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**USA FREEDOM CORPS LEADERS ADDRESS
WASHINGTON CONFERENCE ATTENDEES**

ARLINGTON, Virginia (July 1, 2002) – During the 2002 Washington Conference and Grocers Care Celebration, which was held June 23-25 in Washington, DC, John Bridgeland, Assistant to the President and Director, USA Freedom Corps and Liz DiGregorio, Assistant Director and Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) liaison, USA Freedom Corps each separately spoke to audiences of Washington Conference attendees. The Washington Conference and Grocers Care Celebration was cosponsored by the National Grocers Association (N.G.A) and Food Industry Association Executives (FIAE).

Bridgeland was the keynote speaker at the Assembly of States Lunch on Monday, June 24. Bridgeland spoke about the goals of the Businesses Strengthening America campaign, which was launched in response to President Bush's call for service and volunteerism. Bridgeland urged attendees to promote the need for community service to consumers and associates as well as to help encourage the public to be prepared.

DiGregorio, the daughter of independent grocer, the late Basilio DiGregorio, spoke to N.G.A. Board of Directors and several conference attendees on Monday morning, June 24. DiGregorio spoke about how to build loyalty in communities and how to prepare for terrorism and disaster relief. She highlighted opportunities in which grocers can help consumers be prepared and how to use store space to promote timely relief items.

Bridgeland and DiGregorio both praised N.G.A.'s and the industry's commitment to community service and thanked members and the board of directors for their efforts in promoting the spirit of volunteerism. N.G.A., under the umbrella of its "Grocers Care" program, supports President Bush's USA Freedom Corps and the initiative for grocers to encourage volunteerism and community service to help serve our neighbors and nation.

Bridgeland's and DiGregorio's presence at the Washington Conference was a follow-up to a White House meeting that N.G.A. Immediate Past Chairman Steve Smith and President and CEO Tom Zaucha attended a few weeks ago with 17 other corporate leaders from major corporations across the nation, with Bridgeland and other key White House staff members. They met to discuss themes and objectives for the Business Strengthening America campaign. At a later meeting that day, Smith, the only family-owned met with President Bush and other corporate CEOs, where he identified four goals on behalf of N.G.A. in a report to the President, which include:

1. An industry wide commitment to educate supermarket shoppers and associates about local volunteer opportunities.
2. Commitment on the part of local, community-focused grocers throughout America to put comprehensive volunteer clearinghouse web site and toll-free number on grocery bags, have bag stuffers, point of sale signage, etc. – enabling shoppers to find volunteer opportunities.
3. Enlist supplier trading partners to support the initiative.
4. In cooperation with suppliers and U.S.A. Freedom Corps, make available "Be Prepared" items, products, and information to consumers.

N.G.A. is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent sector of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating in a variety of formats. Some are publicly traded but with controlling shares held by the family. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Independents are the true “entrepreneurs” of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. N.G.A. members include retail and wholesale grocers and their state associations, as well as manufacturers and service suppliers.