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Village Southwest Curfew Center Seeks Volunteers
Celebrating 1st Anniversary of Successful Service to the Community

(Rosemont, PA) The Presbyterian Children's Village Southwest Curfew Center is celebrating one year of successfully helping the community and is recruiting volunteers to help sustain its work in this crucial area. The Curfew Center operates Thursday through Sunday nights and is housed to the Preheim Center, located at 6517 Chester Avenue.

Presbyterian Children's Village operates the Curfew in collaboration with DHS, DBH, Philadelphia Safe and Sound and the 12th Police District. It is one of 11 curfew centers located throughout the City. Darlene Hewett, President and CEO of Presbyterian Children's Village, said "The effectiveness of the Village as an organization and our ability to respond to the changing needs of at-risk children would not be possible without volunteers, their support, and their faith in our work."

The Southwest Curfew Center opened March 22, 2007. Since the opening, more than 320 curfew violators have been brought to the center, with only 7 as "repeats". On an average Thursday or Friday night, 7-10 children are brought to the curfew center by police officers from the 12th Police District. The average figure rises to 10-15 on Saturday and Sunday nights. As many as 28 youths have been brought in on one night during the warmer weather.

"As a result of curfew center operations around the city, the number of kids involved in city crime has decreased," said Curfew Center Director Christine Riddick. She further noted that "our overall concern is the quality of life for the kids. The structure of the Curfew Center allows us to address the needs of the whole family. The use of volunteers allows the Curfew Centers to be provided in partnership with the community."

The guiding principal behind curfew centers is the health and safety of our children. Curfew centers help reduce larger systemic problems such as truancy by empowering parents to more effectively care for and supervise their children, and by connecting the family to crucial resources. Before taking youth to the Curfew Center, police officers first make certain that they aren't wanted for criminal activity, that they have no weapons, and

that there are no drugs or alcohol involved. At the Center, youth go through an intake process to gather information, and parents or guardians are contacted. The youth can be released only to a parent or guardian or a person authorized by the parent or guardian. In the event, no one comes to retrieve the youth, the youth is taken to DHS in the morning and efforts to contact the family are continued. In many instances, youth are fed and sometimes provided with a warm jacket and often the child and family are referred for other essential services. Last summer, a 4 year-old boy in pajamas was brought to the center and given clothing before he was safely returned to his mother. This Center's attributes much of success to the strong partnership with the 12th Police District of Philadelphia.

Volunteers work at the Village curfew center on Thursday through Sunday nights. The center, like all other city curfew centers, is open from 9pm to 7am, operating in two shifts. A behavioral health specialist is also provided as a part of the Curfew Center programming and is on duty all night to provide professional assessment as necessary.

There are a variety of roles that volunteers may perform. The most critical need is in the processing of the paper work generated as a result of each child that is brought to the center. Intake clerks fill out forms to get appropriate information about each curfew violator, and retrievers/runners are needed to make copies of the paperwork and forward it to appropriate City agencies such as the Department of Human Services. Other volunteer duties include center preparation and cleanup, food preparation, contacting parents, mentoring youth, assisting other center staff, and community outreach. Although it would be helpful for volunteers to have experience working with youth in behavioral health situations, it is not required.

The Southwest Curfew Center currently has five dedicated volunteers. As warmer weather approaches, the Curfew Center projects it will need at least four more community volunteers. Under the auspices of the Village, other program volunteers are sought for the Bartram Beacon program at John Bartram High School, after-school programs, and particularly for the Adolescent Violence Reduction Program (AVRP) where at least 10-15 volunteers are critically needed.

Each volunteer is asked to provide background information, including, criminal background checks, and child abuse clearances. The costs for these clearances are paid by the City. Volunteers are provided with training and orientation including a tour of the center, instructions on assisting parents or guardians to complete the required paper work and an explanation of general center rules.

In return for the dedicated services in giving back to their community, volunteers are annually recognized by both the Village and Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS).

Recent budget cuts to the Philadelphia Safe and Sound program have impacted a number of programs of Presbyterian Children's Village. Talks with the city continue as the new administration works with agencies to ensure needed services are available for at-risk

children. From the beginning, the Curfew Center has relied heavily on the dedication of volunteers.

For further information about volunteering for the Village Curfew Center Program, please contact Christine Riddick at the Village Preheim Center, 215-878-2480. Information about additional volunteer opportunities, such as work with after-school programs, can be obtained by calling 610-525-5400, emailing the Village at village@pcv.org, or by viewing the Village website at www.pcv.org.

Founded as an orphanage in 1877, the Presbyterian Children's Village today is a non-profit corporation dedicated to the healing of the spirits of children, families and communities broken by violence, addiction, poverty, mental illness, racism, and other serious societal problems. The Village, from its two facilities in Rosemont and South West Philadelphia, serves about 10,000 children and parents each year most of whom are from the Greater Philadelphia region. The Village provides a continuum of services to children and families including residential services for troubled teens, community-based child welfare services, behavioral health services and an array of prevention services.

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