

The Russ Berrie Award for **MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE**

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**MINE HILL MOTHER WHO FOUNDED ORGANIZATION TO AID HOMELESS  
EARNS TOP RUSS BERRIE AWARD**

*Annual Ceremony Honors New Jersey's Unsung Heroes  
Who Give Back to Their Communities*

MAHWAH, N.J., June 2, 2005 – Joann Tyler's heart is filled with love - for her three birth children, seven adopted children and more than 20 foster children - and for those with no place to call home.

When Tyler, a resident of Mine Hill, saw six homeless people in a Dover park on Thanksgiving Day 2003, she took them plates of Thanksgiving food. A year later, she was feeding breakfast and dinner to more than 50 people a day. Today, as co-founder of Missionaries of God, she continues to provide food and clothing and dreams of expanding the organization's services to open a shelter.

For her selfless dedication, Tyler was given the top award, a cash grant of \$50,000, during today's presentation of the 2005 Russ Berrie Award for Making a Difference at Ramapo College of New Jersey in Mahwah.

In all, 19 finalists were distinguished with cash grants during the Awards Ceremony. The top three finalists, chosen by a selection committee comprising eminent New Jersey business leaders and professionals, received cash awards of \$50,000, \$35,000 and \$25,000.

The \$35,000 award was given to **David Butler, MD of Norwood**, who has practiced obstetrics and gynecology at Holy Name Hospital for the past 33 years. For the past 13 years, he has been making annual visits to Haiti's Hôpital Sacré Coeur to provide obstetrical and gynecologic surgery services to poor and underserved women who travel as far as 20 miles for care. Each day, Butler performs five to eight surgeries and sees between 70 and 100 patients.

The \$25,000 award was presented to **Arthur Ackerman of Port Norris**. He and his wife adopted four babies who now range in age from 22 to 35. Each has Down's Syndrome. Though his wife and oldest daughter have died, Ackerman remains devoted to his family. "What the family lacks in money, and in many other things for that matter, they make up for in love and happiness," said an admirer.

## **2005 BERRIE AWARD RECIPIENTS add 2-2-2-2**

Late philanthropist and businessman Russ Berrie created the award in 1997. His widow, Angelica Berrie, shared his passion for giving and now leads the Russell Berrie Foundation's efforts to realize his philanthropic vision. "Russ wanted to create an award specifically for unsung heroes—people who really make a difference by dedicating their lives to improving life or helping others."

Delivering the keynote address was Emmy and AP award winning broadcast journalist Lori Stokes, news anchor for WABC TV's *Eyewitness News This Morning* and *Eyewitness News at Noon*.

Sixteen finalists were presented awards of \$2,500 each. They include:

**John Bertollo of Hawthorne** is a borough councilman who has committed his time to many community organizations. While Rotary Club president, he secured a \$25,000 grant for a playground for children with and without physical challenges. Along with his son and brother, he put personal risk aside to rescue a neighbor with Multiple Sclerosis whose house was engulfed in flames.

Attorney **Gary Carbonello of Mendham** donated a kidney to a woman he never met, a 34-year-old mother of three young children. Since that time, Carbonello has served on the Board of Trustees of Transplant Speakers International and on its Advisory Council. He speaks to groups across the country urging them to become organ donors.

**Wayne Cesa of Hawthorne** is the executive director of Free Throws for AIDS, an organization that he founded in 1998 to improve the quality of life of those whose lives are affected by the virus and to raise awareness of AIDS through education. Since the death of his cousin from complications from AIDS in 1992, Cesa spends every spare moment, and much of his own money, trying to help others, especially students in the Paterson area, understand the devastating impact of AIDS and how it can be prevented.

For the past 35 years **Jerome Colwell of Bayonne** has been helping a variety of people in a variety of circumstances while instilling self-esteem in those he helps. In addition to his work with organizations including Covenant House, American Red Cross, Project Ready, Harmony House, Boy Scouts, Big Brother, he is also a member of the Disaster Action Team and responds to fires and other disasters in the Bergen-Hudson County area.

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## **2005 BERRIE AWARD RECIPIENTS add 3-3-3-3**

**Kathleen DiChiara** is founder and leader of the **Hillside**-based Community FoodBank of New Jersey, one of the largest in the country. Inspired by a Sunday sermon, she started collecting food for the needy in the back of her station wagon. Today, the organization has a staff of 97, more than 30,000 volunteers, two warehouses and a small fleet of trucks and distributes more than 23 million pounds of food and groceries to more than 1,500 charities serving over 500,000 people.

**Claudio Gomez of West New York** was thrust into the role of lifesaver this past February when a charter jet crashed into the Strawberry clothing warehouse in Teterboro, where Gomez is employed. Before firefighters arrived, he defied the thick black smoke and flames that engulfed the jet to pull three survivors from the wreckage.

**Janet Hansraj of Mahwah**, a registered nurse at Pascack Valley Hospital, risked her life to extricate a badly burned and bleeding 20-year-old man from a car that hit a guardrail, flipped over several times, slid down an embankment and landed upside down in a ditch. Hansraj, garbed in a sari, took charge until ambulances arrived. It was Hansraj's sari that helped identify her weeks after the accident when authorities sought the identity of the calm, but anonymous rescuer.

**Lillie Hendry of Freehold** has been the president of the Board of Trustees of the Court Street School Education Community Center for the past 10 years. Now a Historic Community Center, it was one of the last segregated schools in Monmouth County. Hendry helped refurbish the school and turn it into a community center that offers numerous programs for the area's young people.

**George Khalid Jones of Prospect Park** shares his life experiences with young people to stress the importance of education, respect for teachers and staying away from gangs, drugs and negative behavior. The current reigning light heavyweight IBF North American Boxing Federation Champion, Jones was formerly homeless, a drug dealing addict and an ex-convict. He learned to read and write in prison and earned his high school diploma during his incarceration. After prison, Jones earned a commercial driving license and began a career in boxing.

**Stacey Kindt of Lakewood** is the co-founder and co-director of Redeem-Her, an ex-offender directed, self-help, social services organization. Successful female ex-offenders reach back to their sisters still behind bars to prepare them for spiritual reconciliation as well as reconciliation with themselves, their families and communities, and help them enter the work world by providing skills training and wardrobe assistance.

**Sr. Rosemary A. McSorley, Esq. of Pompton Plains** is the founder and director of Cornelian Community Counselors, a non-sectarian, not-for-profit law firm that represents battered women, their children, seniors, immigrants seeking citizenship and low-income families. A teacher for 25 years, McSorley entered Seton Hall Law School in her sixties, passed the bar and established the firm in 1995. Donations and grants cover the firm's expenses as she works to ensure her clients receive the appropriate services and to help them become more productive citizens.

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## **2005 BERRIE AWARD RECIPIENTS add 4-4-4-4**

**Evelyn Personeus of River Vale** is a registered nurse at Bergen Regional Medical Center. This past January, a car crashed into trees, a telephone pole and a cement structure outside her home. After she called 911, she found the car's passenger, a 20-year-old man, unconscious and pinned in the wreck, near death. She climbed into the car through the window to hold his head so he could breathe, or, if the worst happened, be with him if his heart stopped beating. Police officers used crowbar to free the passenger's legs and drag him out. The young man recovered from his injuries.

Losing all four limbs 12 years ago did not stop **Michael V. Sciuлло of Brigantine** from returning to his photography business in Atlantic City. Months of intensive care and additional physical and occupational therapy allowed him to walk out of Bacharach Re-Hab in Pomona, NJ, with four artificial limbs. He so impressed his fellow patient members of a support group for amputees at Bacharach that the doctor there suggested Sciuлло take over the group. Sciuлло continues as a volunteer counselor and serves as chairman of the Atlantic County Disabled Citizens Advisory Board. Chairman of the Atlantic County Veterans Advisory Board, he was influential in the construction of a new Veterans Medical Center.

**Lipica Jaclyn Shah of Clarksburg** and several Girl Scout friends dreamed of starting a disaster supply center to assist families in Millstone who lost their homes to fire seven years ago. Although the troop disbanded, Shah pursued their dream and created Project HOPE (Helping Our People Everyday). With township approval and involvement, she obtained and restored a trailer, held drives to collect needed items to fill it, and involved younger scouts to teach them about community service. When Shah, now 17, leaves for college, the township's Emergency Management Office will run the fully stocked trailer. Shah is on the National By Girls, for Girls Advisory Committee, represents the Monmouth Council of Girl Scouts to the Board of Directors, is a member of the Girl Scouts Teen Speakers Bureau and is Red Cross certified in life guarding, small craft safety, CPR and First Aid.

**Lindsey Tippett of Hamilton** learned three years ago that she has Ewing's Sarcoma, a rare form of malignant bone tumor. She has made it a lifelong mission to help others suffering from cancer, raising over \$60,000 for the oncology department at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia through bake sales, sponsored walks and conducting community blood drives, even while traveling to Philadelphia for bi-weekly chemotherapy treatments. During a year of treatment, Lindsey spent more than 100 days in the hospital, yet managed to remain on her school's honor roll by being tutored at home. An inspiration to her classmates, telecommunications students made a documentary film in her honor.

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## **2005 BERRIE AWARD RECIPIENTS add 5-5-5-5**

**Kathleen Toth of Wyckoff** is an advocate of family values and community involvement. About 10 years ago, she organized a group of volunteers to assist the teachers at the school of Sacred Heart in Jersey City in an area with high unemployment and many families living at or below the poverty level. She helped create the Angel Fund at her own parish in Wyckoff, the Church of St. Elizabeth, which raises over \$100,000 each year to assist families who otherwise would not be able to afford to send their children to Sacred Heart. Since the involvement of Toth and her volunteers, over 400 students have graduated from Sacred Heart and the school has a waiting list.

Russ Berrie founded Russ Berrie and Company, Inc. in 1963. While best known for its teddy bears and other plush animals, the Company's gift and juvenile lines comprise a diverse range of everyday, seasonal, and occasion-themed products that help people celebrate the milestones in their lives. Headquartered in New Jersey, today the Company operates offices, showrooms, and distribution centers all over the world and trades on the NYSE under the symbol RUS.

In addition to his business accomplishments, Mr. Berrie devoted boundless energy and resources to numerous charitable causes, earning recognition in 1998 as one of the 40 most generous Americans by *Fortune* Magazine.

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's public liberal arts college, serving 5,600 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 20 states and 60 nations. U.S. News & World Report ranks Ramapo number one among public comprehensive colleges in the north. The College named its center for performing and visual arts, the site of the Russ Berrie Award for Making a Difference ceremony, in honor of both Mr. Berrie and his wife Angelica.

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