

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Leads Alliance of First Spouses Supporting National Light the Way Initiative in Recognition of the Importance of Down Syndrome Cognitive Research

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Drumthwacket to Shine Blue on Tuesday, March 21 to Mark World Down Syndrome Day



Trenton, NJ – Continuing her commitment to bring greater attention to the groundbreaking research advances being made to empower individuals with Down syndrome, First Lady Mary Pat Christie announced she is being joined by 33 other First Spouses from around the country who are participating in this year's 2017 *Light the Way* campaign to help raise awareness in their respective states. This year's theme for World Down Syndrome Day is "We Care."

"I am pleased to once again lead the *Light the Way* initiative, and to have so many First Spouses creatively participating in the program this year to show 'We Care'," said

First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "During my term as First Lady, I've truly been inspired by the multitude of outstanding privately led initiatives that make a difference in communities across our state and nation. Today, as a result of non-profit groups such as the LuMind Research Down Syndrome Foundation, many cutting edge advances are occurring that will increase life opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome and I am proud our participation is contributing to this effort."

Additionally, Governor Christie has proclaimed March 21, 2017 as Down Syndrome Day in New Jersey. Later in the evening, Drumthwacket, the Governor's official residence in Princeton, NJ, will be illuminated in blue to symbolize Mrs. Christie's support of Down syndrome cognitive research.

Among the participants in the 2017 *Light the Way* campaign are First Spouses and Governors from Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming and Virginia. The First Spouses will be demonstrating their support, for example, by lighting a prominent state monument blue, issuing a proclamation in support of Down syndrome, wearing blue or tying a blue bow around their State House door.

March 21 is particularly meaningful to the *Light the Way* campaign because Down syndrome results from the presence of three copies of chromosome 21. Down syndrome is the most common chromosomal disorder. It affects over 400,000 Americans with approximately 6,000 babies born with Down syndrome each year. Down syndrome occurs in approximately one in every 691 births.

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Since the inception of the *Light the Way* initiative in 2011, there have been numerous breakthroughs in Down syndrome cognition research. Advances include discovering connections between Down syndrome and Alzheimer's disease. Moreover, the research funded by the LuMind Research Down Syndrome Foundation may also hold promise for preventing or delaying cognitive decline in the Alzheimer's disease community. Additionally, under the guidance of former Chief Scientific Officer, Michael Harpold, Ph.D., the Foundation has created a pipeline of research discoveries that has led to several clinical trials, including an innovative partnership with the National Institutes of Health and AC Immune.

For more information, visit www.lumindrds.org or #LumindrdsCARES

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