



**NEWS RELEASE
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October 12, 2017

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**Plainfield Community Outreach Afterschool Enrichment Program
Operating at Queen City Academy and Cedarbrook and Clinton Elementary Schools**

PLAINFIELD, NJ – Plainfield Community Outreach (PCO)’s 21st Century Community Learning Center program (21CCLC) is up and running at three Plainfield public schools: Clinton and Cedarbrook elementary schools and, for the first time, Queen City Academy.

Also for the first time, the program has been extended to third graders in addition to the fourth-through eighth-graders it has served in previous school years. PCO’s 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative provides learning enrichment after the school day and during the summer. It is made possible, in part, by a \$350,000 five-year grant from the New Jersey Department of Education.

“I am so excited about all we are going to be able to accomplish this school year. I’m looking forward to working with the students at Queen City for the first time,” said Patience Smith, program director of the PCO’s 21CCLC program, which has operated in Plainfield for the past 11 years. “And I’m thrilled that we can now provide academic enrichment to students beginning in the third grade – something that parents have been requesting for quite some time.”

The programming theme at the three sites, *Shine Your Light*, will be reflected in a robust course of activities that focus on STEM (Science Technology, Engineering, and Math), the performing arts and civic engagement. The field trips will include an outdoor play at Washington State Crossing historical site and a visit to the STEM student learning center at Rutgers. Science Family Nights will give students and their families opportunities to work on science projects together. The 21CCLC and Homefirst: Interfaith Housing and Family Services also will partner on activities such as girls’ and boys’ groups, family game nights and other evening activities.

Danielle West, Chief Academic Officer at Queen City Academy, said, “We are delighted that our scholars will be able to engage in a STEM-based afterschool program. This is an opportunity to ensure that scholars of color participate in programming that focuses on the sciences and math areas that historically see an underrepresentation of scholars of color.”

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The 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative is a federally funded program supported by the New Jersey Department of Education for students before and after the school day and during the summer. The 21CCLC initiative was created by Former President George Bush to provide academic enrichment, youth development, health and wellness education, and counseling to public school students and to encourage parents and guardians to be more involved in their children's educational experience. It is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to afterschool programs. The No Child Left Behind Act reauthorized 21st CCLC in 2002, transferring the administration of the grants from the U.S. Department of Education to the state education agencies. Its mission is to promote student achievement and prepare students to compete on a global scale.

Plainfield Community Outreach is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created in 2000 by Grace Episcopal Church Plainfield to address the needs of the greater Plainfield area. In addition to the 21st Century Community Learning Center Program, Plainfield Community Outreach operates Grace's Kitchen, a soup kitchen that feeds the hungry the last five days of every month, and an English Language Learning program for adults.

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PCO 21st Century Learning Center Staff