

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Announces Ornaments Created by Students at Camden's UrbanPromise Academy to Adorn New Jersey's 2014 Christmas Tree In Washington, D.C.

Thursday, November 20, 2014 Tags: [First Lady](#)



Trenton, NJ – First Lady Mary Pat Christie today announced that ornaments designed by high school students from Camden's UrbanPromise Academy will decorate New Jersey's Christmas Tree at the 2014 National Christmas Tree display in Washington, D.C. this December. Teaching artist Robert Kelleher led the 10th-12th grade students in the design and creative process. The ornaments will adorn New Jersey's Christmas Tree along the Pathway of Peace in Presidents Park.

"These beautiful stained glass ornaments crafted by UrbanPromise Academy students truly demonstrate the spirit of hope and promise they have for the future" said

First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "The Governor and I are so proud these works of art, which reflect the Garden State's cultural diversity and spirituality, will be showcased on the national stage this holiday season."

Each year, local artists and youth groups are chosen to create 24 ornaments to be featured on their respective state tree for the National Christmas Tree display in Washington, DC. This year's ornaments depict the diversity found in New Jersey and in the city of Camden. Studying Marc Chagall's "Peace Window" at United Nations World Headquarters, students worked with themes of stained glass and universal symbols of peace and spirituality from many cultures and religions to create their artwork.

"UrbanPromise and our high school students are so honored to have the opportunity to create ornaments for the National Christmas Tree," said Executive Director Jodina Hicks. "Affording our teens the chance to create something on behalf of the State of New Jersey and for the White House is a gift to our young artists; and giving the chance to display the beauty of and from Camden is a gift to our community."

UrbanPromise Academy is a private, Christian high school that was founded in 1997 to fulfill the needs of Camden students who have not met their academic potential in traditional school settings. The Academy offers Camden youth a unique schooling opportunity with a low teacher to student ratio, a family-style learning environment, an emphasis on community service, and experiential and expeditionary learning.

"We are so delighted that UrbanPromise Academy has been selected by First Lady Mary Pat Christie to craft one-of-a-kind Christmas Tree ornaments for the New Jersey State Christmas Tree in Washington, D.C.," said Mayor Dana Redd. "UrbanPromise plays such a significant role in our community as they offer developmental support services to many of our Camden youth. As the holiday season approaches, it presents the opportunity to reflect on the true meaning of the season – peace, hope and caring for one another. It pleases me to know that these ornaments were influenced by these concepts and as a result, will convey a message of peace to all who see them."

More information about UrbanPromise can be found at www.urbanpromiseusa.org

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The National Christmas Tree Lighting, which began on Christmas Eve in 1923, is one of America's oldest holiday traditions. At the time, President Calvin Coolidge lit a Christmas tree in front of 3,000 spectators on the Ellipse in President's Park. Since then, each succeeding President has carried on the tradition of what now has become a month-long event presented by the National Park Foundation and National Park Service.

Through the years, the annual event has evolved and in 1954, a "Pathway of Peace," 56 smaller, decorated trees representing all 50 states, five territories, and the District of Columbia were planted surrounding the National Christmas Tree. The 92nd National Tree Lighting Ceremony is scheduled for Thursday December 4, 2014 on the White House Ellipse at President's Park. For more information, see <http://thenationaltree.org/>



EDITORS NOTE: Photos of ornaments created by Urban Promise Academy students are attached. Photo credit should be given to UrbanPromise Academy.

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