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DYCD and NYC Service Kick Off Summer of Service 2011

Young People From Across the City Begin Service Projects to Improve Their Neighborhoods

Sunset Park, Brooklyn – Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav and NYC Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford today kicked off the third annual Summer of Service Initiative at the 64th Street Community Garden in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. One of 16 service-oriented projects taking place throughout the city this summer, youth volunteers at this site began the work of planting this year’s crops, including the addition of a new pumpkin patch. The project, which is being administered by Center for Family Life, a program of SCO Family of Services, will engage more than 500 young people and area residents over the next five weeks.

“It’s with great pride that we launch another year of Summer of Service,” said **DYCD Commissioner Jeanne B. Mullgrav**. “Summer of Service gives our young people the chance to identify a problem in their community and to work toward a solution. It’s a program that taps into one of the most powerful sources of positive change in our City – our youth.”

“This year marks the third *Summer of Service* for our City’s youth, and the projects they have planned address the City’s most pressing issues, from improving public health to protecting the environment, so we know that their service will make a difference where it matters most,” said **NYC Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford**. “At NYC Service, we realize that youth are one of the most powerful sources of positive change across our City, and that’s why we work to ensure that every young person in New York City has the opportunity to serve. I applaud the young people who will serve their communities this summer and encourage them to make a lifelong commitment to giving back through service and volunteerism.”

Summer of Service is made possible by a generous grant from the Neuberger Berman Foundation. This summer, 16 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) will administer projects that will engage nearly 2,000 elementary, middle and high school youth volunteers and more than 1,300 area residents. Projects vary in scope from organizing a farmer’s market on Staten Island to training young people to promote health and wellness in Northern Manhattan.

“Neuberger Berman is thrilled to continue its role as the sponsor of Summer of Service, funding the creative, varied and important initiatives, such as this one, taking place across our city over the summer,” said **Elizabeth Rabii Cribbs, Treasurer of the Neuberger Berman Foundation**. We strongly believe in the value of community service and are so proud to be able to support the efforts of the thousands of youth and community members engaged in these programs.”

Work on the 64th Street Community Garden began last year during the Summer of Service Initiative. This year, the volunteers will place five new gardening beds at the site, in addition to hosting a series of events designed to bring area residents to the garden, including the “Fresh Food Festival” later this summer.

“We began work on this garden because our young people wanted to learn more about the food they eat,” said **John Kixmiller, Summer of Service Program Coordinator at SCO/Center for Family Life**. “This year, we are expanding the project by adding a pumpkin patch that the youth can harvest during our Halloween Festival. After two ‘fruitful’ years, it’s clear that our young people take away more than just the flowers, fruits and vegetables we grow; they learn about the environment and the key to a healthy and balanced diet - something that they will take with them throughout the rest of their lives.”

NYC Service was launched by Mayor Bloomberg in April 2009 to meet his State of the City pledge for New York City to lead the nation in answering President Obama’s national call to service. The program has three core goals: help more New Yorkers connect to service opportunities more easily, target volunteers to address the city’s greatest challenges and promote service as a core part of what it means to be a citizen of the greatest city in the world. NYC Service aims to drive volunteer resources to six impact areas where New York City’s needs are greatest: strengthening communities, helping neighbors in need, education, health, emergency preparedness and the environment. New Yorkers can find opportunities to serve their communities by visiting www.nyc.gov or by calling 311.

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