



## News Release

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Communities In Schools of New Orleans to Participate in One of the Nation's Largest Volunteer Gatherings**

*Support Will Be Given to Every Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Public School Student in the City*

New Orleans, La. – During a time when President Obama has called Americans to a “Summer of Service,” Communities In Schools of New Orleans is proud to join hundreds of organizations in one of the largest three-day volunteer programs in the country. Sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Jesus Justice and Jazz” will bring 24,000 high school students and 12,000 adults to New Orleans to help the city in its continuing recovery efforts.

The gathering is organized around six key themes – Health and Wellness, Literacy, Housing, the Environment, Arts and Culture, and Wealth and Poverty – and will contain service activities under each theme. Organizations and volunteers will partner in service activities under each theme that highlight what can be done when individuals come together in a cause larger than themselves.

“We have been anticipating the arrival of these young people for more than two years and are pleased that the Gathering leadership chose to include literacy and education as a theme area so that participants can learn about the importance of improving literacy skills as our nation grapples with reversing the epidemic of school dropouts. The service component of this project is also an outstanding example of what President Obama is calling for in his United We Serve initiative,” said Sara Massey, executive director, Communities In Schools of New Orleans, Inc.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated the New Orleans school system, and many schools are still struggling to provide students with the tools they need to learn and prepare for college and life. With this in mind, Communities In Schools of New Orleans and volunteers from the AmeriCorps service program will coordinate 400 youth volunteers over three days in service that underscores the importance of literacy and education in young people's lives.

Meeting at Sarah T. Reed High School, a Recovery School District-run school located in the heavily devastated community known as New Orleans East, youth volunteers will focus on the importance of advocacy in improving academic outcomes, especially in the area of literacy. They will be encouraged to commit to ways they can continue to give back to their communities even after the gathering ends.

A documentary on New Orleans will be aired that will serve as a springboard to a discussion about social justice and the importance of supporting public education. As a final call to service, Communities In Schools of New Orleans and AmeriCorps volunteers will lead the youth in the

assembling of 13,550 kits – one for every Kindergartner through 3<sup>rd</sup> grader in the New Orleans public school system – that will contain school supplies that are often unavailable in economically disadvantaged districts. The supplies were donated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

For more information on how to become involved in what will truly be a unique gathering, please contact CIS of New Orleans at 504-486-8002.

Communities In Schools of New Orleans is the Louisiana affiliate of the nation's largest dropout prevention organization. Founded in 1996, Communities In Schools New Orleans is working with ten K-12 schools in New Orleans, coordinating direct services for students that help them stay in school, learn, achieve, and be prepared for life. More than 70% of Communities In Schools' tracked students show improvement in academic achievement, attendance, behavior and promotion to the next grade level. Visit our website at [www.CISNewOrleans.org](http://www.CISNewOrleans.org)

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Media welcome.

Dates: July 23-25 (Thurs-Sat)

Location: Sarah T. Reed High School, 5316 Michoud Blvd, New Orleans

Best time for pictures/video: 12:45-2:00 pm

Interviews welcome: 10:30 am - 4:00 pm