

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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Heroes Wanted

North Jersey—One hundred boys and girls are looking for heroes.

The children have been referred to Volunteers in Protective Services (VIPS), a mentoring program sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. For over 30 years, VIPS has screened, trained and supported caring men and women who are positive role models and dedicated mentors to Bergen County children who have experienced abuse, neglect and/or isolation.

Mentoring helps because it guarantees a young person that there is someone who cares about him/her. The child is not alone in dealing with day to day worries. According to public and private ventures studies of Big Brothers/Big Sisters and other mentoring programs, mentors keep children in school—students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class. Mentors help improve a young person's self esteem, and teach how to relate well to all kinds of people, strengthening the young person's communication skills. Youth who meet regularly with their mentors are 46% less likely than their peers to start using illegal drugs and 27% less likely to start drinking.

The next 6 week VIPS mentor training session begins Wednesday, September 10, 2008. It is held from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm at the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, 64 Passaic Street in Hackensack.

There are not nearly enough people enrolled thus far. Men, in particular, are needed to become positive male role models for the boys.

“These 100 children are waiting for someone to step in and believe in them, encourage them to laugh and succeed,” says Cheryl Carroll, program director of VIPS. “The fall training class is not full. If you can remember someone who was in your corner at a time when you needed a friend, then please, I ask you to join us now, take the training class and share your good fortune with one of those children who so desperately needs a friend now. There is an especially critical need for bi-lingual, Spanish speaking mentors.”

The 15 hour VIPS training covers such topics as developing good listening and communication skills, working through challenges, recognizing the signs of abuse and neglect, the role of the mentor and the matching process. Applicants are asked to supply references and undergo a background check.

“Mentoring provides many benefits, both for the child and the mentor,” Ms. Carroll says. “As a mentor you will be making a difference in someone else’s life, learning about yourself, giving back and contributing to the future and having fun! It is a shared opportunity for learning and growth.”

For more information about the VIPS program, call (201) 489-9454 Ext. 115, or visit www.bergenvolunteers.org and click on mentoring programs.

The mission of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County is to strengthen the community by connecting people with opportunities to serve, operating model volunteer programs, building the capacity for effective volunteering and participating in strategic partnerships that meet community needs.

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