

For Immediate Release

DATE: *May 5, 2011*

CONTACT: *Vanessa Edwards-EI, SICCS Parent Team, 718.909.2686*

Staten Island's First Charter School Joins Hands to Promote Pride, Social Responsibility and Community Partnerships Between Youths, Adults & the Elderly through Volunteering on Join Hands Day, May 7, 2011

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Thousands of young people and adults across America are expected to spend Saturday, May 7 (the tenth JOIN HANDS DAY) volunteering to improve their communities and help neighbors in need. At Staten Island Community Charter School (SICCS), community is their middle name! As the first elementary charter school in Staten Island, their mission is to *produce a community of smart, responsible, creative citizens with a strong relationship between school, home and community* which will in turn boost their student's level of achievement.

Connecting youths and adults in neighborhood volunteering is the unique focus of JOIN HANDS DAY, a national day of service. SICCS will participate in JOIN HANDS DAY by creating a flower garden in the front of their school to enhance the overall appearance of the school and to provide a source of pride for the students and the surrounding community. Their K-2 students will also create beautifully decorated potted plants that will be delivered to Sunrise Senior Living and Silver Lake Specialized Care Center by representatives of the student body, parents, staff and community partners of SICCS.

Local political leaders, community leaders, and press are invited to a dedication ceremony to unveil the final beautifully transformed garden and a presentation ceremony where the final potted plants will be presented to our participating local senior living facilities. To honor the newly formed bond between the youth, the elderly and the rest of the community, this moment will be proudly captured and will mark the first of many community outreach endeavors that SICCS will spearhead.

"I can't think of an activity more in keeping than JOIN HANDS DAY with the mission, values and vision of Staten Island Community Charter School. Join Hands Day builds community by bringing young and old together, by beautifying our surroundings, and by making everybody feel good about the place we've chosen to call home. I'm very proud of our school's participation. Kudos to our hard-working SICCS Parent Team!" --- *Chairperson, Staten Island Community Charter School Board of Trustees*

Sponsored by America's fraternal benefit societies, JOIN HANDS DAY encourages people to form partnerships across generations to build greater mutual understanding, respect and trust. JOIN HANDS DAY is an opportunity for youths and adults to work side-by-side as they tackle projects and make life better in Staten Island's North Shore and other communities.

"When I learned of Join Hands Day, I thought that it was a perfect fit for what our SICCS Family stands for. Many of our young people have little knowledge of or first hand interaction with the concept of performing a community service, except for what they learn from their family and teachers. As of this date, we are the only organization in New York City registered to participate in this community service event. We are proud to be the first group to spearhead this event in NYC. Along with great companies like Gerardi's Farmers Market, this year's sponsor, we welcome other organizations to join us in the future. JOIN HANDS DAY is one way to break down the barriers between our generations, while promoting volunteerism and making a difference within our community." said Vanessa Edwards-EI, Events & Fundraising Chair of SICCS Parent Team

Staten Island Community Charter School joins other fraternal benefit societies throughout the country to serve as community facilitators that will help connect individuals and groups, to identify their neighborhood needs and assist with community connections to civic leaders and dignitaries. Scheduled annually on the first Saturday in May, JOIN HANDS DAY can provide the first step in changing communication and cooperation in a neighborhood. This one-day event will introduce volunteering to different audiences of all ages and encourage participation and togetherness.

Getting involved in JOIN HANDS DAY is easy. SICCS can help. Contact SICCS Parent Team Events & Fundraising Chair by calling Vanessa Edwards-EI, CMP at 718.909.2686 or via email at vanessa@palmerspecialevents.com. For more information about JOIN HANDS DAY, visit the JOIN HANDS DAY Web site at www.joinhandsday.org, send an e-mail to actioncenter@joinhandsday.org or call the JOIN HANDS DAY Action Center at (630) 522-6322, ext. 113.

About the National Fraternal Congress of America

The 125-year-old American Fraternal Alliance unites 70 not-for-profit fraternal benefit societies operating in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Canada. The association represents nearly 9 million fraternalists in 31,500 local chapters, making it one of America's largest member-volunteer networks. Fraternal benefit societies play a vital role in our communities. Every day, volunteers supplement the social services provided by overburdened government agencies—serving children, the elderly, veterans, the underprivileged and others who need help. Combined, the American Fraternal Alliance's member societies maintain almost \$362 billion of life insurance-in-force and, in 2009 alone, contributed \$400 million to charitable and fraternal programs, and volunteered 91 million hours for community-service projects. For more information, visit the association's Web site at www.fraternalalliance.org.

About Staten Island Community Charter School

SICCS is a public charter school that's community based, community focused and community run. The school was founded by parents, grandparents and educators from the area and is operated by a board of trustees — not a charter school management corporation. Many of their trustees, in fact, live in the same neighborhoods their students do. We see each child as an individual with his or her own way of learning. And they offer each child the right level of support by staffing each classroom with teams of two and three highly qualified New York State-certified teachers, to provide differentiated instruction and individual attention when needed. Their longer school day gives each student more time to learn. And because they view the classroom as a dynamic environment, they remain alert for instructional opportunities as they occur throughout each school day. At SICCS, parents, grandparents, foster parents and guardians are school partners who volunteer, contribute great ideas, and — as stipulated in their charter — have a permanent representative on the SICCS Board of Trustees. They work together in school, at home, and in the community to help their students succeed. SICCS Website: www.si-ccs.org