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HEADLINE: Haitian earthquake Family Resource Center opens in Elizabeth

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ELIZABETH " On Monday, February 22, the New Jersey Department of Human Services opened the "New Jersey Haitian Family Resource Center " in Elizabeth in the lower level of the Sidney Lessner Building of Union County College's Elizabeth campus at 12 West Jersey St.

The Resource Center will provide vital services for the members of the Haitian community affected by the earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince on Jan. 12. The City of Elizabeth is home to a large Haitian community and is easily accessed via mass transit.

At the Center, a number of support services will be available to the Haitian-Americans and Haitian nationals living in New Jersey, including: interpretation services; assistance with immigration-related issues; family assistance applications; access to telephones and computers to obtain more information about those in their homeland; child custody matters; legal information; and grief counseling.

"The College has been actively working to support our Haitian students and the members of the New Jersey Haitian community. When the Union County and State officials approached the College about establishing the Resource Center on our Elizabeth campus, we knew it was the next step in providing support to those in need, " said Victor M. Richel, Chair of the UCC Board of Trustees.

In addition to the services listed above, the Center will provide daily, official situation reports of the current status of the relief effort in Haiti.

The hours of operation will be Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Information provided at the Center will also be made available through a combination of telephone and web-based systems. The Center will not take donations of cash or goods, but staff will direct those interested in making a donation to established Haitian relief organizations.

Upon arrival at the College, visitors will meet with Resource Center staff who will assess their needs and provide language interpretation if needed. Visitors will then be guided to the appropriate services and will be asked to provide feedback about the services they received to gauge the effectiveness of the services being offered and identify any additional needs. "The College is happy to provide its facility to those agencies that are going to assist Haitian families in the aftermath of this tragedy in their homeland. " said Dr. John R. Farrell, Jr., Interim President of Union County College.

The Resource Center is going to be staffed by a wide range of State, Union County, and other agencies that have access to vital and reliable information. State, city and local agencies that will be providing support include: NJ Department of Human Services Office of Emergency Management, NJ Department of Health and Senior Services, NJ Office of **Homeland Security** and Preparedness, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, the Emergency Management section of the New Jersey State Police **Homeland Security** Branch, Union County Department of Human Services, NJ Department of Children and Family Services, U.S. Citizens and Immigration Services, the faith-based community and NJ4Haiti.

There will also be resource tables located in the center with informational materials from a variety of sources, which are available in English, Creole, and French. These include questions and answers pertaining to Adoptions, Temporary Protected Status, Community Seminars, and Fraud/ Scam prevention.