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Mayor Fulop Joins the Corporation for National and Community Service in Mayor’s Day Event to Promote Volunteerism; Announces First AmeriCorps VISTA Project for City Hall

The VISTA Project Represents a \$550,000 Federal Investment Over Three Years; Volunteers to Focus on Economic Opportunity and Youth Development

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop was joined today by the **New Jersey State Director of the Corporation for National and Community Service**, as well as representatives of local non-profit Rising Tide Capital, at a press conference highlighting community service and volunteerism as part of the Annual **Mayor’s Day of Recognition for National Service**.

During the press conference, **Mayor Fulop also announced a new City Hall AmeriCorps VISTA project** that will promote economic opportunity and youth development among low-income Jersey City residents. The new **AmeriCorps VISTA project represents a federal investment of over \$550,000 over the next three years.**

“We know the role that volunteerism and community service play in improving cities, which is why we sought this opportunity to work with the Corporation for National and Community Service,” said Mayor **Fulop**. “With the AmeriCorps VISTA program we will expand our municipal capacity to develop innovative approaches to solving issues around poverty and economic opportunity without increasing the cost to taxpayers. We are continually seeking projects such as this, as well as private and public grants, so we can improve services, offer more programs, and provide greater opportunities and an improved quality of life for residents.”

Jersey City’s team of VISTAs will perform interdepartmental support through various divisions of city government. Their projects will focus on anti-poverty initiatives through the Resident Response Center (RRC), the Mayor’s Quality of Life Task Force (MQLTF) and the Division of Community Development (DCD) and will also engage employers to better connect residents with job opportunities, as well as expanding employment and enrichment opportunities for youth.

Their assignments will align with the City’s commitment to the My Brothers’ Keeper and Cities of Service campaigns and brings together leadership and partnerships that promise to magnify and strengthen efforts around six White House-identified goals that aim to empower the community’s most vulnerable residents.

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VISTA volunteers will help create, manage and sustain systems for collecting data through focus groups, surveys, interviews, legislative reviews, research, analysis, and other activities. Their work will largely involve outreach to key community stakeholders, including non-profit leaders, advocates, clergy, businesses, faith-based leaders, and other key components of anti-poverty programs in the community.

Additionally, volunteers will be actively communicating with local businesses, small and large, to encourage buy-in and investment in the local workforce by supporting training for current and future labor force needs and playing an active role in job placement. VISTA volunteers will be critical to establishing these connections with community partners from various sectors, helping to facilitate the connection between the needs of low-income residents, the prescriptions employed to address those needs, and the goals and objectives for individuals in poverty and the program as a whole.

“I am proud to be working with Mayor Fulop as we continue to strengthen communities through national service,” said **Wendy Spencer, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service**. “Mayors are leaders who get things done. They know first-hand the value of national service in tackling city problems. I commend Mayor Fulop for working with us to improve lives and strengthen communities through national service.”

Over the next three years, with the addition of the AmeriCorps VISTA project at City Hall, the Corporation for National and Community Service will invest over \$1 million of federal resources in Jersey City. Currently, Jewish Family Services of Metro West, Rising Tide Capital and the Salvation Army Newark Area Services are tackling challenges faced by Jersey City residents through the AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps VISTA, Foster Grandparent, RSVP and Senior Companion programs.

“We are truly impressed with the level of passion, competency, and professionalism displayed by our nine AmeriCorps VISTAs,” said **Alfa Demmelsh, Chief Executive Officer of Rising Tide Capital**. “We are thrilled to recognize their commitment to the Jersey City community and dedication to service. Their hard work has enabled us to make significant progress on all fronts at Rising Tide Capital. Before the VISTA program RTC was serving 245 entrepreneurs per year. In just five years, our VISTAs have helped us reach nearly 700 entrepreneurs annually.”

As the federal agency for service and volunteering, CNCS annually engages more than five million citizens in service at more than 60,000 locations in 8,500 cities across the country through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other programs. National service participants address the most pressing challenges facing our cities and nation, from educating students for the jobs of the 21st century and supporting veterans and military families to preserving the environment and helping communities recover from natural disasters.

2015 marks the 50th Anniversary of AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America). VISTA engages more than 7,700 Americans annually to support community efforts to overcome poverty. The program’s nationwide corps of VISTAs volunteer fulltime for a year at nonprofit organizations or local government agencies to build the capacity of these organizations to carry out programs that fight poverty.

ABOUT THE MAYOR'S DAY OF RECOGNITION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

More than 2,000 mayors will participate in the Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service - a nationwide bipartisan effort to recognize the positive impact of national service in tackling city problems, to thank those who serve, and to encourage citizens to give back to their communities. The day is sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the National League of Cities, and Cities of Service. For more information on the Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service, including background and a list of participating mayors, visit www.nationalservice.gov/mayorsforservice.

All media inquiries should be directed to Jennifer Morrill, Press Secretary to Mayor Steven M. Fulop at 201-547-4836 or 201-376-0699.////