600

RELEASE: September 15, 1999

### **Governor Tours Union County; Presents Checks to Local Projects and Teaches 4th Grade History**

Governor Christie Whitman today spent the day touring Union County with members of her Cabinet, stopping along the way to be a "substitute teacher" for fourth graders in Roselle Park and distributing checks to two local facilities. Later, the Governor visited a bilingual day care center in Plainfield, just one of the centers providing a pre-kindergarten program in one of the 30 Abbott districts. Whitman finished the day in Summit where she toured the downtown area.

The Governor kicked off the tour at the Robert Gordon Elementary School in Roselle Park. While teaching a fourth grade class she talked to students about school violence prevention and fielded questions from the students. She also added a personal touch to the New Jersey history that students will be learning as part of the fourth grade curriculum.

The Governor told students about a new program aimed at helping students prevent violence and keep it out of their schools and their communities. The V-Free initiative announced by the Governor last Tuesday creates a tip line, **1-877-624-8082**, for students to call when they are concerned about a potentially dangerous situation. A website, [www.njyouth.com/vfree](http://www.njyouth.com/vfree), is also available to provide resource information for students, teachers and parents. In addition, \$75,000 will be made available to help students get involved in the effort to prevent violence.

"By doing these things, I hope that state government can help you make the most of your time in school and have a great time growing up without having to worry about violence," Gov. Whitman told students.

In 1998, Gov. Whitman challenged more New Jerseyans to volunteer to help their fellow citizens, and throughout the year Gov. Whitman spent time each month reading for Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic. The organization provides audio tapes of books for those with vision problems. She added teaching to her list of volunteer activities in her 1999 State of the State address.

"I made a promise to add to my commitment to volunteerism by teaching the New Jersey history and government curriculum in one fourth grade class every month," the Governor said. "I have to comment on how well the class treated their substitute teacher!"

"In my class, I spoke about how one of my favorite things about being governor is that it gives me a chance to make a real difference in people's lives. Teaching a class each month is one small way of making a difference," Gov. Whitman said.

"But if I can set an example for others to follow, maybe they will volunteer - not only in schools, but in organizations and communities around New Jersey."

Gov. Whitman told the students that they, too, should strive to make New Jersey a better place to live, play, and go to school. "You don't have to be a governor to make a difference in people's lives. Each one of you can set an example for others to follow. You can work hard in school. You can be kind, tolerant, and demonstrate respect for all people," she told the students.

### **Governor Presents \$50,000 Check to Kenilworth Senior Center**

Later in the day, Gov. Whitman stopped to present a \$50,000 check to the Kenilworth Senior Center to purchase a new van to transport seniors. The money is part of the FY 2000 budget.

Kenilworth Senior Center is a social club of nearly 400 senior citizens. Activities provided by the center include dancing, card playing and field trips. The center also provides a referral service and tax preparation assistance.

"New Jersey's senior citizens have contributed so much to the strength of our state," the Governor said. "It's only right that we work our hardest to help seniors enjoy a good life."

Throughout her tenure as Governor, Christie Whitman has taken various steps to provide seniors with various living options and easy access to services. The NJEASE program streamlines access to senior citizen programs and provides "one-stop shopping" for seniors. A statewide number was set up as part of the program, so seniors can call and get information on particular services they may need by calling and reaching county based advisors.

In addition, the Governor froze property taxes for nearly 280,000 seniors. In 1996, Governor Whitman created the Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS). DHSS provides nursing home report cards, scoring the state's 332 licensed homes in the areas of nursing care, food service and overall environment.

### **Cranford Community Center Gets Neighborly Hand From Governor**

Gov. Whitman continued the day in Cranford where she presented a check for \$100,000 to local officials to help the town build a new community center. The town is also renovating and expanding its library.

The new center will boast a gymnasium, television room, senior quarters for reading and lounging and a kitchen. Local senior programs will also operate from the center. The center is scheduled for completion in late November. The project received an initial grant of \$75,000 in FY 1998 for start-up costs. The current grant of \$100,000 is included in the FY 2000 budget.

"You might say that this project will unite Cranford citizens from eight to eighty because it will offer a new home for the senior programs and for the township's recreational activities," the Governor said after handing the check to officials. "And the library expansion will guarantee that Cranford continues to offer the best educational resources for its citizens as it enters the new millenium."

## **Governor Tours Day Care Center in Plainfield Stresses Commitment to New Jersey Early Childhood Program**

Stressing her commitment to New Jersey's children, Governor Whitman toured the Plainfield Bilingual Day Care Center. The center is one of 344 providers who have been contracted to serve as Pre-K centers for three and four year olds in the Abbott Districts.

Exceeding the court's expectations in the Abbott v. Burke decision, Gov. Whitman in January announced that the state would provide full-day learning for three and four-year-olds in the 30 Abbott districts over the next 12 to 24 months. Under the Governor's vision, existing community-based childcare centers are being utilized to help provide the new program.

"Thanks to our unprecedented commitment to early childhood education, the youngest students in New Jersey's 30 urban school districts will be offered the kind of preschool experience that will give them the start in life that they deserve," said the Governor.

"By working with community providers-like the Plainfield Bilingual Day Care Center-we are acknowledging their dedication and the investment parents and providers have made in their communities," the Governor continued.

Gov. Whitman announced last week that every Abbot community center will be inspected for health, safety and program standards within the next 60 days. In order to be considered for the program, centers must provide one teacher and one aide for every fifteen students or one teacher and two aides for every 20 students. In addition, activities must be age- and developmentally- appropriate.

Also, existing teachers are expected to further their education, with the goal of obtaining their Child Development Associate or Certified Childcare Professional credentials within two years and a bachelor's degree and an N-3 teaching certificate within six years. The N-3 certification, for nursery to third grade, is being developed by the Department of Education.

To meet the needs of students the Governor's early childhood program provides that one family worker must be present for every 40 children to ensure that parents are involved and supporting student endeavors. A master teacher must also be provided for every 20 classrooms to ensure quality control over the curriculum. Over \$275 million will be available for this program in the FY 2000 budget combining state and federal funds to facilitate the program.

