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**NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR UNSUNG HEROES IN NEW JERSEY
FOR THE RUSS BERRIE AWARD FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

*Uncommon Acts for the Common Good
Earn Everyday Heroes Extraordinary Recognition
Deadline for Nominations Is February 27, 2009*

MAHWAH, N.J., January 29, 2009 — Nominations for the 2009 Russ Berrie Award for Making a Difference will be accepted by The Russell Berrie Foundation through February 27. New Jerseyans who have made a significant difference in their communities through a heroic effort or a lifetime of service are eligible for cash awards of up to \$50,000.

Established in 1996 by the late Russell Berrie, founder of Russ Berrie and Company, Inc., and Ramapo College of New Jersey, the awards honor “unsung heroes” from throughout the state. Up to 19 individuals will be recognized for making a significant difference to the well-being of their community during the annual spring award ceremony at Ramapo College in Mahwah.

The Russell Berrie Foundation will provide monetary awards of up to \$50,000, \$35,000 and \$25,000 as well as runner-up grants of \$2,500 each.

“Through this award, we honor the contributions of people who don’t seek recognition for what they do, yet generously give of themselves to make the world a better place,” said Angelica Berrie of Englewood, president of The Russell Berrie Foundation.

Nominees will be reviewed by an Advisory Board, which is co-chaired by Josh S. Weston, honorary chairman, Automatic Data Processing, Inc., and Dr. Peter P. Mercer, president of Ramapo College of New Jersey. The Board, comprised of eminent New Jersey business leaders and professionals, will evaluate nominations submitted by community groups, houses of worship, educators, representatives of the media and others. Following this evaluation, based on criteria refined by the Board, the group will present the awards at a ceremony in May. Among the criteria is the impact the cash award will have on the lives of the heroes themselves.

Last year, the top honorees included a photographer who publicized the plight of adoption-eligible children mired in the foster care system, a woman who travels each week to distribute sandwiches, soups and stews to the homeless and needy in Newark and the founder of a full-service respite and family support agency for children with developmental disabilities.

For more information on The Russ Berrie Award for Making a Difference or to nominate someone, please contact:

The Russ Berrie Award for Making a Difference
c/o Office of the President
Ramapo College of New Jersey
505 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, New Jersey 07430
Phone: (201) 684-7910.

Nomination forms are also available on the Internet at www.russellberriefoundation.org or <http://www.ramapo.edu/news/specialevents/berrieawards/nomination.html>. The deadline for entries is Friday, February 27.

Angelica Berrie, wife of the late Russ Berrie, heads the Russell Berrie Foundation in its work to foster continuity and enrichment of Jewish communal life, support issues of health with an emphasis on diabetes and humanism in medicine and recognize individuals who have made a significant difference in the lives of others.

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's public liberal arts college, serving more than 5,800 undergraduate and graduate students. The College, which offers more than 700 courses and 40 academic programs, was ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* among the top public universities (master's) in the region. The campus center for performing and visual arts – the site of the Russ Berrie Award for Making a Difference ceremony – is named in honor of both Mr. Berrie and his wife Angelica.

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