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## First Lady Mary Pat Christie Promotes Importance of Research to Improving Life Opportunities for People with Down Syndrome

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**Trenton, NJ** - Encouraging support of Down syndrome cognitive research and expanded life opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome, First Lady Mary Pat Christie applauded the revolutionary work that Research Down Syndrome (RDS) organization in funding research and treatments for people with Down syndrome. Mrs. Christie hosted a reception and dinner at Drumthwacket to help advance the work of the non-profit group. Guests attending the event included Governor Christie, former Congressman Mike Ferguson, TV host Geraldo Rivera and Dr. Roger Reeves of the John Hopkins University School of Medicine.

"Today, the occurrence of Down syndrome remains a serious health concern, appearing in about 1 in 700 births," said Mrs. Christie, Honorary Chair of the event. "As parents, we always want the best for our children, and the important work of RDS is helping families address the unique challenges of having a family member with Down syndrome. Through this vital research, quality of life improvements for thousands of individuals with Down syndrome and their families here in New Jersey and across the country are being advanced, helping them to live more independent and fulfilling lives."

Mrs. Christie was presented with an award by RDS for her commitment to the cause of Down syndrome research.

Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal anomaly in humans, the result of having 47 chromosomes instead of 46. The impairment causes delays in physical and intellectual development that usually range from mild to moderate in nature. An estimated three million people worldwide have Down syndrome, including approximately 400,000 in the United States. Life expectancy for people with Down syndrome has more than doubled in the past twenty five years and now averages 55 to 60 years.

Researchers are making progress treating the cognitive issues associated with Down syndrome. Roger Reeves, Ph.D., professor at John Hopkins University School of Medicine and member of the RDS Scientific Advisory Board has noted that a number of potential targets for the development of drugs that will impact learning and memory have been identified in the last few years. These new developments bring the promise of biomedical therapies for improving memory, learning and communications, which will help individuals with Down syndrome live healthier, more active lives.

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