



**RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**Office of Communications and Public Relations**  
**Press Release**  
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## **Ramapo College Officially Declared ‘Stigma-Free’ Campus**

*Former Governor Richard Codey among dignitaries at ceremony*

MAHWAH, N.J. -- Ramapo College of New Jersey welcomed former New Jersey Governor Richard Codey as a guest speaker to officially declare Ramapo a stigma-free campus. During a special ceremony on September 28, Codey’s declaration was part of an initiative focused on eliminating the stigma associated with an array of mental illnesses.

“There are no barriers to mental illness,” said Governor Codey. “It affects men and women of all ages, races and ethnicities, and sadly, it is affecting our youth as well. But the more we talk about it, the more we can get help for those individuals who need it.”

Ramapo College President Peter P. Mercer presided over the ceremony whose honored guests included Bergen County Executive James Tedesco, Mahwah Mayor William LaForet, Northvale Mayor Ed Piehler, Ramapo Board of Trustees Chairman George C. Ruotolo and Ramapo Trustee and Alumnus A.J. Sabath. Also in attendance was Tricia Baker, the founder of Attitudes in Reverse (AIR), a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise awareness of mental health issues among young people.

The event, held in at the Arch, drew a significant number of students, staff and faculty as well as outside guests.

Coinciding with the declaration was a table display of 232 pairs of shoes to represent the number of youth, ages 10 to 24, who died by suicide in New Jersey in recent years. The “In Their Shoes” display was part of an initiative by AIR.

“The statistics are staggering,” said Trustee Ruotolo. “That’s why this event today is a compelling representation of Ramapo’s values, that the College is committed to being an open, inclusive and sustainable community.”

The College’s Counseling Services and Active Minds student organization manned several tables offering informational materials for students. In addition, President Mercer noted that the College’s Office of

Specialized Services presents Wellness Wednesday events throughout the academic year, adding that there have been more than 200 mental health screenings offered at the College.

Photo caption:

Former Governor Richard Codey addresses the crowd at Ramapo College of New Jersey. Looking on are, from left, Tricia Baker of Attitudes in Reverse, Ramapo College Board of Trustees Chair George C. Ruotolo, and Ramapo College Trustee and alumnus A.J. Sabath.

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Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the top in the Best Regional Public Universities North category, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes viewed as a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 6,000 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers eight graduate programs as well as articulated programs with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.