



Contact: Kimberley Lee, Vice President Advancement
tel. - (w) 413-858-3108 (cell) 413-563-6049
email: klee@startatsquareone.org

► **MEDIA ADVISORY** ◀

Emerson Wight Park Slated For Sprucing

Springfield College AmeriCorps students plan park rehab to benefit Springfield families

(Springfield, Ma...) August 25, 2008 - Having just turned 100, Emerson Wight is getting a face lift. Emerson Wight Park, that is!

As a component of the AmeriCorps orientation scheduled from August 26th to the 28th, Springfield College is collaborating with Square One, Springfield Parks and Recreation, and Springfield City Hall to clean Emerson Wight Park. **On Thursday, August 28th from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** more than 50 AmeriCorps members will join Square One and Springfield Park and Recreation staff to provide much-needed TLC to the 100-year old park and playground.

Springfield's Emerson Wight Park and Playground is listed on the Commonwealth's inventory of Historic and Archaeological assets, and a significant part of the Nathan Bill legacy of Springfield's park system. Located on Marble Street in the city's South End, the space was officially registered on July 28 in 1908 for \$1.00 by Nathan D. Bill, Park Commissioner from 1899 to 1927 and son-in-law of Emerson Wight, Springfield's Mayor from 1875-1878.

AmeriCorps members will rehab the baseball/softball diamond, mulch the playground, paint park benches and play structures, as well as trim overgrown shrubbery. Springfield College anticipates its AmeriCorps members will "adopt" the park for the duration of the service year, returning monthly to maintain their efforts and initiate new, smaller park-based projects.

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“Each year, 100 graduate students provide more than 70,000 hours of service to the city of Springfield as part of the Springfield College AmeriCorps Program,” explains Shannon Langone, AmeriCorps Program Director. “By combining this service project with the AmeriCorps Orientation, we are introducing the members to the city they will be serving for the next nine months and uniting them in a common goal: to become active and engaged members of their community.”

According to David B. Panagore, Springfield’s Chief Development Officer, the efforts of the students and the coordination by Square One is integral to the city’s plans for the South End and represent the importance of public-private partnerships.

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno stated “this is the direction we need to bring our city. We need strong community leadership to encourage citizen participation. We’re fortunate to have active colleges and organizations in Springfield.”

The clean up scheduled for the 28th will begin with a breakfast event slated for Emerson Wight Park at 9:30 a.m. Members of the South End Revitalization Committee, neighborhood residents and City Hall staff are expected to attend.

For additional information about the August 28th event, please contact Kimberley A. Lee, Vice President of Advancement for Square One at 413-858-3108.

About Square One:

Square One is committed to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed at school, at work and in life by providing educational programs, family support services, health and fitness resources, and a voice in the community. We know that children grow up to become better educated and more productive when they have high quality early education, nurturing adults to care for them, and a safe and healthy community. In addition to providing learning focused programs daily for 1,100 infants, toddlers and preschoolers in secure, stable environments, Square One offers after-school programs for elementary-aged children, certification and oversight of neighborhood-based in-home care, and training and education for parents. At the core of everything we do is our founding mission to provide safe care for children of and our belief, confirmed by research, that kids who begin learning early become better learners for life.

About AmeriCorps:

Springfield College is a leader in community collaborations designed to meet a variety of needs, especially those centered on youth. The Springfield College AmeriCorps Program provides direct services in the city

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of Springfield primarily in the targeted areas of education, youth enrichment, health care, and other human needs. One hundred members are placed in public schools, community centers, hospitals and other community-based organizations where they serve part-time, 900 hours of service, throughout the academic year in one of four service categories: counseling/case management; capacity building; academic coaching; and youth leadership. The Springfield College AmeriCorps Program is supported in part by the Massachusetts Service Alliance and the Corporation for National and Community Service.