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# First Lady Mary Pat Christie Recognizes Yolanda Gadson Of The "I Have a Dream" Foundation For Her Commitment To Empower Newark Youth To Pursue Their Educational Aspirations

Wednesday, May 31, 2017 Tags: [First Lady](#)



Trenton, NJ – First Lady Mary Pat Christie today honored Yolanda Gadson, executive director of the Newark Chapter of the "I Have a Dream Foundation" as her 48<sup>th</sup> New Jersey Hero. Gadson works to support and empower students in Newark to achieve their educational goals through comprehensive programming and services provided by the Foundation from early elementary school through high school and beyond.



**CAPTION:** Yolanda Gadson, executive director of the Newark Chapter of the "I Have a Dream" Foundation, is the 48<sup>th</sup> New Jersey Hero to be named by First Lady Mary Pat Christie.

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"Yolanda's commitment and vision are truly creating life changing opportunities for the young people of Newark," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "As someone who herself experienced life's hardships early on, Yolanda is an inspiration and through the 'I Have A Dream' Foundation, she is nurturing our future generation to achieve all they can they can be. I am proud to make Yolanda Gadson our third New Jersey Hero of 2017 and 48<sup>th</sup> Hero overall."

With more than 25 years of experience working with nonprofit organizations committed to empowering youth and families, Yolanda Gadson's vision is that all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, should be given the opportunity to complete high school, go on to post-secondary education, and achieve their full potential while becoming productive global citizens.

"As the Executive Director of 'I Have A Dream' Foundation – Newark, NJ, I am incredibly humbled and honored to be among the Heroes of New Jersey serving those in need of support, direction or a simple act of kindness," said Yolanda Gadson. "I grew up in poverty and witnessed the struggles of my mother working three jobs as a domestic. But poverty never owned me. I am one of the many vested partners supporting the children and families of New Jersey."

Newark's "I Have a Dream" Foundation was founded in 2006, as part of the national organization which was founded in 1981 by businessman and philanthropist Eugene Lang. The Foundation was created to provide children in underserved and under-resourced communities with the opportunity to achieve their dream of a college education and a path towards a successful and fulfilling future. Lang called the children *Dreamers* to encourage and inspire them to have their own dreams and to fight hard to achieve them.

"In keeping with Mr. Lang's vision for all children to have access to higher learning, it is my mission to make sure the *Dreamers* of Newark, New Jersey becomes one of the many children living in poverty to achieve a college degree and break the cycle. Our Newark *Dreamers* aspire to be doctors, lawyers, mechanics, law enforcers, programmers and other fields of industry that will serve New Jersey and our country in the future," added Gadson.

Upon high school graduation, the students enrolled in the Newark program receive guaranteed tuition assistance for higher education and continued support during their college journey.

Some of the Foundation's current programs include: The *College Path Program*, which is a four-year plan that provides students with a road map to successfully complete high school and to make well-informed decisions. It also helps them gain access to college or an accredited trade school. In addition, the *Youth Identified Mentor Program (YIM)* involves students personally identifying and selecting a college-readiness mentor to guide them through successful completion of high school and entry to college or technical school. Another initiative, the *Work is Success Internship Program (WISIP)*, is an eight-week work preparation program in which the students receive 40 hours of training aimed at preparing them to work in an office environment. Following the training, the students participate in a paid summer internship in the Newark area. Additionally, there is an online tutoring platform, *Mentored*, that provides students one to one academic support in all subjects including test prep and foreign languages. *Dreamers* work with subject-matter experts called "Mentors" to complete assignments and strengthen their skills.

The "I Have a Dream" Foundation has served nearly 18,000 young people in over 200 programs nationwide. Furthermore, 90 percent of dreamers graduate high school in comparison to 74 percent of low-income students nationally and they are over three times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than their low-income peers

For more information about the "I Have a Dream" Foundation, visit [www.ihaveadreamnewark.org/](http://www.ihaveadreamnewark.org/)

New Jersey Heroes is an initiative First Lady Mary Pat Christie began in 2010 to showcase the positive and unique ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey and their communities. To nominate a hero, go to <http://newjerseyheroes.org> and follow the application instructions to submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

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