

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Participates in National Initiative to Spotlight America's Veterans

Thursday, November 10, 2016 Tags: [First Lady](#)



Trenton, NJ – In an expression of gratitude and support for the sacrifice and service of New Jersey's nearly 400,000 veterans, First Lady Mary Pat Christie announced today that Drumthwacket, the Governor's Official Residence in Princeton, will glow green on the evening of Veterans Day, Friday November 11. The recognition is part of the second annual *Greenlight a Vet* initiative, a program created to generate greater visibility and appreciation of America's veterans by changing one light in homes and businesses to green.

"It's often difficult to distinguish our nation's veterans without their uniforms," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "That's why it's so important that we take a moment this Veterans

Day to show our appreciation of their courage, service and sacrifice by changing one light in our homes to green to symbolize our heartfelt thanks and support. Many of these veterans are our relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues who have represented the ideals of freedom and democracy to people across the globe. The Governor and I encourage all New Jerseyans to join us in honoring all of our brave veterans."

According to Syracuse University's Institute for Military Families, there are 22.5 million veterans in the United States. More than 2.5 million Americans have served in uniform since 2001. In New Jersey, as of September 2016, there are 398,576 veterans, of which 33,197 are women.

Through her New Jersey Heroes Foundation, Mrs. Christie has honored several organizations for their efforts to support current military members and veterans across the state.

- Rod Hirsch, Executive Director of Operation Shoebox New Jersey: When Rod was an Eagle Scout in 1969, he chose to do a service project, sending care packages to his friends serving in Vietnam and other troops overseas. Thirty-six years later, Operation Shoebox New Jersey was born as a simple, yet meaningful gesture of a care package for service members far away from their family and friends. Since 2005, Operation Shoebox NJ has shipped more than 100,000 total packages to U.S. military members at posts in the Middle East as well as Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan. The contents are donated by individuals and companies large and small in New Jersey. Several times a year, volunteers give their time to sort donated supplies and then pack boxes to be shipped overseas. For more information on Operation Shoebox, visit www.opshooboxnj.org.
- Michael Ricci, Founder of Operation Beachhead in Sea Girt: Ricci, a combat-decorated veteran who served in Vietnam and sustained permanent injuries, began Operation Beachhead three years ago as a means to bring adventurous and challenging therapy activities to disabled U.S. military veterans. Activities provide a structured, yet unique therapeutic experience for courageous New Jerseyans. The program has grown to include individuals with disabilities. Ricci, who has a Master's Degree in Counseling, has guided veterans for over 30 years on issues of

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substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder and has been active with disabled veterans organizations throughout the years. For more information about Operation Beach Head, visit <http://opbeachhead.org/>.

- Jack McDonald, President of GI Tickets Foundation: This New Jersey non-profit organization was established by McDonald as he entered his junior year of high school in 2011. In 2013, he took a step back from the charity to focus on his transition from high school to college. With that transition complete, he assembled a team of Villanova and University of Penn students to help run the organization with the mission to send active duty soldiers and their families to major sporting events and concerts as a 'thank you' for their service. GI Tickets works with monetary donors, season ticket holders, professional teams, and Fortune 500 companies to utilize unused tickets and tailor custom outings by providing premium seats and creating personal experiences with donors and the soldiers they serve. For more information about the GI Tickets Foundation visit: <http://www.giticketsfoundation.org/>.

Additionally, through her New Jersey Heroes Foundation, Mrs. Christie established the New Jersey Heart of a Hero Scholarship program as an additional means to help New Jersey's military men and women make their higher education and career goals a reality. New Jersey Heroes assisted 40 dedicated military men and women advance their career objectives by providing a total of \$250,000 in scholarship awards to these deserving heroes.

To share your support of America's veterans, take a picture of your greenlight and post it using the hashtag #greenlightavet. For more information, visit <http://www.greenlightavet.com/>.

Photo Caption: Drumthwacket honors the nation's veterans by going green.

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