



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
125 WEST STATE STREET
TRENTON, NJ 08625

JON S. CORZINE
GOVERNOR

NINA MITCHELL WELLS
SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 15, 2009

CONTACT: SUSAN EVANS
PRESS OFFICE 609.777.0830

CALL FOR CITIZEN ACTION VOLUNTEER SERVICE IN HONOR OF MLK HOLIDAY

TRENTON, NJ – New Jersey Governor Jon S. Corzine and Secretary of State Nina Mitchell Wells have joined President-elect Barack Obama in calling for renewed focus on the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday as a national day of service. The federal King Holiday and Service Act, signed in 1994, challenges Americans to transform the MLK holiday into a day of citizen action volunteer service in honor of Dr. King.

President-elect Obama and his family plan to take part in service activities on the day before the inauguration, and are urging participation in widespread volunteer initiatives across the country, such as serving meals to the homeless, cleaning schools and neighborhoods, or helping disadvantaged youth and the elderly.

“Unlike past calls to service, President-elect Obama is asking Americans to do more than offer a single day of service to their communities, but to make an ongoing commitment,” said Gov. Corzine. “As a tribute to Dr. King’s legacy, I urge New Jerseyans to take part by becoming a volunteer with one of the state’s many worthy, charitable organizations.”

The Governor’s Office of Volunteerism and AmeriCorps, in the Department of State, are committed to increasing awareness of the need for volunteers statewide and simplifying the process of finding the most appropriate opportunity using a new, interactive volunteerism website, www.volunteernewjersey.org. The site is designed to serve as the state’s one-stop resource for individuals and organizations, facilitating communication and coordination efforts statewide.

Individuals can access volunteer opportunities, create a volunteer profile, search a continually updated calendar of events, and review agency outlines. Organizations can recruit volunteers, track staff hours, and publicize events. At present, there are more than 1,150 volunteer opportunities in 431 agencies, sorted by zip code, city or county, or statewide.

“With President-elect Obama and our future First Lady placing national service and volunteerism high on their agenda, this is a great time to get involved,” said Secretary Wells. “Among the commendable organizations looking for volunteer involvement are: the Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Junior Achievement, Boys and Girls Clubs, and **New Jersey After 3**, which provide mentoring, tutoring and enrichment activities to help young people succeed in school. Museums, historic societies, and cultural venues, which highlight the quality of life in our communities, could not survive without volunteers; and, of course, the Community Food Bank of New Jersey and food pantries throughout the state, assist those families in greatest need and are themselves in need of volunteer services.”

In addition, Gov. Corzine, Secretary Wells and the Department of State's Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission will host the Annual MLK Holiday Commemorative Celebration on Sunday, January 18, 2009, at 4:00 p.m. at the Patriots Theater at the War Memorial in Trenton, NJ.

The keynote speaker will be Senior Pastor and founder of Kingdom Church in Ewing, Reverend Dharius Daniels. Founder of Daniel's Den and the Kingdom Community Development Corporation, Pastor Daniels' organizations provide mentorship to adolescent and pre-teen males, exposing them to life changing opportunities and experiences that provide moral, financial, vocational and spiritual guidance.

Assistant Attorney General Shavar Jeffries, Esq. will deliver a community report on non-violence initiatives that are part of the Governor's Strategy for Safe Streets and Neighborhoods. As Counsel, Professor Jeffries, who is on leave from Seton Hall Law School, advises the Office of the Attorney General on legal issues and serves as liaison to various divisions within the Department of Law and Public Safety.

To reserve seats, please call 609-777-4134, or email at mlk@sos.state.nj.us. There is no cost to attend the Annual MLK Holiday Commemorative Celebration, and free parking is available at the Marriott Hotel parking Garage and the Liberty Commons Parking Garage at 16 E. Front Street.

To learn more about the diverse array of services and programs located within the Department of State, visit www.state.nj.us/state.

###