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[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > 2013

## First Lady Mary Pat Christie Supports 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Day – Be Involved. Stay Involved™

Friday, September 20, 2013

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**Trenton, NJ** – Recognizing the importance of cultivating special bonds between parents and their children, First Lady Mary Pat Christie announced today that Drumthwacket will be illuminated in red and blue on Monday, September 23, to celebrate the 12th annual *Family Day – Be Involved. Stay Involved.™* This national initiative created by CASAColumbia,™ promotes simple acts of parental engagement as key ways to help prevent substance use in children and teens. Research shows that children with hands-on parents are far less likely to smoke, drink or use other drugs.

“Every day activities such as driving your kids to soccer practice, reading to young children before bedtime or enjoying frequent family dinners can have a lasting effect on children. Each of these moments offers an opportunity to communicate with your kids and to really listen to what’s on their mind,” said First Lady Mary Pat Christie, Honorary Chair of *Family Day in New Jersey*. “For the Governor and me, our favorite moments include attending our children’s sporting events and making a special priority to settle down at the evening dinner table together. We’ve found that this special time is an effective way to bond with our children and catch up from the hustle and bustle of life.”

Statistics show that three-fourths of high school students (75.6 percent, 10.0 million) have used addictive substances including cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana or cocaine. Nine out of 10 Americans who meet the medical criteria for addiction started smoking, drinking, or using other drugs before age 18. Consequently, preventing or delaying teens from using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs for as long as possible is critical to their health and safety.

CASA offers these tips about talking to your children about substance abuse:

Start talking with your kids at an early age and take time to explain things to your child in basic terms that are easily understandable. Make your child comfortable talking to you about “difficult” topics such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

Listen carefully to your child. Educate yourself so you can answer his or her questions. As children get older, their questions get more difficult, so you need to be prepared.

Peer pressure may play a pivotal role in a child’s decision to use drugs. However, encourage your child to be their own person and make their own decisions.

Tell your child the truth - that drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, may make them feel good for a while (by activating brain chemicals). Unfortunately, that feeling is brief and no one can know the true potency or lifetime effects of these substances.

Try to impress on your child the long-term consequences drinking, smoking or using other drugs may have on something they enjoy doing, such as sports, math or writing.

What began as a grassroots initiative in 2001 to inform parents about the benefits of frequent family dinners, has grown into a national movement that is supported by a network of partners and sponsors across the country. To learn more about Family Day, please visit [www.CASAFamilyDay.org](http://www.CASAFamilyDay.org) or find Family Day on Facebook and Twitter.

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