

Governor Christie, First Lady Mary Pat Christie Honor St. Anthony High School and Seton Hall Basketball Standout for Work to Improve the Lives of Jersey City Youth

'Team Walker' Founder Jerry Walker Named a New Jersey Hero

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, July 20, 2011

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Trenton, NJ – With a career that's taken him around the globe, Jerry Walker just wanted to give something back to the community. Recognizing a need to provide inner city youth with safe and constructive alternatives to the obstacles experienced in their daily lives, the former St. Anthony High School and Seton Hall basketball standout formed *Team Walker*. The nonprofit organization gives children an opportunity to learn teamwork, responsibility and unity through after-school, athletic and recreational programs. Today, Governor Christie and First Lady Mary Pat Christie named Jerry Walker as the latest New Jersey Hero to honor his efforts aimed at improving the lives of youth in Jersey City.

"Jerry's not just an athletic standout. He's the epitome of a true New Jersey Hero who is working to make a difference in the lives of the young people in his community," said Governor and Mrs. Christie. "He and the volunteers from *Team Walker* pride themselves in being positive role models and are providing these children with the tools needed to achieve a successful life path now and in the future. We're proud to announce Jerry Walker as this month's New Jersey Hero."

Team Walker offers youth participation programs in academic and recreational activities to replace the negative influences found on the streets. These programs emphasize the importance of education, teamwork and sportsmanship. The primary mission of the after-school academic program focuses on tutoring and study hall sessions to assist children in academic disciplines to supplement their classroom instruction. *Team Walker* also stresses athletics through an after-school recreation program, day camp and summer youth tournaments, music, cheerleading and even the sport of fencing.

"I am honored and surprised to be named a New Jersey Hero by Governor and Mrs. Christie," said Jerry Walker. "The work we do every day at *Team Walker* is not glamorous, but is incredibly rewarding. We create productive after school programs for the youth of Jersey City to give them a positive alternative to the streets. We work with the kids in groups and individually to create a better academic base and self-image. Thank you for this recognition of our programs. Casting the limelight on *Team Walker* will help let potential volunteers and donors know about our good works and enable us to grow."

The program has expanded significantly since its inception in 1996, beginning with a single tournament and basketball clinic serving a handful of children to over 500 young people participating in year-round academic and athletic programs initiated by the *Team Walker* organization.

"And we hope this recognition helps us with our latest project – The *Team Walker* Learning Center. This has been a dream of mine to have a building for our programs. We have close to \$1.4 million dollars raised for the project and it will be a reality next summer. All I can say is that I feel very blessed," added Walker.

The new Center will be located right in the neighborhood on Communipaw Avenue. It will consist of a three-story structure that features five different classroom areas for up to 150 students, a unique library and multi-purpose room, wired classrooms for computers and smart boards, a basement cafeteria with full kitchen, office space for the CEO and other staff, a conference room and outside recreation space.

To learn more about the efforts of *Team Walker*, visit www.teamwalker.org

New Jersey Heroes is an initiative of First Lady Mary Pat Christie that showcases the positive ways people and organizations are impacting New Jersey in their own unique ways. To nominate a hero, go to the bottom of the page at www.nj.gov/governor/firstlady and click the NJ Heroes tab. Follow the application instructions and submit the person you believe is a true New Jersey Hero.

PHOTO CAPTION 1: NJ Hero Jerry Walker, First Lady Mary Pat Christie and Governor Christie with *Team Walker* participants.

PHOTO CAPTION 2: *Team Walker* students present First Lady Mary Pat Christie with bouquet of flowers.

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