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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*  
*SEPTEMBER 10, 2007*

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**CELEBRATE NJ! SCHOOL PROGRAM KICKS OFF SEPTEMBER 15:  
FOURTH GRADERS ACROSS THE STATE BUILD PRIDE AND BASIC SKILLS**

(Trenton, NJ) – Fourth graders throughout New Jersey have an opportunity to lend their creative writing skills to the creation of a statewide newspaper written by and for New Jersey kids. Celebrate NJ!, a grass roots effort to build pride in the Garden State is launching its Third Annual School Program on September 15, 2007. The program, designed to educate, inspire and celebrate fourth graders aims to reach 20,000 students this year.

An interactive online program will guide students across New Jersey to research and write articles about the people, places, events and history that makes New Jersey special. The best of those articles will be judged and selected for an online newspaper to be published next spring. The program provides students with a combination of New Jersey Studies, a requirement in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, with the development of the basic skills of reading comprehension and written composition. Students perform research using both the program's online sources and those found in school libraries to complete their assignments.

Karen Hatcher, Executive Director of Celebrate NJ! says, "Students and teachers have a lot of ground to cover in fourth grade. We designed this program to support many of the priority areas for student testing so it fits with teachers' lesson plans. At the same time, we made it fun for the kids, including a writing contest, awards celebrations and baseball games for those who participate."

In its first two years, over 17,000 students were registered by fourth grade teachers in every county of New Jersey. The organization seeks to reach students in under-served and inner city areas by providing a Spanish translation of the assignment for those students transitioning from Spanish to English. Hatcher explains, "The students will be required to write their articles in English, however the translation will allow for better understanding of the assignment and give students the ability to share the program with their parents at home." Also realizing that not all schools have equal resources and many students may not have access to computers at home, the organization is creating a written Library/Home Study Guide in partnership with the NJ Association of School Librarians.

Teachers may register their students between September 15<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup>. A complete Program Overview is available on the organization's web site: [www.CelebrateNJ.org](http://www.CelebrateNJ.org), (School Program, Teachers Page). For further information, contact Karen Hatcher, Executive Director at 732-333-0462.