

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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For immediate release

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Leadership Program Tackles Environmental Issues

The 28 members of Bergen County's first community leadership program recently spent a day exploring the County's economic development and environmental issues.

Bergen LEADS, sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, is a program that focuses on preparing local leaders to tackle the unique challenges and embrace the opportunities in Bergen County.

Since September of 2008, the class has met monthly to dissect issues, debate viewpoints and get a first-hand look at Bergen County's infrastructure. Past seminars included Government, Education, Health Care, Public Safety and Diversity.

The Environmental seminar began with a panel that included developers and representatives of environmental organizations who addressed sprawl, open space, development and re-development in the region. Through the lectures and site visitations, they saw regional planning, the science of efficient placement of infrastructure and zoning for the sustainable growth of a region, in action.

The class then broke into groups and visited four sites: Palisades Interstate Park in Alpine; Celery Farm Natural Area in Allendale; Meadowlands Environmental Center in Lyndhurst and Xanadu in East Rutherford, where they learned about the processes of land development and conservation, to gain understanding of how environmental concerns are balanced with the need to provide more ratables, retail, commercial, retail and residential space.

The Bergen LEADS seminar year will conclude with presentation of special group projects and a graduation where the class of 2009 will welcome the new Class of 2010, which is currently in the selection process. Ultimately the program will help participants figure out what to do with their new found knowledge and apply it to solve some of Bergen County's challenges.

For more information about Bergen LEADS, call 201-489-9454, Ext. 119, or e-mail amissey@bergenvolunteers.org. Additional background on Bergen LEADS can be found on the website: www.bergenleads.org.

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 capacity for effective volunteering, and participating in strategic partnerships that meet community needs.

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Participants in Bergen LEADS, a community leadership program, at an observation platform overlooking the Celery Farm Natural area in Allendale, a 107-acre freshwater wetland nature preserve which is a refuge for an astounding variety of wildlife--from herons, ducks, minks, and foxes to dozens of species of flowers and plants.

In the forefront is Hugh Carola, Program Director, Hackensack Riverkeeper.

L to R are: Liz Corsini, Englewood; Mark Heard, Hackensack; Mary Rossettini, Hackensack; Ellen Rafferty, Franklin Lakes; Kathleen Bikoff, Hackensack; Tony Luciano, Teterboro; Eric Cawood, Park Ridge and Kim Caesar, Hackensack