

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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### **Governor Whitman Visits FountainView Care Center; Highlights \$200,000 Program to Encourage More Eden Homes.**

Gov. Christie Whitman today highlighted a \$200,000 competitive grant program that will promote the Eden Alternative philosophy as an option for New Jersey's nursing homes. The program continues the Governor's commitment to quality of life issues facing New Jersey's seniors.

"Our seniors have dedicated themselves to making this a better state for all of us," said the Governor, while addressing seniors at the FountainView Care Center in Lakewood. "Through a commitment to the Eden Alternative, let's rededicate ourselves to giving them the best care and treatment we can provide."

Developed by Dr. William H. Thomas, the Eden Alternative philosophy seeks to create a more independent, community-like setting in nursing homes. This goal is accomplished by making companionship, spontaneity and variety part of resident's daily lives. Seniors are encouraged to take care of other living things such as plants and animals.

The Governor's commitment of up to \$200,000 to the Eden philosophy will provide competitive grants of between \$10,000 and \$20,000 to up to 10 nursing homes around the state who want to become Eden homes. The program will be funded through fines assessed on nursing homes that violate state regulations.

The Governor said Eden homes are revolutionizing how care is provided in nursing homes by shifting the focus from disease and disability to life. She said by engaging residents and empowering staff, homes that have shifted to the Eden Alternative have seen dramatic improvements in resident health and staff satisfaction.

Grant money will be used by nursing homes to help offset the start-up costs of implementing the Eden philosophy. These costs include staff training and development, supplies and equipment. Grants will also help homes purchase and care for animals that are part of the Eden philosophy.

"While these homes stand out from the crowd because of their lush greenery, the presence of cats, dogs and birds, and their inter-generational activities, the Eden Alternative is more than that," said Health and Senior Services Commissioner Len Fishman. "This philosophy recognizes that loneliness, helplessness and boredom are major problems in nursing homes and that there are important fundamental differences between the treatment of a condition and overall resident care."

The Eden alternative has been successfully implemented by some nursing homes in New York, Texas and both Carolinas. Dr. Thomas first implemented the Eden

philosophy in the nursing home he managed in upstate New York. The FountainView Care Center is the state's first Eden home. The Center expects to be fully "Edenized" by April 2000.

An advisory committee, made up of nursing home providers, resident advocates, and Eden experts will be formed to formulate grant criteria. Applications will be submitted to and reviewed by the Department of Health and Senior Services.

During her State of the State speech, Gov. Whitman pledged to provide choice in long-term care. The Governor dedicated \$60 million annually, to be phased-in over the next three years, for senior initiatives. Initiatives include caregiver assistance and additional funds for community based care alternatives.

Governor Whitman also made it even easier for seniors and their caregivers to get information about senior services around the state. The Governor unveiled a statewide number that anyone in the state can call to reach county based advisors. The NJEASE program began four years ago and originally featured separate numbers for counties offering the service. The new toll-free statewide number --- 1-877-222-3737 --- will make it easier for senior and their caregivers to receive information.

Recognizing that nursing homes will always be a long-term care option, the Governor created the Eden Alternative grant program. The Governor also created screening and counseling programs that will enable seniors to get information and counseling prior to making the decision to enter a nursing home.

