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Jazz-Packed Opening Session Kicks Off Conference

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Volunteers Give Sam Bonart Park a Facelift

More than 150 volunteers converged on Sam Bonart Park in the Lower Ninth Ward Monday morning for the culmination of the Road to the Gulf, a program of HandsOn Network and University of Phoenix.

“Community service is an integral part of our mission at University of Phoenix,” said Pat Gottfried, vice president of community investment for University of Phoenix.

“The Road to the Gulf has enriched communities across the country and has helped address significant community challenges – from New Orleans to those affected by recent flooding and tornadoes. We thank everyone who played a part and hope they continue to find ways to create change.”

At Sam Bonart Park, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu was joined by players from the New Orleans Hornets, Points of Light Institute CEO Michelle Nunn, Points of Light Institute Board Chairman Neil Bush, Corporation for National and Community Service Board Chairman Mark Gearan and leaders from the Points of Light Corporate Service Council in projects throughout the park.

Volunteers installed new playground equipment, built soccer fields including setting up nets and goals, built benches for the baseball and soccer fields, repaired damaged concrete on basketball courts, installed new lighting and signage, painted murals and beautified the area.

Sam Bonart Park is the only park within the Lower Ninth Ward, a low-income area devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Since the storm, the park has fallen into disrepair and has been largely unavailable to the children who have returned to their homes.

Books and Beignets Anyone?

Talk with featured authors over bring-your-own beignets and coffee. These Tuesday and Wednesday morning book club-style sessions invite participants to join in intimate discussions with featured authors. Here’s a taste:

“SHIFT AND RESET: Strategies for Addressing Serious Issues in a Connected Society” by Brian Reich (5709) teaches the nonprofit/social change/philanthropy community how to take advantage of rapidly changing technologies and the new communication ecosystem that exists in our connected society.

“The Power of “What If?”... Extra Mile America: Stories of Inspiration, Possibility and Purpose” by Shawn Anderson (5739) provides empowering stories of people who took initiative, pushed forward and created incredible change.

Learn about Excellence in Employee Volunteering

Trends of Excellence in Employee Volunteering, the first in a series of reports compiled by the HandsOn Network Business member program, analyzes employee volunteer programs (EVP) to identify the practices associated with excellence.

The report, which focuses on the basic infrastructure and company support in excellent EVPs, found companies should:

• House the EVP where it seems most productive
• Consider investing at least $179 per employee
• Employ an EVP team of at least one full-time staff position for every 28,000 employees

The report is based on information from the 2010 Points of Light Institute Corporate Engagement Awards of Excellence finalist companies. Subsequent reports will address other aspects of excellent EVPs, including strategies, policies and activities.

Paying It Forward, New Orleans Style

Yesterday afternoon Mayor Mitch Landrieu joined conference officials to “send-off” a team of locals to Joplin, Mo. Led by Greg Reggio and the Taste Buds, a local culinary company, and under the heading of “Three Chefs: One Mission,” the group will aid the victims of the devastating tornado that took the lives of 138 people and destroyed almost 40 percent of the city.

Among the conference officials joining Mayor Landrieu were Michelle Nunn, CEO of Points of Light Institute, and director of AmeriCorps John Gomperts. The contingent, including a caravan of refrigerated trucks, trailers, cooking equipment, tents, generators, buses and a music stage, left from the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans and will provide more than 1,000 people with fresh Louisiana seafood.

“Three New Orleanians are true champions of service,” said Mayor Landrieu. “We know what the good people of Joplin are facing; we’ve been where they are.”

The team, including restaurant partners from the Louisiana Seafood Promotion and Marketing Board, musician Amanda Shaw and volunteers left for Joplin minutes before the kick-off of the conference to celebrate the spirit of Paying it Forward.

“This taste of New Orleans culture will be greatly appreciated by the hard-working volunteers and residents of Joplin who are coming back from a terrible disaster with a strong spirit of resiliency and hope,” said Gomperts. “Just as in New Orleans, volunteers and national service participants are playing an essential role in helping Joplin get back on its feet.”

POLI Corporate Service Council Names Leader

Points of Light Institute’s Corporate Service Council (CSC), a group of more than 40 companies that are leading and inspiring the business community to increase civic impact through innovation, sharing of best practices and the application of human capital and financial results good, has new leadership.

Cliff Burrows, president, Starbucks Coffee U.S., has been named chairman of CSC. Burrows succeeds John Rice, vice chairman of GE.

“Engaging people to participate in meaningful service is a positive force to drive positive change in our communities,” said Burrows. “Companies have a responsibility to address these critical issues. The Corporate Service Council provides an opportunity to bring the influence and business acumen of corporations to the public sector. Working together we’re better equipped to answer the call to action around issues of importance to the neighborhoods in which we do business.”

Corporate partnerships are vital to Points of Light Institute’s mission to inspire, equip and mobilize volunteer service. By leveraging the power of their employees, members of the CSC are able to deliver high-impact service and volunteer leadership that is resulting in stronger neighborhoods, schools and nonprofits across the country.

After Hurricane Katrina, National Service participants served 1.6 million meals, refurbished 10,500 homes, built 2,000 new homes and managed 650,000 volunteers.

Gov. Barbour, Acting CNCS CEO, Director of White House Domestic Policy Address Service Community

In this morning’s National Service session (5668), Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour, White House Domestic Policy Director Melody Barnes, Acting CNCS CEO Robert Velasco and CNCS Board Chair Mark Gearan will explore how national service is pioneering innovative approaches to solve national challenges, and giving volunteers and nonprofits the tools and talent to tackle a host of issues. We’ll recognize the Peace Corps 50th anniversary, see a powerful video showing the impact of volunteers in the wake of disaster and learn more about national service’s strategic focus for the future.