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### **AmeriCorps Launch Dedicates Ninth Year to "Global Issues. . . Local Action"**

New Jersey AmeriCorps members will launch a new season of service on Friday, October 18. More than 300 AmeriCorps members will pledge their commitment to serve New Jersey's communities at a program launching the new year of service.

**A swearing-in ceremony for the new AmeriCorps members is scheduled to begin at 10:00 a.m. in the General Assembly Chamber of the State House, Trenton.. In addition, AmeriCorps members will participate in community service events around the state to celebrate "Make a Difference Day" on Saturday, October 26 ([see attachment](#)).**

Following the swearing-in ceremony on October 18, participants will take a course in "AmeriCorp 101"; and attend workshops on such topics as Homeland Security or Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse. They will also give presentations on what their program plans to accomplish in the coming year.

"AmerCorps has proven itself over the years to be a vital program that has created many opportunities for people to serve their communities," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "I wish our newest members well as they begin their projects to improve the quality of life for all of us."

This year marks nine years of AmeriCorps service in New Jersey and will be dedicated to the theme of "Global Issues . . .Local Action". Highlighting this theme will be an AmeriCorps project called the Trenton Backpack Challenge. In this program, AmeriCorps members assembled age appropriate backpacks for children in foster care. The backpacks, broken down by age into four categories from infant to 17 years: included school supplies, health and beauty aids, disposable cameras, and "gift" items such as a stuffed animal, T-shirt, or CD.

One of the sponsors of the backpack challenge, Prudential Insurance Company of America, will be recognized for its contribution. Gabriella Morris, president of the Prudential Foundation and vice president of Community Resources of, Prudential Financial, Inc., is expected to speak about her organization's commitment to the community.

Jeffrey Vega, chair of the New Jersey Commission on National and Community Service, commended the AmeriCorps members for making a commitment for a year of service. "We are proud of the talents and dedication that you are bringing to the citizens of New Jersey," he said. "At a time when our country is challenged to be compassionate and patriotic, you set an example for us all."

"Make a Difference Day" is an annual national event that will involve more than 2 million participants in community service activities. [News media are invited and encouraged to cover activities highlighted on the attached list.](#)

AmeriCorps members perform one year of community service on projects such as increasing literacy skills, providing safe havens for children to learn and play in after school programs, working with families and senior citizens to combat poverty and homelessness, mentoring juvenile offenders, and conducting environmental cleanups.

Members also generate thousands of hours of volunteer support across New Jersey by encouraging broader community involvement in service initiatives. In return, they receive a modest living allowance of \$9,600 and an education award of \$4,725 to help pay for college or pay back student loans.

For more information about the launch ceremony, "Make a Difference Day" activities, or AmeriCorps, please contact Rowena Madden, 609-633-9627; or Sherry Mahfouz, 609-633-2701.