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First Lady Mary Pat Christie Honors Operation Shoebox New Jersey Founder Rod Hirsch as a New Jersey Hero

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Continues Administration's Season of Service by Making Care Packages for U.S. Military Service Members

Trenton, NJ – As a young Eagle Scout Rod Hirsch began his commitment to service through a community project creating care packages for soldiers in Vietnam. Thirty-six years later, he founded Operation Shoebox New Jersey, a volunteer organization dedicated to collecting donated supplies for care packages to be assembled and shipped to U.S. soldiers based in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. For his steadfast support of America's fighting men and women, First Lady Mary Pat Christie today named Rod Hirsch her ninth New Jersey Hero. During her visit, Mrs. Christie also joined the supply line to help make care packages for U.S troops as part of the Christie Administration's Season of Service.

"The simple gesture of a care package means the world to a service member who is far away from family and friends. I admire Rod so much for recognizing a need, taking action and making a difference in the lives of our military personnel every day," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "His service and commitment to Operation Shoebox make me proud to name him our next New Jersey Hero."

Since 2005, Operation Shoebox NJ has shipped more than 50,000 total packages to U.S. military members at posts in the Middle East as well as Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan. The contents of all 50,000 boxes were generously donated by individuals and companies large and small in New Jersey

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Several times a year, volunteers ranging from veterans and church groups to corporations and school children give their time to sort donated supplies and then pack boxes to be shipped overseas. Items needed include lip balm, sun block, moist wipes, bars of soap, small bottles of shampoo, non-aerosol deodorant, powdered drink mixes, cereal/snacks, granola bars, individual packets of instant oatmeal, popcorn and hot chocolate, small cans of fruit with pop tops, gum, candy, athletic socks and batteries.

"I am honored to be recognized by New Jersey First Lady Mary Pat Christie as a New Jersey Hero," said Rod Hirsch, founder and executive director of the non-profit corporation. "However, this award is not about one person. It has been earned by thousands of volunteers over the past seven years who have worked hard and remain deeply committed to supporting US troops deployed overseas. Without their participation and dedication, Operation Shoebox New Jersey would not have been able to maintain its supply line of personal care packages overseas."

The Season of Service was inspired by November's New Jersey Hero, 8-year-old Aidan McManus of Burlington Township for his compassion and commitment to feed the needy in his community. Governor Christie and First Lady Mary Pat Christie announced the initiative on Thanksgiving Eve. Since then, cabinet officials have been volunteering and highlighting service opportunities throughout the Garden State and will continue through the end of December.

To submit the name of a deployed soldier to receive a care package from Operation Shoebox, visit http://opshoeboxnj.org/ufm/opshoebox_list.html

To thank a military member for their service to our country, visit http://opshoeboxnj.org/ufm/opshoebox_list.html.

Children can also send a thank you message by coloring their own Hero Card at <http://opshoeboxnj.org/pdf/SHOEBOXCARD.pdf>

For more information on Operation Shoebox, visit www.opshoeboxnj.org

New Jersey Heroes is an initiative of First Lady Mary Pat Christie that showcases the positive ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey in their own unique ways. To nominate a hero, go to <http://newjerseyheroes.org> and follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

Press Contact:
Michael Drewniak
Kevin Roberts
609-777-2600



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Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000