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First Lady Mary Pat Christie Names Danielle Bracco, Executive Director of Bonds of Courage, as 45th New Jersey Hero

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Westfield Resident Honored for Commitment to New Jersey's Veterans



Trenton, NJ — Honoring her work on behalf of New Jersey's veterans, First Lady Mary Pat Christie today named Danielle Bracco, Executive Director of Bonds of Courage, as the 6th New Jersey Hero of 2016 and 45th Hero overall. Located in Westfield, Bonds of Courage is a non-profit organization established in 2004 to provide a network of support to military members, veterans and their families by helping in areas such as employment, health, family issues, and finances.

"As we honor our veterans every November, it is also important to spotlight individuals like Danielle who is a tireless advocate for our military, veterans as well as

their families," said Mrs. Christie. "Her dedication and distinguished service on their behalf continues to shine a light on the courage and commitment of our military personnel, past and present, while working to meet some of their most important needs from counseling services to employment opportunities. For all of these efforts, I am proud to recognize Danielle Bracco as our next New Jersey Hero."

Bonds of Courage offers three major programs for troops and their families. *Building Bonds* provides a network among military families so they are never alone. Many times, veterans and those still serving, require help getting connected to existing programs. *Building Bonds* can help by intervening and making those important connections. The organization also provides a personalized *Mentoring Program* to veterans so that they can speak with experts who offer guidance on career opportunities, continuing education, physical and mental health, personal finance, home buying and much more. In addition, Bonds of Courage provides *Care Packages* and letters creating a connection between the community and active duty troops.

"I'm very honored to be recognized," said Danielle Bracco. "Bonds of Courage and its volunteers are a team dedicated to serving our service members, veterans and their families. I'm proud to accept this award on their behalf. For all of us, serving them is truly a reward in and of itself. I hope that many others can experience the satisfaction that we have from seeing the results of volunteering in support of these members of our community."

Since its inception, Bonds of Courage has developed relationships with 105 local troops within New Jersey, with approximately 500 family members. They have also engaged 2,000 active donors and volunteers and involved several thousand children and community members in troop support activities and education. Because of the growing needs of the veteran's community, Bonds of Courage recently expanded its program to provide items to organizations that serve homeless veterans and residents of the community's local veterans' memorial home.

Aside from her work with Bonds of Courage, Danielle Bracco serves as Program Director for the ProVetus mentor program and is also a volunteer with 102nd Cavalry Squadron's Family Readiness Group, supporting families' well-

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being and preparedness of the unit. Prior to this work, she was President and Vice President of the Parent Teacher Organization in Westfield as well as member and board member of the Westfield Junior Woman's Club. She also served with Rainbows, New Jersey, an organization that focuses on helping youth who have lost a loved one or experienced another traumatic event move through the grief process and learn to cope with life's challenges.

For more information about Bonds of Courage, visit <http://www.bondsofcourage.org/>

New Jersey Heroes is an initiative First Lady Mary Pat Christie began in 2010 to showcase the positive and unique ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey and their communities. To nominate a hero, go to newjerseyheroes.org and follow the application instructions to submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

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