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Kristina Guttadora named newest New Jersey Hero

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Kristina Guttadora, executive director for the New Jersey Agricultural Society, was recently named the 36th New Jersey Hero by New Jersey first lady Mary Pat Christie's New Jersey Heroes Foundation for her work directing New Jersey Farmers Against Hunger.

An online public poll was conducted throughout the month of August to select the New Jersey Hero. Adam Lowy of Move for Hunger and Gary Oppenheimer of Ample Harvest were also selected as candidates for their outstanding work in hunger relief.



Kristina Guttadora, executive director for the New Jersey Agricultural Society, was named the 36th New Jersey Hero. She is shown Sept. 17 at Giamarese Farms with Jim Giamarese, chairman of Farmers Against Hunger; his wife, Sue; and Jerry Verrico, president of the New Jersey Agricultural Society. *(Photo courtesy of NJAS)*

Supporters from the agricultural community, food pantries, churches, volunteer groups and others who believe in the Farmers Against Hunger mission came together to cast their votes.

"This was a tremendous opportunity for New Jersey Farmers Against Hunger to outreach to a much broader audience," Guttadora said in a late September press release. "With nearly 18,000 votes cast, the New Jersey Heroes Foundation event certainly helped us share our mission and recruit new volunteers and donors. We hope to stay connected with these new supporters to further expand our services in providing fresh produce to New Jersey neighbors in need."

New Jersey Farmers Against Hunger has been "harvesting for the hungry" since 1996. It all began when a group of farmers and legislators were on a farm tour and recognized the need to efficiently move surplus fresh produce to those in need. Ever since, Farmers Against Hunger works to collect 1.3 million pounds of food annually from farms, grocery stores and wholesale suppliers. Farmers Against Hunger is a truly collaborative organization, helping over 70 partner agencies, including the state food banks, soup kitchens and pantries, by providing free donations.

The award of \$7,500 was presented by Casey Mahoney, executive director of the New Jersey Heroes Foundation, on Thursday Sept. 17, at Giamarese Farms. The award was presented during a gleaning event in East Brunswick, NJ, to Guttadora; Jim Giamarese, chairman of Farmers Against Hunger; and Jerry Verrico, president of the New Jersey Agricultural Society. The donation will kick start a fund for a replacement refrigerated truck.

In addition to the New Jersey Heroes Foundation Award, New Jersey Farmers Against Hunger also was awarded \$8,198 from Ravitz Family Markets, ShopRite stores. This came from a two-week collection from customers in their stores. Ravitz Family Markets welcomed Farmers Against Hunger

staff to come to five of their stores to promote their mission, recruit volunteers and raise this funding.

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