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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 14, 2010

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**NEW JERSEY JUVENILE PROGRAM RECOGNIZED BY JUSTICE DEPARTMENT
AS RECIPIENT OF ANNUAL PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

NEWARK, N.J. – The Department of Justice recognized a New Jersey initiative with the Outstanding Juvenile Program Award during today’s annual Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Achievement Awards, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

The Mercer County PSN Juvenile Component – designed as a collaboration between Trenton police officers and New Jersey State juvenile probation and parole officers – focuses on violence prevention, intervention, education, and job training in a multifaceted effort to prevent recidivism by juveniles in the City of Trenton. The PSN grant for the program is awarded by the Department of Justice and administered through the fiscal agent, the New Jersey State Attorney General’s Office.

The 24 recipients of the annual PSN Achievement Awards were announced in a ceremony hosted by Acting Deputy Attorney General Gary G. Grindler at the PSN national conference in New Orleans. Recipients were chosen from a large pool of nominations submitted by U.S. Attorneys’ Offices across the nation.

U.S. Attorney Fishman stated: “The Juvenile PSN Component is an outstanding example of law enforcement and community members coming together to eradicate gang and gun violence, one individual at a time. It provides prior juvenile offenders with real accountability and a real shot at succeeding as productive members of their communities. This Office has proudly worked with the Mercer County PSN Juvenile Component since its inception, and it is wonderful to see the dedicated men and women who make the program possible receive the recognition they deserve.”

“At its core, Project Safe Neighborhoods is built upon the commitment and personal integrity of individuals like those we honor today. This year’s awards celebrate and highlight the work that has been done that has truly made a difference,” said Acting Deputy Attorney General Grindler. “Led by our U.S. Attorneys, federal, state, tribal and local law enforcement and prosecutors are on the front lines on the streets of America every day. We thank you for your service, and honor your success.”

In the City of Trenton, street gangs actively recruit juvenile probationers and returning parolees to participate in narcotics and violent crime. The Mercer County PSN Juvenile Program, begun in September 2005, is a partnership of the Trenton Police Department, the

Mercer Vicinage Department of Probation, and the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission. Officers from all three agencies work together to contact juveniles and their families in their homes and neighborhoods in the City of Trenton, with the goals of preventing crime, engaging the community, and providing social services. The collaborative PSN teams conduct joint operations during “non-traditional” hours to reach out to at-risk juveniles aged 15 to 20 in Trenton who are on probation and parole.

Over the past five years, PSN teams have made thousands of home contacts with juveniles and their families throughout the City of Trenton. Additionally, targeted social service programs for juvenile and family services have been created, developed, and deployed, supporting the goals of preventing crime and reducing recidivism. The Mercer County PSN probation team has recently focused on anti-gang programming. As an example, in keeping with one of the PSN program’s goals of establishing enhanced parental involvement, the PSN team members developed a Gang Awareness Parent Group to help parents gain a better understanding of gang culture and learn to identify signs of gang involvement within their community. Additionally, the PSN team and the Probation Division’s Juvenile Intake Unit created the Probation Orientation Program (POP) held monthly at the Mercer County Criminal Courthouse on the last Thursday of every month. The orientation program is facilitated by various PSN team members and provides a forum for parents of juveniles newly placed on probation to learn about the role of Probation and to have their questions answered.

Among other things, the supervision and attention fostered through the PSN program’s parole and police partnership has coordinated efforts in monitoring and sharing information on PSN participants, resulting in enhanced supervision over juvenile parolees. The Mercer County PSN parole team also provides a host of social services to at-risk juveniles on parole and their families, including mental health and substance abuse counseling.

To find out about more about PSN and its local programs, visit the PSN website at www.psn.gov.