

**For Immediate Release**

**VOLUNTEERISM SURGES WITH NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK 2009**  
***April 19-25: Celebrating People Taking Action***

**Call to Service and Economy Motivate Thousands – Young and Old – to Volunteer**

ATLANTA (April 16, 2009) - National Volunteer Week is April 19-25 and according to Points of Light Institute CEO Michelle Nunn, this year, the week takes on special significance with the expected signing of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act by President Barack Obama and an unprecedented national surge in volunteerism.

“We are seeing enormous increases in volunteerism as well as increases in the demand for volunteers,” said Nunn citing a 60% increase so far this year in the number of volunteers stepping up to support communities through their national network of 250 volunteer management and connector organizations. “Our HandsOn Network works with over 30,000 nonprofits, developing volunteer leaders, matching volunteers to community needs and managing critical projects like refurbishing schools, supporting shelters and food banks, or helping to reduce a communities’ environmental footprint. We also help nonprofits and community organizations secure volunteers needed for ongoing program needs—and we are experiencing a spike in the need for volunteers right along with the increase in volunteer numbers,” said Nunn.

Points of Light Institute is the nation’s largest volunteer and civic engagement organization and sets the theme and focus for National Volunteer Week. The organization is hosting several milestone signature events across the country and in Washington, D.C. this year to celebrate the momentum created by the response to President Obama’s call to service and the passage of the new landmark volunteer legislation. The Serve America Act provides access and opportunity for Americans of all ages to volunteer to help address pressing needs in education, the environment, economic distress, healthcare and more. It also authorizes new approaches for expanding capacity of the nonprofit sector, and will help to create an army of engaged citizens working together in communities to address critical local needs.

A special Points of Light reception on April 22 on Capitol Hill will honor Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Senator Orrin G. Hatch for their lifetime of leadership in service and volunteerism. Additionally, eight extraordinary individuals will be inducted into The Extra Mile--Points of Light Volunteer Pathway a national monument dedicated to the spirit of service in America. The Extra Mile honors heroes of our nation's service movement, and forms a one-mile walking path just blocks from the White House.

***2009 Extra Mile Inductees include:***

- Rachel Carson, Author and Environmentalist
- John Muir, Conservationist and Founder, Sierra Club
- Wallace Campbell, Founder of CARE
- Samuel Gompers, Founder, American Federation of Labor
- Roger Baldwin, Founder of the American Civil Liberties Union
- Robert Smith and William Wilson, Co-Founders, Alcoholics Anonymous
- Clifford Beers, Founder of the Modern Health Movement

These events will focus national attention on the impact and power of volunteerism and service as an integral aspect of our civic leadership. “As this year’s theme—*Celebrating People In Action*—

suggests it is also a time of inspiration as we honor the thousands of individuals who take action all year round, to strengthen their communities,” said Nunn.

Communities and organizations across the nation will host recognition events honoring volunteers and sharing their stories of impact and personal transformation. Thousands of nonprofit organizations, businesses and community groups engage in service projects and demonstrate the power of individuals to make a difference. This year, in the wake of economic distress and dislocation, the needs are greater than ever.

Two significant national days of service are also celebrated under the umbrella of National Volunteer Week: Earth Day on April 22 and Global Youth Service Day on April 24-26. This year, the focus on both the environment and service as essential to the development of the next generation of youth will resonate throughout the weeklong commemoration.

National Volunteer Week is celebrated annually during the third or fourth week of April. It was created by executive order of President Richard Nixon in 1974, signaling a recommitment to create a culture of service in America. Millions of Americans volunteer this week and demonstrate the positive community impact created by individuals, families, businesses and organizations year round. President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama have promised to create an unparalleled call upon the nation to serve and participate in narrating a new national story of change.

To find out how to get involved, plug into local projects or to download the National Volunteer Week toolkit to help organize a community project, visit [HandsOnNetwork.org](http://HandsOnNetwork.org).

#### **About Points of Light Institute**

Points of Light Institute has a global focus to redefine volunteerism and civic engagement for the 21st century and puts people at the center of community problem solving. Our vision is that one day every person will discover their power to make a difference, creating healthy communities in vibrant democracies around the world. To realize this vision, Points of Light Institute operates three dynamic business units that share a mission to equip, mobilize and inspire people to take action that changes the world: HandsOn Network, MissionFish and the Civic Incubator.

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