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CONTACT: Tim Smith
617.373.5312, t.smith@neu.edu
www.masspromisefellows.org

2ND ANNUAL “OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE” MOBILIZES YOUTH ACROSS THE STATE TO EFFECT COMMUNITY CHANGE

Massachusetts Promise Fellowship Joins Worldwide Youth Service Movement

BOSTON, MA – The Massachusetts Promise Fellowship, an AmeriCorps organization that places Fellows who commit to a year of service at non-profit organizations, schools, and city agencies across Massachusetts to create, lead, and manage youth development projects, will host Opportunity To Serve, their second annual statewide day of service on Saturday, April 24th, 2010. The event will mobilize more than 250 volunteers of all ages to participate in Boston, Brockton, and Fall River. Millions of children and youth in the United States and in more than 80 countries are planning service and service-learning projects that highlight the positive contributions young people make throughout the year as a part of the 22nd annual Global Youth Service Weekend.

Last year, the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship celebrated its tenth year as a program by participating in Global Youth Service Day with the first annual Opportunity To Serve. This year, they have expanded on last year's event with a new initiative that incorporates youth voice throughout the process. This has involved the creation of a Youth Board that has overseen the project since its inception, taking the lead on all planning, marketing, & recruitment. The event will consist of five individual projects taking place simultaneously across the state in Brockton, Fall River, and in the Boston neighborhoods of Dorchester, Mission Hill, and the South End. These projects were selected through a competitive RFP process, with proposals that were co-written by youth and reviewed by the Youth Board. The Youth Board has also been integral in planning the day's events through promotion, logistics, and volunteers.

“The rising momentum of the youth service movement is a shining example of the positive change that stems from young people contributing to their communities,” said Steve Culbertson, president and CEO of Youth Service America. “Global Youth Service Day is a powerful glimpse into the year-round participation of young volunteers. It is also an opportune time to connect children and youth who have never served with local projects that will inspire them to lead a life of service.”

Each Opportunity To Serve project will be hosted by a Massachusetts Promise Fellowship site and will be open to everyone, but especially geared towards youth, giving them an opportunity

Massachusetts Promise Fellowship

Northeastern University ♦ 360 Huntington Avenue ♦ 212 Columbus Place ♦ Boston, MA 02115

Phone: 617-373-5312 ♦ Fax: 617-373-5608

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to serve their communities. In Dorchester, America SCORES New England will host a soccer field restoration project at Hambree (Franklin) field that will also include soccer workshops and games. The City of Brockton Mayor's Office will host "Transformation Brockton", a beautification project at the Brockton Teen Center, transforming it into the vibrant space that area youth have proposed. In Mission Hill, Sociedad Latina will host a large Spring Cleanup project that will include art projects, community gardening, and park beautification. The Greater Fall River re-Creation Committee will host a Youth PEACE (Promising Encouraging Active Community Engagement) Day that will include educational workshops, team building activities, and afternoon service projects throughout Fall River. And finally, in the South End, St. Stephen's Youth Programs will host "Restoring Lenox!", a project that will put the ideas and desires of the young people involved in the LEARN @ Lenox Afterschool program into action and breathe new life into the program's home on Lenox Street.

The Youth Board, comprised of seven high school aged youth, representing four Massachusetts Promise Fellowship host sites, has been planning the event since December, and excited to finally see the fruits of their labor, "This event was planned by youth for youth so people can see that youth do care and want to make a difference in their community", said Youth Board member, Vickie Miranda. The combination of the Youth Board leading five youth-serving organizations across the state makes for a truly unique event, even for Global Youth Service Day. Kori Redepenning, Director of the Fellowship explains, "the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship has been working to deliver needed resources to the youth of the Commonwealth for the past 11 years and Opportunity To Serve shows us what youth can do when they are empowered with these resources."

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The Massachusetts Promise Fellowship is a statewide, full-time AmeriCorps program, hosted at Northeastern University. The Fellowship places AmeriCorps Promise Fellows in nonprofit organizations, schools and government agencies for youth development focused community service work. The Fellowship has placed over 200 Fellows at over 80 host sites to provide over 350,000 hours to communities across Massachusetts in its eleven years as a program. For more information, visit www.masspromisefellows.org.

Youth Service America improves communities by increasing the number and the diversity of children and youth, ages 5-25, serving in substantive roles. Founded in 1986, YSA is an international nonprofit resource center that partners with thousands of organizations in more than 100 countries to expand the impact of the youth service movement with families, communities, schools, corporations, and governments. For more information, visit www.YSA.org.

Global Youth Service Day is the largest youth service event in the world and is a year-round effort to expand the impact of the youth service movement. The initiative launches new service organizations, policy changes, and sustainable service programs to create a culture of engaged youth. State Farm Companies Foundation is the presenting sponsor in the United States. Planning Tool Kits, Service-Learning Curriculum Guides, Classroom Posters, Micro-Finance Grants, and more are available for youth, parents, teachers, and organizations. To view a map of all GYSD projects, visit www.GYSD.org/map.

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