

# NEWS

## VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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### **Bergen's First Leadership Program Accomplishes Much**

Applicants Sought for Class of 2010

Bergen County: The inaugural class of Bergen County's first community leadership program has reached the halfway mark in its 10-month curriculum.

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.

The class of 30 participants, who live or work in Bergen County, was chosen through a competitive process in 2008. The group represents a cross section of industries, and a wide range of experiences, backgrounds, ethnicities and ages.

Under the guidance of former Bergen County Executive William "Pat" Schuber, the LEADS Seminar Director, participants are immersed in a stimulating curriculum that not only introduces them to topical issues of local importance, but also enables them to explore their leadership styles, enhance their leadership capacity and become meaningfully engaged in helping to solve some of the challenges facing 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. Using this newfound knowledge, members of the class are continually challenged to explore new approaches to community problems.

The first seminar, in October, examined Community and Government. The class met at the Bergen County Administration Building and learned about public service from County Executive Dennis McNerney and other elected officials. They were presented a primer on how to run for office over lunch, then broke into teams and visited several non-profit organizations that contract with government to provide services.

In November, the focus was on Education, with presentations by Dr. G. Jeremiah Ryan, president of Bergen Community College, and Dr. Aaron Graham, Executive Superintendent of Bergen County Schools. The class visited eight different schools to witness education options: public, private, religious, as well as Head Start sites.

Health care in Bergen County was next, with debate centering on the opening of Pascack Valley Hospital as an acute care facility. Class members visited a variety of venues to see first hand how health care is delivered in Bergen County, including a government clinic, a hospital emergency room, a mental health center, and public and private long term care facilities.

Future topics will be Diversity in Bergen County and Law and Public Safety, with discussions on homeland security, law enforcement, and visits to learn first hand how such organizations as United Water, Garden State Plaza and the Police and Fire Academy are involved in measures to keep residents safe. Another timely topic will be the Environment—with a panel that will include developers and representatives of environmental organizations, who will address sprawl, open space, development and re-development. The class will visit towns with downtown revitalization initiatives, the Meadowlands Commission, and Xanadu.

The seminar year will conclude with presentation of special group projects and a graduation where the Bergen LEADS Class of 2009 will welcome the new Class of 2010.

The Bergen LEADS experience will not end with the seminar year. LEADS alumni will stay informed and connected through special alumni events, forums, and other networking vehicles.

William “Pat” Schuber, Bergen LEADS Seminar Director, sums up the program this way: “The future of Bergen County is being prepared now. Bergen LEADS is producing leaders who will take our businesses, non-profits and governments into a new

era of strength and prosperity. Leadership makes the difference in whether our county meets the challenges it faces. Bergen LEADS is the organization that is providing the vision and training which will make that difference.”

Bergen LEADS is now accepting applications for the Class of 2010. The program seeks individuals from all ethnic, racial and socio-economic backgrounds who espouse different political, religious and social views for future classes. Visit [www.bergenleads.org](http://www.bergenleads.org) for more information. Applications for the Class of 2010 are due by April 2, 2009.

For more information on Bergen LEADS, contact Amanda Missey, Bergen LEADS Director, at 201-489-9454 x119 or [amissey@bergenvolunteers.org](mailto:amissey@bergenvolunteers.org)

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