

First Lady Mary Pat Christie Honors Roots & Wings Founder Irene DeGrandpre For Her Commitment to Empowering Foster Care Youth

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Trenton, NJ – Honoring a commitment to empowering the self-sufficiency of at-risk youth, First Lady Mary Pat Christie today named Irene DeGrandpre, founder of Roots & Wings, as her 23rd New Jersey Hero. Through her experiences as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer, DeGrandpre was motivated to help young adults who age out of the foster care system, who are often without a place to live, or who have an insufficient education and no job. In 1999, she created Denville-based Roots & Wings, a nonprofit organization to address these needs.

“Irene’s story is truly inspiring,” said Mrs. Christie. “Recognizing the enormous needs of these young

adults, she established a nurturing environment that provides mentoring, education opportunities, and financial and life skills training. It is this support that is making a difference in the lives of these young people, helping them become self-sufficient and responsible community members. I am proud to name Irene as our next New Jersey Hero.”

Roots & Wings began as a community-based, volunteer organization that has grown into a well established social services agency serving young adults ages 17 through 25 who have experienced foster care or other out of home placements at some point during their lives. The agency offers two comprehensive Safe Housing and Case Management Programs with tracks for youth who have either completed high school or not yet received diplomas as well as an Intensive Case Management Program.



Through intensive work with a licensed social worker, case manager and the supportive guidance of a mentor, Roots & Wings assists these young adults who have left the foster care system. Each young adult’s program is individualized creating the best possible environment for building a successful future.

“This has been a collaborative community effort. Many volunteers have given generously of their time and talents to make the mission of Roots & Wings a reality and I want to thank them for their dedication,” said Roots & Wings Founder Irene DeGrandpre. “Those who are on the front lines now, working with these aged out foster children, understand the necessity of building a network and building self confidence in this much overlooked

demographic. It is through their efforts that these young adults will establish roots to the community and wings to the world. Thank you for recognizing the mission of the Roots & Wings Foundation.”

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According to Roots & Wings, 50% of its program participants were homeless before intervention by the organization; 100% have left the program with a safe place to live. When entering Roots & Wings, 25% had a GED or high school equivalency; upon transitioning from Roots & Wings program, 100% earned a GED or high school equivalency while others graduated from career trade programs. Only 50% of these young people entered the program with just a part-time job; with Roots & Wing, 86% were employed (57% having a full-time job and 29% having a part-time job).

For more information about Roots & Wings, visit <http://www.rootsandwingsnj.org/>.

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 [New Jersey Heroes](#) and follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

PHOTO CAPTION 1: First Lady Mary Pat Christie honors Irene DeGrandpre, founder of Roots & Wings, as her 23d New Jersey Hero during a ceremony at the Denville-based agency.

PHOTO CAPTION 2: Staff of Roots & Wings joins First Lady Mary Pat Christie in honoring the agency's founder Irene DeGrandpre as a New Jersey Hero.

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Press Contact:
Michael DREWNIAK
Colin REED
609-777-2600



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Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000