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Volunteer Center of South Jersey (VCSJ) joins with Jersey Cares

Sewell, NJ –. The Volunteer Center of South Jersey, along with the Jersey Cares Board of Directors, is proud to announce the Volunteer Center’s merger with Jersey Cares earlier this month. Jersey Cares is a leading organization focused on meaningful volunteering in New Jersey and whose mission also serves volunteers, nonprofits, and communities across the State. The Volunteer Center of South Jersey (VCSJ) is now a program of Jersey Cares and will continue to operate under the Volunteer Center of South Jersey name, in recognition of its longstanding work and commitment in the South Jersey Region.

The merger has been underway since December 2019, when Michele Francesconi, former VCSJ Executive Director, and Brian Dean, CEO at Jersey Cares, saw an opportunity to strengthen their existing partnership and bring the organizations together to serve all New Jersey communities. COVID, however, had other plans, and talks of joining the two volunteer organizations took a back seat to the global pandemic. While the timing was not ideal to complete a merger, it turned out that COVID created a perfect storm that strengthened that partnership, as the two organizations worked more closely to address critical needs of communities statewide. The support of the Volunteer Center by Jersey Cares through the pandemic was invaluable, as Jersey Cares donated staff and other resources to address community needs in South Jersey without hesitation.

Since 2017, under the direction of Michele Francesconi (Epifani), VCSJ has collaborated on several initiatives and programs with Jersey Cares. The more recent list includes launching the New Jersey Family Day of Service initiative statewide, expanding the VCSJ Campus Connect Program to include Jersey Cares’ Youth Workforce Development and Jersey Cares Club Programs, as well as the expansion of the Volunteer Center’s Nonprofit Institute and the capacity building team. “It’s really simple, in that these two organizations complement each other across the board. VCSJ has always been a small but mighty team, and with the merger and support of Jersey Cares over the past three years especially, we are now in a strong position to bring the proven Jersey Cares programs to South Jersey. And The Volunteer Center brings the nonprofit capacity building and education programs to the northern part of the State. I said to Brian, when we came together in 2019, now we don’t have to turn anyone away,” said Francesconi.

VCSJ and Jersey Cares share the same mission, goals, and objectives by improving our communities at large, connecting volunteers with opportunities to serve, and strengthening the nonprofit community with effective volunteer engagement. Francesconi continues to serve as the VP of Capacity Building Training & Strategic Initiatives for Jersey Cares and will continue to oversee operations in the South Jersey Office.

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The Volunteer Center, originally the Volunteer Center of Gloucester County, an independent 501(c)(3), was launched in 1996 to serve the non-profit and volunteer community, addressing community needs by providing connections for volunteers and best practice resources and education to the nonprofits where volunteers served. The organization continued to evolve and expanded to encompass 6 additional counties that make up the South Jersey region. In 2013, The Center changed its name to the Volunteer Center of South Jersey. In 2019, VCSJ's growth and presence at the Rowan College of South Jersey (RCSJ) Campus opened the door to create a premiere partnership with RCSJ, serving students and staff on both the Gloucester and Cumberland County Campuses, as the College's Volunteer & Civic Engagement Office.

"We are looking forward to this new chapter in our history with our non-profit and community partners, and our volunteer base becoming a part of the larger Jersey Cares Family," says Cody Miller, former VCSJ Board President. "This is the perfect example of realizing that we are stronger together than we are apart, in that we can better serve and address the needs of our communities in New Jersey," Miller added.

About the Volunteer Center

The Volunteer Center of South Jersey (VCSJ) was established as a private, independent 501c3 non-profit organization in 1996. VCSJ is a volunteer action center (VAC) in South Jersey, covering seven counties from Burlington to Cape May. Our mission is to change lives, empower families, and improve our community through volunteerism and the support of local non-profit organizations. The center offers best practices in civic engagement through education (workshops, publications, webinars, etc.) for volunteers (individual and groups) and organizations (business and non-profit). For more information, please visit www.sjvolunteers.org.

About Jersey Cares

Jersey Cares is a dynamic nonprofit organization that meets community needs by making volunteering easy and meaningful. Volunteers can sign up for well-managed, team-oriented service projects via simple online registration, choose a time and location that is convenient for them, and commit only to one day at a time according to their individual schedules and interests. Additionally, employees of Jersey Cares' corporate partners take part in projects custom-designed for their participation. Last year, Jersey Cares created volunteer opportunities for more than 20,000 people who contributed more than 70,000 hours of service to local communities through such work as tutoring children, enriching the lives of seniors, feeding the homeless, improving the environment and much more. For more information, please visit www.jerseycares.org.

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