

Groups: Tough times require new round of volunteerism

Alliance says communities will need help

By **TOM BALDWIN**
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TRENTON — A new call for volunteerism was sounded Wednesday by an alliance of business, security, good-government, faith and community organizations, whose members said the time is right for fresh activism beyond voting.

"Most people are very unaware of the opportunity to have real power for an average of two hours a week," said Harry Pozycki, chairman of a clean-government group called the Citizens' Campaign.

"It is pretty much common knowledge," Pozycki said when asked if New Jersey suffered a special need for volunteers at a time when the economy is suffering, the governments' books are imbalanced, the war on global terror rages and the environment erodes.

"Now more than ever, we are going to need to come together. . . . Bring up the old values of commitment to each other," Pozycki said. He added later,

when asked why now, "We have been fat and lazy in this society."

More than rhetoric, the groups are offering free tutorials in how people can channel volunteerism to the needs of their communities.

Examples are serving on a locally appointed board, becoming a neighborhood committee person for a political party, offering ideas to levels of government or volunteering as a first-responder.

"We will do everything we can to facilitate it," said Joan Verplanck, president of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

"There is a need for trained emergency responders," said State Police emergency-management specialist Sgt. Pat Gorman.

"There is no need for us to complain about what is happening if we are not willing to play a part," said the Rev. Dr. Ronald Owens, moderator of the Middlesex Central Baptist As-

sociation.

Others helping to advance the issue are the New Jersey Alliance of YMCAs and the New Jersey Center for Non-Profits.

"The YMCA's core belief in service makes us the perfect partner in this effort," said the "Y" Alliance's chairman, William Lovett.

"We are pleased to be part of this effort," said Linda Czipo, executive director of the non-profit group.

The campaign will last for three years, to reach, as Pozycki said, beyond current political structures and draw on a deep pool of New Jersey talent.

The state is known for highly educated citizens who command high salaries as they advance into their careers.

The U.S. Census Bureau says 25 percent of New Jerseyans speak more than one language, 82 percent possess high-school degrees and 30 percent hold bachelor degrees or higher ones.

