

Lt. Governor Guadagno Tours Greater Goods Thrift Store Locations in Hightstown

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Mercer County Non-Profit Grantee Provides Community with Training, Employment and Affordable Goods

Trenton, NJ – Recognizing organizations that have received grant awards through the Department of State’s Office of Faith Based Initiatives (OFBI), Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today visited the Community Action Service Center, also known as Rise: A Community Service Partnership, to meet with staff and tour two Greater Goods Thrift Store locations in Hightstown.

Rise is a neighborhood-based not-for-profit serving Hightstown and East Windsor and is one of four centers strategically positioned throughout Mercer County as part of its Community Action Program. Rise began its journey toward a social enterprise venture in 2006 with the addition of its first Greater Goods Thrift Store, which offers affordable, gently-used basic necessities such as clothing, furniture and household items while also providing training and employment opportunities for at-risk members of the community.

“Rise and its Greater Goods Thrift Stores display the best qualities of community-based services,” said Lt. Governor Guadagno. “Members of the community support each other through donations and volunteerism, giving their neighbors access to the goods they need and the employment opportunities that will help them achieve independence.”

The goods sold through Greater Goods are gathered through local donations with the proceeds feeding directly back into Rise programs and services. The thrift stores also serve as collection and distribution points for the Rise Food Pantry, training centers for work-assisted disabled groups and distribution points for free merchandise vouchers for families in crisis. Previous OFBI funding enabled the expansion of the original thrift store to a second retail site and additional storage space. Rise received a \$50,000 Fiscal Year 2015 grant from OFBI to cover additional employees and to assist in the potential establishment of a third retail site.

“We are delighted to have the Lt. Governor visit our new Greater Goods Thrift Store. The Lt. Governor can see firsthand what a difference a social enterprise can make on a local level,” said Leslie Koppel, Executive Director of Rise. “The support from the Office of Faith Based Initiatives and local volunteers has helped to fortify our community. We provide training and employment opportunities combined with access to affordable goods and services. Our new Main Street location is in the hub of downtown and we welcome everyone to come shop, donate and volunteer.”

In addition to the thrift stores and food pantry, Rise provides case management for vulnerable families, a summer academic enrichment program for children, domestic violence prevention services and other support programs for members of the community.

OFBI’s mission is to eliminate barriers to funding and other resource opportunities, create greater access for partnership, and enhance the capacity of faith- and community-based organizations to effectively design and implement successful programs and efficiently manage the day to day operations of their organization. In September 2014, OFBI awarded a total of \$1.15 million in grants to 32 organizations.

A full list of OFBI grantees is available here: <http://www.nj.gov/state/programs/pdf/ofbi-fy15-grant-awards-by-category-and-county.pdf>.

More information on OFBI is available on its website at:

http://www.nj.gov/state/programs/dos_program_faith_based.html.

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