



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Delaware & Raritan Greenway Announces the Naming of the Johnson Education Center

Princeton NJ, October 7, 2004 – Delaware & Raritan Greenway, central New Jersey’s land trust, announced today that a **generous contribution from the members of the Johnson Family has named the Johnson Education Center, an innovative and unique resource for the land preservation community.** A circa 1900 barn that was part of the historic Robert Wood Johnson estate on Rosedale Road in Princeton, will be renovated to create the Johnson Education Center. The 60-acre property, now known as Greenway Meadows Park, was preserved in 2001 at a cost of \$7.4 million. D&R Greenway spearheaded the model public/private partnership, which included the State of New Jersey, Mercer County, Princeton Township and Borough and numerous private individuals and made the preservation of this magnificent open space in the heart of Princeton Township a reality.

D&R Greenway completed the first phase of the \$3.5 million capital campaign for the Johnson Education Center, raising \$2.7 million to date, including the gift from the Johnson Family. The Johnson Education Center is scheduled to open its doors in the fall of 2005.

“This is a marvelous day of celebration for all of us at D&R Greenway and for our partners in preservation,” proclaimed Linda J. Mead, D&R Greenway’s Executive Director. “First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of the Johnson Family for continuing Robert Wood Johnson’s legacy of philanthropy and concern for the environment through their gift establishing the Johnson Education Center.”

The Johnson family agrees with Ms. Mead. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Robert Wood Johnson named their estate Longleat, after the first estate in England to open its land and gardens to the public. The family has expressed their belief that Robert Wood Johnson would be very pleased to know that not only have the estate’s beautiful grounds been preserved for the enjoyment of the residents of Princeton but the barn is taking on a new life, sustaining and encouraging the work of land preservation, conservation and environmental organizations throughout the state.

While also providing a home for D&R Greenway, the mission of the Johnson Education Center is to strengthen the capacity of local governments, grassroots organizations and state, county and nonprofit partners to protect and effectively manage land. D&R Greenway's professional staff and other industry experts will provide hands-on education and technical assistance to empower leaders who can accelerate the pace of open space preservation in the most densely developed state in the nation.

A recent study by Rutgers University warns that if development continues at its current pace, New Jersey will become the first completely "built out" state within the next 30 years. The governor's office has stated that fifty acres a day are lost to development across the State. In many central New Jersey communities development rates range from 24% - 84% annually. These figures indicate that the pace of land preservation must increase dramatically in the next five to ten years in order to protect the large contiguous greenways, watershed lands, and areas of biodiversity that are necessary for the health and well-being of those who live in our region. As the remaining lands of high conservation value become increasingly scarce and pressures for development intensify, the work of the conservation community must be accomplished with utmost efficiency and effectiveness.

The programs offered by D&R Greenway at the Johnson Education Center are designed to answer this urgent need to protect as much viable land as possible, as quickly as possible. By increasing the knowledge base of individuals and groups involved in land conservation work and encouraging regional cooperation, more acres can be preserved and the stewardship and use of already preserved acres can be integrated with community interests.

Loraine Otis, president of the Montgomery Friends of Open Space spoke of the importance of the Johnson Education Center to grassroots organization. "The Johnson Education Center will provide critical support to all municipality-based land trusts and vastly increase our effectiveness. From training in the tools and techniques used in the operational process of land preservation to workshops and seminars concerning best practices in outreach and fundraising, the Johnson Education Center could truly make all the difference."

The renovation of the Johnson Education Center is a textbook model of adaptive reuse. The historic barn will retain many of its original structural details including the hand-hewn timber frame. Noted architect Jerry Ford of Ford 3 Architects LLC is the designer of the Johnson Education Center. A contracting bid from E. Allen Reeves, Inc. is under final review for the project.

"The preservation of Greenway Meadows Park and the creation of the Johnson Education Center are excellent examples of working together with our public and private partners to protect and celebrate our open space here in Mercer County," commented Mercer County Executive Brian Hughes. "Protecting open space is not only an investment we make today, but a legacy we leave for future generations, and that is why it is so important that we approve the ballot question on November 2nd."

In August, Mercer County Executive Brian M. Hughes called for a ballot question asking whether voters would support an additional penny on the county's open space tax to help protect an additional 2,400 acres that are already targeted for imminent development as well as additional acres that have yet to be identified. The funds will allow purchase of development rights, historic preservation, and improvements to existing parks.

About Delaware & Raritan Greenway

Celebrating 15 years of land preservation successes, Delaware & Raritan Greenway is central New Jersey's land trust, a non-profit organization founded in 1989. Their mission is to help safeguard the water quality, environment and livability of our region by permanently preserving watershed lands and large-scale landscapes and establishing *Greenways*. *Greenways* are unbroken chains of preserved open space surrounding stream corridors, headwaters, water recharge areas and significant ecosystems. D&R Greenway also encourages effective stewardship and management of this land and promotes educational and recreational usage consistent with the protection of its resources.

D&R Greenway's operating region consists of over 1,500 square miles, encompassing portions of the Delaware, Raritan and Millstone River watersheds and the D&R Canal. This includes all of Mercer County and parts of Hunterdon, Somerset, Middlesex, Burlington and Monmouth counties.

Since 1989, D&R Greenway has permanently preserved 7,355 acres of land valued at \$140.2 million. This represents 113 separate preservation transactions executed or facilitated by D&R Greenway.

For more information please call 609-924-4646. The organization's website is currently under construction.