

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Announces Recipients of Third Annual Heart of a Hero Educational Scholarship

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Ten Servicemen and Women Receive \$5,000 Award for Post Secondary and Vocational Studies

Trenton, NJ - First Lady Mary Pat Christie has announced the recipients of the third annual New Jersey Heroes *Heart of a Hero* Scholarship. Each of the ten recipients will receive a \$5,000 scholarship award to help pursue a post-secondary education or vocational training. Mrs. Christie established the program as another resource to help New Jersey's military men and women make their higher education and career goals a reality.

"Our veterans, past and present, are an extension of our greater New Jersey family," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "So, I'm honored that through New Jersey Heroes, we are once again providing *Heart of a Hero* scholarships to ten deserving servicemen and women from throughout the state. As you can see, age makes no difference in pursuing educational and career goals. In fact, this year's recipients range from 25 to 64. The Governor and I offer our sincere congratulations and heartfelt thanks to these outstanding New Jerseyans for their commitment and service to our state and nation."

The ten New Jersey Heart of a Hero Scholarship recipients are:

Staff Sergeant Saul J. Bautista, U.S. Army/NJ Army National Guard (Newark, Essex): In 2004, in the midst of two wars, 28 year-old Saul Bautista opted to forego college. Through his experiences at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center's Level 1 Trauma Center in Germany, he was motivated to pursue a degree in medicine. A volunteer in the emergency department at University Hospital, Saul will be completing a dual Masters Degree in Biomedical Science and a Masters Degree in Public Health at Rutgers Graduate School of Biomedical Science in the fall. A Newark resident, Saul wants to be a role model for city youth to demonstrate that through hard work, you can attain your goals.

1st Lt. John Beddoe, U.S. Army Reserve, 29 (Demarest, Bergen): Through his volunteer service as an Ambulance and Rescue Corps member, 29-year old John Beddoe discovered a calling to provide lifesaving care to those in need. As a result, he is entering the Registered Nurse Program at Mountainside Hospital School of Nursing this fall and plans to specialize as an Acute Care Nurse Practitioner. John is dedicated to serving others as a nurse, a Soldier, and as an active member of his community.

1st Lt. Jessica Evelyn Domincovitch, U.S. Air Force (Mount Laurel, Burlington): Recognizing the enormous sacrifice and stress placed on military members and their families, 26-year old Jessica Domincovitch is pursuing a Masters Degree in Social Work and eventually plans to become a Licensed Clinical Social Worker/Active Duty Mental Health Officer in the Air Force. Currently, she is a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, providing immediate care and support to victims of sexual assault. Her ultimate career goal is to provide counseling and therapy to military members and their dependents both at home and in the field.

Staff Sergeant E-5 Katie Megan Grogan, U.S. Air Force/NJ Air National Guard (Jackson, Ocean): At a very young age, 25-year-old Katie Grogan knew she wanted to become a nurse and help others. Having served six years active duty and now serving in the NJ Air National Guard, Katie volunteers at the Children's Specialized Hospital in Toms River in the long term care and outpatient units. There, she is active organizing events and visiting with children whose families could no longer provide care for them due to their illnesses as well as working with children who have severe

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disabilities. With this scholarship, she will be studying Nursing in the fall at Ocean County Vocational Technical School.

Colonel Philip Daniel Jones, U.S. Army Reserve (Ringoos, Hunterdon): A 52-year-old Army Reservist, Philip Jones recently retired after 30 years of military service. Since 2012, he and his therapy dog Jack have been volunteering their time to those in need by logging over 100 visits to many different places including hospitals and universities. His career goal is to provide counseling services for pilots, airline personnel and military veterans. He will be studying Mental Health Counseling this fall at Rider University.

Army Specialist E 4, Eugene Marsh, U.S. Army (Pennington, Mercer): This 64-year-old Vietnam veteran has overcome many adversities in his life -- enduring racism, homelessness and unemployment. As a young teenager, he was the first African-American student to integrate an all-white high school in 1965. During his service, he earned distinguished military medals including a Bronze Star for Valor in Combat, the U.S. Army Medal and Vietnam Veteran Medal. This past May, he fulfilled a lifelong dream by earning his Bachelor's Degree in Liberal Arts from Rider University. He is currently enrolled there again to pursue a Masters Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Psychology so that he can help returning veterans reintegrate into society.

Senior Airman E-4 Johandy Martinez, U.S. Air Force Reserve (Union City, Hudson): Currently deployed overseas, 25 year-old Johandy Martinez grew up struggling to maintain a healthy lifestyle and learning English as a second language. He found a passion for teaching when he visited his wife's special education students, many of whom were dealing with similar difficulties in their lives. He became the first person in his family to graduate college when he completed his B.A. in Health and Exercise Science. Today, he is working to complete a Master's Degree in Physical Education and Sports Pedagogy from Manhattanville College and plans to focus his work on at-risk youth.

Corporal E-4 Adolph Mayo, U.S. Marine Corps (Jersey City, Hudson): Adolph Mayo, a 58-year-old US Marine Corps disabled veteran, served his country in Vietnam. Currently, he spends much of his time working with veterans in his community as a Hudson County Veteran Liaison volunteer. Through his efforts, he is helping to ensure that all local veterans are aware of the benefits and services available to them as they transition to civilian life. Adolph is currently a Business major at Jersey City University.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Joseph Mack Mota, U.S. Navy (Lacey Twp, Ocean): This 31-year-old Navy veteran has been actively involved with Veteran Student Affairs while attending Old Dominion University. That experience has encouraged his pursuit of a degree in Higher Education with a particular focus on student veterans. In 2014, he was awarded the Old Dominion University Civic Engagement Medal for most outstanding service in support of service and civic engagement.

Technical Sergeant Ryan C. Munoz, U.S. Air Force (Bordentown, Burlington): Currently on active duty, 27-year-old Ryan Munoz has endured two combat deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan and thousands of miles of convoying. As a young boy, he developed a great passion in all things aviation, influenced by his adoptive father who was also in the Air Force. Ryan has an extensive history of volunteerism, working with groups ranging from the Special Olympics to relief organizations focused on Hurricane Sandy rebuilding and recovery. He is working on his Masters Degree in Securities at Angelo State University as well as his Private Pilot's Certification.

For last year's recipients, the *Heart of a Hero* Scholarship is helping to attain educational and career goals, including the completion of a Master of Science Degree in Criminal Justice, a Master of Science, Environmental Policy and Management degree as well as relieving the debt burden incurred by attending Graduate School experienced by several recipients

"This scholarship has set me up for my future transition from the military to the civilian sector," said 2013 scholarship recipient U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant Robert Abato of McGuire AFB, "I want to thank the New Jersey Heroes organization for all its help and support."

To be considered for the *Heart of a Hero* Scholarship, applicants were required to meet several program criteria: 1) be a United States citizen and New Jersey resident; 2) be a high school graduate or have a high school equivalency diploma (GED); 3) served in the military; 4) submit a letter stating goals and how the scholarship will be used; 5) enroll as a student at an accredited college/university or a vocational training school in pursuit of a degree for the 2014-2015 school year; 6) demonstrate a commitment to volunteerism and community contribution, in the spirit of New Jersey Heroes.

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

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