

Operation Shoebox Recipient Delivers New Jersey Heroes Banner to First Lady Mary Pat Christie

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New Jersey Marine Returns Banner with Photos of Military Members Stationed in Afghanistan



Trenton, NJ – A New Jersey Marine returning from Afghanistan today presented First Lady Mary Pat Christie with the New Jersey Heroes banner she and a group of volunteers originally signed and sent overseas as part of an Operation Shoebox care package in December 2011. Lance Corporal (LCpl) Zachary R. Sanders, of Somerville, returned the placard to Mrs. Christie with a photograph of his fellow soldiers with the banner.

"Operation Shoebox is such a great cause, and the fact that Zach returned to New Jersey to deliver this banner from the soldiers in Afghanistan really demonstrates how much it means to our military personnel to know they are supported on the

home front," said Mrs. Christie. "We're so proud of the courage Zach and his team members have displayed in serving our nation and we are thrilled that they have safely returned to their loves ones."

Lance Corporal Sanders graduated from Somerville High School in 2010. He attended Boot Camp and graduated from Parris Island on November 11, 2010. After marine combat training and military police training, he spent five months at Camp Pendleton, California. He then volunteered to join a police advisor team that was attached to 2nd Battalion 4th Marines. On August 26, 2011, LCpl Sanders was sent to FOB Musa Qala in Helmand Province, Afghanistan to train and mentor the Afghan National Police as well as recruit local police from the surrounding areas. LCpl Sanders returned back to California on March 23, 2012 and will be joining the Law Enforcement Battalion on June 1, 2012.



"I joined the military because the older I got I began to realize all the freedoms we have in America and I knew we didn't just get them by sitting around," said LCpl Sanders. "I love my job. I loved working with the police in Afghanistan and teaching them some of our techniques and our knowledge of things. I was working with an outstanding team, PAT1 2nd Bat 4th Marines. There were 16 of us and I thank God everyone on the team made it back safe. It's great to be back in America."

Since 2005, Operation Shoebox New Jersey has shipped more than 50,000 total packages to U.S. military members at posts in the Middle East, including Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan. The contents of all 50,000 boxes were generously donated by individuals and companies large and small in New Jersey. In December 2011, First Lady Mary Pat Christie named Rod Hirsh, founder of Operation Shoebox New Jersey as her ninth New Jersey Hero.

At the time, Mrs. Christie joined Operation Shoebox volunteers in assembling care packages to be sent to military personnel in the Mideast. Several times a year, Shoebox volunteers ranging from veterans and church groups to corporations and school children give their time to sort donated supplies and then pack boxes to be shipped overseas. Items needed include lip balm, sun block, moist wipes, bars of soap, small bottles of shampoo, non-aerosol deodorant, powdered drink mixes, cereal/snacks, granola bars, individual packets of instant oatmeal, popcorn and hot chocolate, small cans of fruit with pop tops, gum, candy, athletic socks and batteries.

To learn more about Operation Shoebox New Jersey, visit www.opshoeboxnj.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, go to <http://newjerseyheroes.org> and follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

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Photo 1: Operation Shoebox recipients in Afghanistan with New Jersey Hero Banner

Photo 2: First Lady Mary Pat Christie with Marine Lance Corporal Zachary R. Sanders, Operation Shoebox Founder Rod Hirsh and Operation Shoebox volunteers



Marine Lance Corporal Zachary R. Sanders returns New Jersey Hero banner to First Lady Mary Pat Christie.

First Lady Mary Pat Christie with Marine Lance Corporal Zachary R. Sanders, Operation Shoebox Founder Rod Hirsh and Operation Shoebox volunteers

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