

It's time to bring attention to what babies—and their families—need to thrive. Thank you for being part of a team that's fighting for their future!

Event Details *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey
DATE: Thursday, May 30, 2019, held rain or shine
WHERE: In front of the State House Annex, Trenton
 125 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08608
 For directions, visit: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/directions.asp>.
 Address in case of rain: Trenton War Memorial: 1 West Lafayette Street, Trenton, NJ
TIME: 11am - 1pm (Arrive by 10:30am to check in)

WHAT TO WEAR/BRING: Adults should wear white shirts. Attendees are encouraged to bring a blanket or beach towel for seating.

The first few years lay the foundation for the rest of a child's life; that's why early childhood matters. *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey aims to bring attention to what our youngest children need to thrive:

- Affordable, quality child care
- support for new parents
- healthy starts for babies

As a valued partner of *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey, we need your help with the following actions that must take place BEFORE THE EVENT ON MAY 30:

1. Distribute the ***Strolling Thunder* New Jersey flyers** to colleagues and parents. Help us get the word out by connecting with early childhood stakeholders and families of young children. Share the flyers in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) with your parents—but don't stop there!
 - a. Forward the **electronic** flyers to your colleagues, friends, community organizations, businesses, social service agencies and everyone in between.
 - b. Insert a blurb in your print newsletters or e-newsletters about *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey. Here is a sample for your organization's Parent News:

*Have you ever struggled to find child care for your infant or toddler? Once you found it, did you have trouble paying for it? YOU ARE NOT ALONE! Join Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) at *Strolling Thunder*TM New Jersey, a rally to take place in Trenton on Thursday, May 30 at 11am, to*

tell Governor Murphy and our legislators that we need them to do more for our children right from the start. The first 150 families who completely pre-register will receive a \$50 gift card IF they bring a child under the age of 3. Snacks, beverages and boxed lunches will be provided. To register and learn more, visit [The Future Begins With Babies](#)*

**One gift card per family.*

- 2. Help organize families to attend the rally.** Transportation to Trenton may be difficult for some families traveling with babies. If enough of your families WITH BABIES UNDER THE AGE OF 3 are interested in participating in the rally, ACNJ will pay for the costs of chartering a bus for transportation. Our guide [Reserving a Bus for Strolling Thunder NJ](#) provides resources and the steps to take in order to receive approval and reimbursement from ACNJ. For more information, call 973.643.3876, or email Patricia Canning at pcanning@acnj.org.

Download guide for reserving a bus: [Instructions for chartering a bus for Strolling Thunder NJ](#)

Download reimbursement form: [Instructions and form for travel expenses reimbursement](#)

- 3. Make sure interested families are registered.** You have the relationships with families and they may need your help registration. Registering is easy; you can use our google form to register all of your interested families at the same time. [Link to Group Sign Up](#) Share the [Family Toolkit](#) with them to ensure they are prepared for the event.
- 4. Make sure you are registered!** ACNJ wants to have an accurate count of the number of people participating and we need everyone—partners, staff and adults with or without children—to register. Please visit [The Future Begins With Babies - Sign up](#) to register.
- 5. Have fun preparing for the event!** Host a poster-making party and encourage attendees to craft their own masterpieces. This is their chance to tell state leaders what families need in order for babies to thrive. Need help figuring out what to write? How about:
 - **Child care is everyone's business!**
 - **There are no do-overs in childhood!**
 - **It's time to think babies!**

But remember, PLEASE, no sticks or poles on these signs—they will not be allowed!

- 6. Be part of the *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey Social Media Team!** You and the families you recruit have the chance to not only be advocates in person - everyone can also make their voices heard through social

media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We will be using the hashtags #StrollingThunderNJ and #ThinkBabies before, during and after the event. Please share these hashtags with your families so we can make our voices heard. Here are some tips for effective social media promotion:

- Follow us on social media @ACNJforkids! Share our posts to promote the event through your social networks.
- If you are having a “poster party,” or any event that shows how you and your families are getting ready for the event, please take pictures and use them on your social media outlets.
- Don’t forget to tag ACNJ at @acnjforkids, Governor Phil Murphy at @GovMurphy, #StrollingThunderNJ, #ThinkBabies, #NJLeg and your legislator to get everyone to Think Babies!

7. Take your voice to Twitter: We have some sample tweets that can be used immediately! Please start using them before, during and after the event:

- We’re excited to join families from across NJ & @acnjforkids in Trenton on May 30th for #StrollingThunderNJ to tell @GovMurphy and #NJLeg to #ThinkBabies. Join us by registering at acnj.org
- When babies get what their growing brains need to thrive, they have the best chance for healthy development. @GovMurphy, that's why I'm attending #StrollingThunderNJ in Trenton on 5/30/2019. It's time to #ThinkBabies. Visit acnj.org to learn more. @acnjforkids
- When babies are not made a high priority, our society as a whole suffers. @GovMurphy, that's why I'm attending #StrollingThunderNJ in Trenton on 5/30. It's time to #ThinkBabies. Go to acnj.org to learn more. @acnjforkids
- Why #ThinkBabies? Because NJ has 310,284 children under 3 years old. That’s 16% of all NJ kids under 18! Join us & @acnjforkids on 5/30 for #StrollingThunderNJ in Trenton for this important rally. Register at acnj.org
- #DYK a baby’s brain grows faster between the ages of 0 and 3 than any other point in time? @GovMurphy, that's why I'm attending #StrollingThunderNJ in Trenton on 5/30. It's time to #ThinkBabies. Visit acnj.org to learn more. @acnjforkids
- When we #ThinkBabies & help parents, we improve lives— healthy babies + parent support = higher graduation rates + employment & a brighter future. Join us on 5/30 for #StrollingThunderNJ in Trenton for this important rally. Register at acnj.org @acnjforkids

- 8. Invite your legislators!** It really matters when your legislators hear from you! Give your State Senator and your two members of the Assembly a call, or send them an email invitation:

Dear Senator/Assemblyman:

I live in your legislative district and on May 30, 2019, I will be in Trenton with over 200 other New Jersey residents with babies to participate in Strolling ThunderTM New Jersey, a rally that will bring attention to issues affecting infants, toddlers and their families, many of whom are in child care programs like mine. The rally will be held in front of the State House Annex and is scheduled to begin at 11am and end by 1pm. I hope that you too will be able to attend this important event. I'll be looking for you!

YOUR NAME

NAME OF YOUR PROGRAM

YOUR ADDRESS

9. Reach out to the media

Gaining coverage in local media outlets is a great way to spread the word about *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey. Plus, local papers are ALWAYS looking for stories—and you will have one! You can let the press know one or both ways:

- *Submit a letter to the editor to your local paper.*

Here is a sample Letter to the Editor. All you need to include is your contact information. Letters to the editor should also be copied into an email – not sent as an attachment.

Dear Editor,

The science is clear. A baby's brain grows faster between the ages of 0 and 3 than at any other point in time, forming more than one million new neural connections every second. When babies have nurturing relationships and experiences as well as good health and nutrition, those first few years lay a strong foundation for the rest of their lives.

Unfortunately, not every child has a strong start. The sad reality is that many children do not have what they need to thrive and succeed, causing both the children and our society to suffer. As a child care provider, I see how families struggle every day. Children who are not being given the chance to grow up safe, healthy and educated are robbed of the basic building blocks for healthy development. And New Jersey faces the consequences.

That's why I'm heading to the State House in Trenton on May 30th to participate in *Strolling Thunder*™ New Jersey, a rally that's bringing advocates and families from across NJ to the State House to let Governor Murphy and the Legislature know it's time to make our youngest children a higher state priority.

Over 200 adults and babies will be making their voices heard that day. I'll be there. How about you? For more information, go to www.acnj.org.

(BE SURE TO INCLUDE WRITER'S CONTACT INFORMATION AS DETAILED BELOW!)

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[ADDRESS]

[PHONE]

[EMAIL]

- *Issue a news release a week before the start of Strolling Thunder New Jersey by highlighting the local efforts in your community to help make this day a success.*

Here is a sample news release but you will need to fill in some information in the body of the release. News releases should also be copied into an email – not sent as an attachment.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE

Contact: YOUR NAME/ CONTACT INFORMATION

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] getting ready to rally for babies at the State House

In an effort to make our youngest children a higher state priority, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is bringing families with infants and toddlers to a rally for babies at the State House in Trenton on May 30th.

Led by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), *Strolling Thunder*™ New Jersey aims to bring attention to issues like quality child care, support for new parents and healthy starts for babies.

“What happens during the first few years of a child’s life has the potential to lay the foundation for the rest of their formative years and beyond. That’s why we’re sending a message to Governor Murphy and our legislature that early childhood matters,” said [ORGANIZER NAME/TITLE].

To get ready for *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey, [INSERT WHAT ACTIVITIES YOUR ORGANIZATION IS DOING].

Earlier this year, New Jersey was selected as one of six states for the national *Think Babies*™ campaign, with ACNJ leading the statewide effort. Supported by national early childhood advocacy group ZERO TO

THREE, the campaign aims to make the potential of every baby in New Jersey a priority in 2019 and beyond.

Additional information on New Jersey's *Think Babies* campaign and *Strolling Thunder* activities can be found at acnj.org.

For any additional questions, contact Patricia Canning via phone at 973.643.3876 or via email at pcanning@acnj.org.

Thank you for your supporting *Strolling Thunder* New Jersey, and continue to #ThinkBabies!