

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Recognizes Eric Fuchs-Stengel for his Commitment to Improving Access to Healthy Foods for Those in Need

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Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO) Founder is 5th New Jersey Hero of 2014



Trenton, NJ - First Lady Mary Pat Christie has honored Eric Fuchs-Stengel, Executive Director of the Mahwah Environmental Volunteers Organization (MEVO) for his commitment to improving the lives of local residents by increasing access to healthy, fresh foods through the organization's *Farm to Live* program. He is the 29th Garden State resident to be named a New Jersey Hero since December 2010.

"Eric's love for the outdoors inspired a tremendous commitment to improve and enrich the environment around him, creating MEVO when he was just 16," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie. "Through his work, Eric recognized a need for greater access to healthy, fresh foods and created the *Farm to Live* program to help low-income families from local communities get nutritious fruits and vegetables. I am amazed by how this young man is making a difference and I am proud to name Eric as our 5th New Jersey Hero of the year."

MEVO's *Farm to Live* program establishes and maintains natural, local, organic farms on unused land in the suburbs of New Jersey and New York. Produce is grown through environmentally-conscious means — without chemical pesticides, herbicides, or fertilizers and without fossil fuel powered tools to maintain their plants. The program relies entirely on in-kind donations for materials and

supplies. Volunteers and interns maintain the farms, with the produce grown distributed to low-income and needy families in the surrounding communities and local foodbanks.

The community garden visited by Mrs. Christie is located on land donated by Bergen Community College. In addition to fruits and vegetables, this site contains 15 honeybee hives, which produce local honey. To date, MEVO has grown 130 pounds of vegetables and fruits and 45 pounds of pumpkins at the Bergen Community College community farm. Overall, *Farm to Live* has harvested over 700 pounds of vegetables in three years.

Founded in 2008, MEVO is a grassroots youth organization operated by student volunteers from high school and college. In addition to *Farm to Live*, it's other primary program is *Earth Crew*, which carries out weekly service events to improve and enhance the environment, including planting trees, **distributing compact fluorescent light bulbs** to reduce CO2 emissions, **hiking trail restorations** and **trash clean-ups**. MEVO has organized over 120 volunteer events and has mobilized over 1,500 volunteers to carry out over 23,000 hours of environmental service.

"What may be the outstanding part of MEVO is that in just six years a group of grassroots high school students with



very little to no monetary support has grown into a nationally recognized professional environmental organization and is receiving recognition from Mrs. Christie and the New Jersey Heroes Foundation," said Eric Fuchs-Stengel. "This is only possible thanks to the thousands of collective supporters who have dedicated their time, money, tools, homes, property, land, education, and more to helping MEVO take action in our communities."

"Being named a New Jersey Hero means a lot. It recognizes that the environmental and sustainable future MEVO is working to create is not only important but worthy of duplication and of growing much

larger. The vast serious environmental problems in the world today continue to exist not because of lack of ways to take action but because of inaction. We strive to inspire and empower action!"

Eric Fuchs-Stengel and MEVO have received many awards, among them: the 2014 The National Jefferson Award for Public Service; the 2014 New Jersey Governors Jefferson Award for Public Service Environmental Stewardship; the 2013 Governors' Environmental Excellence Award from the New Jersey DEP; the 2012 Russell Berrie Award for Making a Difference,; and the 2012 Organization of the Year Award from the Mahwah Regional Chamber of Commerce.

To volunteer, support or partner with MEVO, contact Eric at ericifs@mevoearth.org or visit www.mevoearth.org

Mrs. Christie launched the New Jersey Heroes program in December 2010 as a way to showcase 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 and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

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