



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 20, 2023
Mercer Street Friends
Contact: Ellen Malavsky
Marketing Communications Consultant
ellen.malavskypr@gmail.com

**MERCER STREET FRIENDS TO OPEN FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
AT B.C. GREGORY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**
AN EXTENSION OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE IN TRENTON DISTRICT

Trenton, NJ: Mercer Street Friends, a nonprofit whose mission supports local families through comprehensive food and education programs, is set to open the first Choice Food Pantry in a Trenton District School, as part of a comprehensive Family Resource Center.

As an extension of Mercer Street Friends' [Community Schools](#) program in Trenton, Benjamin C. Gregory Elementary will be the first of three locations where the organization will roll out the Family Resource Center initiative. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School and Luis Muñoz-Rivera Elementary are future sites.

A ribbon cutting ceremony is scheduled for **Friday, September 29 at 10:00 am at Gregory Elementary**, 500 Rutherford Ave., Trenton. Remarks from representatives of Mercer Street Friends, Trenton School District, and local government are expected.

Bernadette Trapp, Director of Community Schools at Mercer Street Friends says the Family Resource Center is part of a “holistic approach” to address the needs of the “whole child - and this means families too.”

“Our programs for reading intervention, after-school enrichment, and [Summer Bridge](#), provide year-round educational and social and emotional learning for students. With a food pantry and an extensive offering of additional services, the resource center will support the families in our Community Schools as well.”

The Choice Food Pantry in the resource center will be open two days per week for Gregory Elementary families. Mercer Street Friends' food bank will deliver a nutritious selection of weekly offerings.

Matthew Broad, Co-chair of the Trenton Food Stakeholders says “Gregory” is the ideal location for the first food pantry. “Gregory Elementary School sits at the intersection of several neighborhoods with higher levels of food insecurity. Data from the Mercer County Food Insecurity Index and Mercer County Food Needs Survey identified that this area has limited food resources that are open when convenient,

with many residents experiencing transportation challenges and a lack of awareness around availability and eligibility of free food resources.”

Gregory Principal Jeannette Harris says the food pantry will be a “tremendous resource” for families. “The closest supermarket is 1.5 miles away, which is equivalent to a forty-minute walk. As you can imagine, that presents a hardship for families that don’t have access to Transportation. Mercer Street Friends’ school-based food pantry will provide Gregory School families with convenient access to food supplies.”

“We recognize the immediate need to address food insecurity for the families of Gregory Elementary students. Our team is ready,” said Bernie Flynn, CEO, Mercer Street Friends.

Flynn and team have a thoughtful “slow and grow” plan in place to launch the first Family Resource Center. “Our goal is to make a greater impact at each of our Community Schools. By providing comprehensive services beginning at Gregory, we will have actionable insights before we open the next location.”

In addition to the food pantry, families visiting the resource center will have access to services to assist with SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps), housing, immigration, legal, parenting, adult education, and mental health. By the end of October, a section of the center will be a dedicated technology room with laptops, printers, fax machines, and office supplies, all provided by Mercer Street Friends. Families will be able to use the room for online appointments and interviews.

Respecting the confidentiality and sensitive nature of a family’s needs is paramount. “Our team of intake coordinators are trained in these matters and are closely supervised to ensure guidelines for best practices are met,” says Trapp.

Gregory Elementary is part of Mercer Street Friends' Community Schools initiative in the Trenton Public School District. Mercer Street Friends provides elementary level reading intervention programs and other educational opportunities in addition to social, emotional, physical, and mental health support to students and families year-round, including summer programming.

In addition to Gregory, Mercer Street Friends leads two other Trenton-based Community Schools; Luis Muñoz-Rivera Elementary School, where the organization provides Site Coordinators, Case Managers and Reading Interventionists, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School with Site Coordinators and Case Managers.

ABOUT MERCER STREET FRIENDS

As a Quaker-affiliated, nonsectarian 501(c)(3) organization, Mercer Street Friends is dedicated to nourishing minds and bodies, empowering families, and communities by providing comprehensive programs to address poverty and the physical and emotional trauma it creates for children, families, and the community. Their work is focused on three critical areas: food, families, and education. To learn more about Mercer Street Friends, visit mercerstreetfriends.org.