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**MAYOR REDD SEEKS TO ENHANCE PREVENTION AND REENTRY
INITIATIVES IN CAMDEN**

*Establishes Office of Prevention and Reentry; Appoints Rhoda Thomas To Coordinate
City's Prevention and Reentry Efforts*

CAMDEN – Following through her commitment to enhance and streamline the City's prevention and reentry initiatives, Mayor Dana L. Redd today established the Office of Prevention and Reentry within the Office of the Mayor and announced the appointment of Ms. Rhoda Thomas as the director for the Office of Prevention and Reentry.

"I am thrilled to have Ms. Thomas join my team in her new capacity in the Office of Prevention and Reentry," Mayor Redd said. "As a former Camden Police Officer for more than 25 years, Ms. Thomas is highly respected by our residents for her no-nonsense approach to keeping our communities safe. With her years of public and community service experience, Ms. Thomas understands that we cannot arrest our way out of the problem. Preventing juvenile delinquency is a critical component in our efforts to improve public safety in Camden and it also allows us to better prepare our youth for a productive and bright future."

"It is a great privilege and honor to be able to serve the Mayor and City residents in my new role as the coordinator for the Office of Prevention and Reentry," Ms. Thomas said. "Camden is a great City full of potential and wonderful people. I look forward to working with all our partners to ensure our young men and women have plenty of positive activities to take part in and to help individuals who are seeking a second chance to be productive members of society."

Working in the Office of Prevention and Reentry, Ms. Thomas will be responsible for arranging supportive services for the formerly incarcerated and disengaged and at-risk youth. She will also work closely with the Mayor's Youth Council, the New Jersey Attorney General's Office of Community Justice, Opportunity Reconnect, community and faith based organizations, local reentry organizations, youth development partners, and the Camden Youth Planning Policy Board – which the Mayor will formally launch in the coming weeks. As the coordinator, Ms. Thomas will implement a system for delivery of services to individuals in a manner that uses existing resources and that leads to self-sufficiency and will regularly attend re-entry taskforce meetings both locally and statewide.

(more)

“The Walter Rand Institute at Rutgers-Camden applauds Mayor Redd’s initiative to create an Office of Prevention and Reentry in her administration,” said Dr. Richard A. Harris, Director of the Senator Walter Rand Institute for Public Affairs for Rutgers University. “The Mayor’s Office has been working closely with the Rand Institute and an array of service providers to develop the Opportunity Reconnect Reentry Center at 1812 Federal St. Under contract with the NJ Attorney General, the Institute is staffing the Mayor Redd’s Municipal Prevention Council. I see the creation of this new office as a critical commitment to reintegrating ex-offenders into the community and keeping Camden’s youth out of the criminal justice system in the first place.”

Rhoda Thomas

Ms. Thomas recently retired from the Camden Police Department after more than 25 dedicated years on the force; where she was the first African American female and second female police officer to join the department. Ms. Thomas was born and raised in Camden and was educated in the Camden City school system. Upon graduating from Woodrow Wilson High School, Ms. Thomas attended Rutgers University and she also enrolled in Camden County College where she earned an associate’s degree in Law Enforcement.

Ms. Thomas later joined the Camden City Public School system as a substitute teacher where she was a positive and respected presence for the students. Since 1983, Ms. Thomas has unselfishly volunteered her time to assist senior citizens throughout the City of Camden. She also works and spends time with the City’s youth to encourage them to live their dreams and be productive residents.

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