

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: December 4, 1998

Governor Urges Personal Responsibility

Gov. Christie Whitman provides a weekly radio message to radio stations throughout the state. Each week, the message focuses on a different concern or event of interest to New Jerseyans.

This week the Governor discusses the importance of personal responsibility. She notes the lack of personal responsibility in our society as a crisis and offers two examples of programs in New Jersey that encourage personal responsibility in young people. The School Based Youth Services Program offers the message of personal responsibility to students in thirty school districts through services like family counseling and pregnancy prevention services. Another example is the World AIDS Day of Learning for New Jersey Youth. This event trains student leaders in HIV and AIDS prevention.

Attached is the text of the message.

The radio message can be accessed by calling the Governor's actuality line at 609-292-3249. It will be available today, beginning at noon, and will run through the weekend

Governor's Weekly Radio Address December 4, 1998 Personal Responsibility

I'm sure that everyone listening to my voice has their own definition of personal responsibility.

Some of you might say that it means being a good citizen, obeying the law, giving something back to your community, or setting a good example for others.

Maybe for you responsibility means doing the right thing by not passing the buck and being accountable for your actions.

Or you might say it means taking stock of your life and doing the very best you can do - for yourself and your loved ones.

Whatever your definition, the important thing is that we all strive to be responsible, whether it's interpersonally, on the job, or in the community.

When we're not personally responsible, we give up the one real power we all possess - the power to take full control of our lives.

That's why I have spoken across New Jersey about what I call the crisis of personal responsibility. I was motivated by some horrible incidents in this state - including reports of teenagers who killed pizza deliverymen just for the thrill of it, and a teen parent who flushed a newborn down the toilet.

But the examples don't have to be this dramatic. Two-thirds of college students admit to cheating. Fewer than half the people of voting age actually vote. And the list of examples goes on and on.

The lack of personal responsibility is the common thread in all of these examples. There's a lack of respect and concern for others, a refusal to distinguish right from wrong, or a failure to recognize that actions have consequences.

The real question is this: what do we do about it?

I'd like to offer two examples of programs in New Jersey that put personal responsibility high on the priority list for our young people.

One of these is the School Based Youth Services Program. Established 10 years ago, this program offers a message of personal responsibility to students in some 30 school districts across our state. Students who are at risk of dropping out of school, becoming pregnant, using drugs, or developing mental illness.

The School Based message is clear: "Take responsibility for your actions." And in this 10th anniversary year, we think the message is getting through: each year, 25,000 students take advantage of school based services such as family counseling and pregnancy prevention. Programs operate before, during, after school, and during the summer. Some offer their services on the weekend.

We have another example of personal responsibility in our World AIDS Day of Learning for New Jersey Youth. Earlier this week I joined with 700 high school peer educators and their advisors from across the state in a Day of Learning in Princeton. This annual event trains student leaders in HIV and AIDS prevention, and gives them an opportunity to hear in person from those living with HIV.

What a great way for kids to learn - firsthand - about making healthy, responsible choices, and then taking this message back to their peers and communities.

In programs like these, we're driving home the message of personal responsibility. Moreover, we're letting parents know that they have to do the same. Every time you take time to talk with your children about personal responsibility, you take a giant step in helping them grow to become better people and more responsible adults.

I encourage you to begin today to share the message of personal responsibility. And to make it your lifelong goal to teach your children - and others - that behavior matters, that character counts, and that actions have consequences.

