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**UNION COUNTY TEACHER TAKES CELEBRATE NJ! SCHOOL PROGRAM
TO ANOTHER LEVEL**

(Elizabeth, NJ) -- A teacher from Elizabeth has embraced the Celebrate NJ! school program and created a New Jersey-based theme in her classroom, taking the program to another level. Mary Petersen of the St. Genevieve School had been using basic standardized curriculum to teach New Jersey studies in her classroom, "I thought that the lessons were too short and they didn't go into enough depth. When I saw the WebQuest from Celebrate NJ!, I immediately brought it to my students. They love it because they are able to go beyond the textbook and make their own discoveries."

The interactive WebQuest accessed through the Celebrate NJ! website guides students across New Jersey to research and write articles about state history, people, places and events. The students are challenged to help create a newspaper written by and for New Jersey kids about what makes New Jersey great. Celebrate NJ!'s Executive Director, Karen Hatcher says, "The program helps kids make a connection to and be inspired by their home state. They discover the significant inventions and historical events that took place here; they learn about famous people, our diversity, and the unique and varied environment that makes New Jersey special."

Petersen decided to take the WebQuest a step further by applying the New Jersey theme to all subject areas she teaches. "For math, the students did three digit multiplications using New Jersey area codes, for physical education, they designed a new game called SkooterBall to be played at the Continental Airlines Arena. They even came up with team names and logos. In Language Arts, they also adopted author Judy Blume, an Elizabeth native for Read Across America."

Other projects covered Music and Science. Petersen explains, "They wrote and performed their own New Jersey song and applied what they learned about force, gravity and energy to the different roller coasters at Six Flags Great Adventure."

Petersen also had her 16 students create a "16 Reasons to Celebrate NJ!" wall in the classroom as part of the '365 Reasons to Celebrate NJ!' campaign. "Mary Petersen is one of the many of teachers in our program who took a creative approach with the subject

matter. We love what she did with the material. This is what we hoped would happen when we made the program available”, says Hatcher.

The Celebrate NJ! School Program will be hosting regional awards events in May and baseball game nights in June, to celebrate the thousands of students across New Jersey who participated in the program. To find out more about these events or about participating in the fourth grade no-fee school program next year, visit www.CelebrateNJ.org, School Program page, or contact Karen Hatcher at khatcher@CelebrateNJ.org or 732-361-3253.

Celebrate NJ! also invites everyone who has a Reason to Celebrate NJ! to log on to www.CelebrateNJ.org and enter that reason. No deadlines have been set. Reasons are being released on a monthly basis. Entry cards are also available at over 350 libraries across the state, which are promoting the campaign. The best 365 reasons will be published as part of an advertising and media campaign, which will take place on outdoor ads across the state and through radio, television and newspaper promotions. A select number of entries will be chosen to participate in feature stories for various publications across New Jersey.