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Congressional Delegation Joined Lt. Gov. Denn to Kick Off Two Mentoring Programs in Delaware; Surrounded By Mentors and Supporters in Dover for Announcement

DOVER, Del. (Friday, October 8, 2010) - This afternoon, Sens. Tom Carper and Ted Kaufman (both D-Del.), Cong. Mike Castle (R-Del.), and Lt. Gov. Matt Denn (D-Del.) joined the Greater Dover Committee, the Capital School District, Connecting Generations, Big Brothers Big Sisters of DE, Communities in Schools, the Department of Education, local organizations and mentors to announce two programs that will have a significant impact on mentoring in the state of Delaware; the Capital Mentors' Program and the Connecting Generations' AmeriCorps Youth Ambassador program in partnership with Communities in Schools.

The event was held at North Dover Elementary School in the Capital School District, whose Superintendent, Dr. Michael D. Thomas, said, **"We were happy to host this event today. Mentors make a huge difference in the lives of our students and the support provided by the community to help students be successful is invaluable."**

Federal, state and local government officials, education, corporate and non-profit leaders were on hand to provide encouragement and support to the mentors and AmeriCorps members as these two programs start. In May, 2010, Connecting Generations received a \$126,000 federal grant to help hire 11 new AmeriCorps members to volunteer in local schools. **"I have been a mentor for nearly 15 years and find it one of the most rewarding things in my life," said Sen. Carper. "Mentoring works and I salute those here today who are not only mentors, but encouraging their employees and members of their communities to help change lives through mentoring."**

The two programs announced today were:

- o The Capital Mentors Program, which is a community-wide collaboration led by the Greater Dover Committee in partnership with the Capital School District, Connecting Generations, Big Brothers Big Sisters and Communities in Schools; and
- o The Connecting Generations AmeriCorps Youth Ambassador Program, in partnership with Communities in Schools, which will place AmeriCorps members in 10 schools in Dover and Wilmington.

"Both the Capital Mentors Program and Connecting Generations' AmeriCorps Youth Ambassador Program will help young Delawareans build a strong intellectual and developmental foundation that will serve them their whole lives," said Sen. Kaufman. "Not only do mentoring programs like these greatly benefit the mentees, they're proven to have a positive impact on the community at large."

"These programs provide opportunities to our young people and help to strengthen communities throughout our state," said Congressman Castle. "This grant to Connecting Generations AmeriCorps Youth Ambassador Program and the Capital Mentors Program will motivate young adults to get involved in their community, inspire pre-teens to make a difference, and have a positive impact on Delaware's students."

Ed Dulin, representing the Greater Dover Committee said, "The thrill of watching the Capital Mentors program grow from inception of the initial idea in the spring of 2009 to its implementation in the fall of 2010 has been very gratifying. The Dover community has rallied around students and is working to make the future of the Greater Dover area brighter by working with its future movers and shakers."

The goal of the Capital Mentors Program is to build and sustain a district-wide mentoring program for students in the Capital School District. While the focus of the program is initially the Capital School District, the group hopes to expand it to include all of the schools in Kent County in the future. **"The partnership among the three non profits and the Greater Dover Committee offers the best opportunity I have seen in 27 years to provide the highest quality mentoring service to more students than would otherwise be possible working alone," said Joe Duffy of Big Brother Big Sisters of DE.**

Local organizations including Kraft Foods, the City of Dover, and Dover Downs are supporters of the mentoring program and are encouraging their employees to mentor. Students from Wesley College, Delaware State University, Delaware Technical and Community College, Wilmington University and Dover High School are also lending their support and time.

The primary role of the AmeriCorps Program will be to have members serve as Mentor Coordinators in targeted schools. The mentor coordinators will help recruit, train and place adult and high school mentors with students in grades K-12. They will then support those

mentors in partnering site based programs. **Lt. Gov Matt Denn, who has made mentoring one of his top priorities said, "The importance of mentoring cannot be understated. It is a necessary support system for students that can be provided by the community. Many students need extra help and support from a caring adult or high school student, and this program will fill that need."**

The AmeriCorps members, called Youth Ambassadors, will also provide "integrated student services" to identified students using the Communities in Schools model. Finally, they will promote community service with all students in these same schools. **Jim Purcell, President of Communities in Schools said, "Bringing all of the resources in the community to bear to help individual students stay in school and be successful is something I am proud to be involved in. Our goal is to integrate learning in and out of the classrooms - some valuable lessons can be taught and learned while helping others."**

The AmeriCorps program is partially funded by a grant of \$126,000 from the Corporation for National and Community Service. AmeriCorps members receive a modest living allowance of \$12,600, student loan forbearance, individual health care and child care for those who qualify. After successfully completing their term of service, they receive an AmeriCorps education award of \$5,330. The AmeriCorps Education award can be matched at nearly 100 colleges and universities, including the University of Delaware, making the total award \$10,660. The education award is transferable to your child, grandchild or foster child if you are at least 55 when starting your term of service.

Rich Kapolka, Executive Director of Connecting Generations said, "Both of these programs promote volunteer service and have the ability to be replicated in other schools and districts in the years to come. We are happy that the Federal Government is providing additional funds and the Greater Dover Committee is providing leadership to help engage citizens in one of our most important goals - helping all students be successful."

We still need caring adults in the lives of our youth. If you have an hour a week and an interest in making a difference in the life of a child, please visit www.capitalmentors.org website and apply to be a mentor.

Questions regarding the Greater Dover Committee can be addressed to Shelly Cecchett, Executive Director at (302) 734-2513, greaterdovercommittee@comcast.net.

Questions regarding the Youth Ambassador's AmeriCorps Program can be addressed to Iazia McTeer, AmeriCorps Program Director at 302-656-2122 ext. 16, imcteer@connecting-generations.org, or Rachel Markowitz, Creative Mentoring Director, 302.656.2122 ext. 15, Rmarkowitz@connecting-generations.org.

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