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## First Lady Mary Pat Christie Participates in National Read for the Record Campaign

Thursday, October 7, 2010 • Tags: [Education](#)

### Promotes Literacy to Give Young Children a Successful Start

**Trenton, NJ** – Participating in Jumpstart’s “Read for the Record” campaign, First Lady Mary Pat Christie visited the Douglass Development Disabilities Center of Rutgers University today to read the Ezra Jack Keats book *The Snowy Day* to an integrated class serving both preschool and kindergarten age children having autism spectrum disorder and their typically developing peers. The “Read for the Record” program, in collaboration with the Pearson Foundation, the nonprofit arm of Pearson, an international education and media company, brings children and adults together to read the same book, on the same day, in homes and communities nationwide.

“Enlightening children through the power of reading helps to instill pride and confidence in young lives. For a child with an autism spectrum disorder, it can open doors to learning important skills,” said Mrs. Christie. “I applaud the work of Jumpstart and the Pearson Foundation for promoting early literacy and the world of books to preschool children. Through their efforts, thousands of preschool children across the nation are off to a successful start in school and on a firmer path to future success.”

After reading to the class, Mrs. Christie distributed story books to the children that were donated by the Pearson Foundation.

During last year’s highly successful “Read for the Record” campaign, 2,019,752 children heard *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* read aloud to them. Since 2006, \$6.2 million has been raised through the initiative to provide books and supplies for children in need. Almost 800,000 books have been donated to children in low-income neighborhoods nationally.

Jumpstart is a nonprofit organization that specializes in the field of early childhood education. The organization recruits and trains thousands of college students and community volunteers to work with preschool children in low-income neighborhoods, helping them to develop the language, literacy, and social skills they need to succeed in school and in life. This year alone, Jumpstart volunteers are serving more than one million hours with 13,000 preschool children in more than 60 communities across America.

Mrs. Christie also met with officials from Douglass Development Disabilities Center to discuss autism spectrum disorders and the work of the center. The Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center serves children ages 3 to 21 who are diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. The Center was established by the Board of Governors at Rutgers in 1972 and is affiliated with the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology.

Autism is a spectrum of disorders that are biologically based and affect the development and functioning of a person’s verbal and non-verbal communication skills, social interactions and behavior patterns.

According to the CDC, 1 in 166 children is diagnosed with autism nationally. In New Jersey, it is estimated that between 12,000 and 18,000 people have an autism spectrum disorder.

First Lady Mary Pat Christie promotes the power of reading during her visit to the Douglass Development Disabilities Center of Rutgers University to mark Jumpstart’s “Read for the Record” campaign.

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