

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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Thank Your Mentor Day.

North Jersey--As a centerpiece of National Mentoring Month, January 2009, Thank Your Mentor Day will be celebrated on Thursday, January 22nd. On that day, many Americans will reach out to thank or honor those individuals who encouraged and guided them, and who had a lasting impact on their lives.

The theme for Thank Your Mentor Day is “Who Mentored You? Pass it on—become a mentor”. The goal is to encourage people to think about individuals in their lives during their formative years—family members, teachers, coaches, neighbors, employers, friends—who encouraged them, showed them the ropes, and helped them become who they are today. Then, thank them and encourage others to become mentors.

“Most people have someone who helped them somewhere along the line, ,” says Janet Sharma, Executive Director of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. “This is a chance to say ‘thank you’ and at the same time take advantage of this national initiative to inspire others to become mentors.”

Thank Your Mentor Day promotes “Four Ways to Honor Your Mentor”:

- Contact your mentor directly to express your appreciation
- “Pass it on” by becoming a mentor to someone in your community
- Make a financial contribution to a local mentoring program, like the Volunteer Center’s Mentoring Moms and Volunteers in Protective Services Programs.
- Write a tribute to your mentor for posting on the national mentoring website

www.WhoMentoredYou.org

The Volunteer Center has been sponsoring mentoring programs for over 30 years, and is currently in need of men and women to become volunteer mentors to meet the

increasing needs in several areas of the community. There is an especially great need for male mentors and bi-lingual Spanish speaking volunteers of both sexes.

Through the **Volunteers in Protective Services (VIPS)**, caring men and women provide guidance, friendship and support to abused and neglected children ages 2 to 18. Currently there are over 100 boys and girls who are waiting to be matched with someone with whom they can develop a positive relationship.

Mentoring Moms are women who make a difference in the lives of isolated and overwhelmed mothers of all ages. The volunteers spend time with DYFS-referred mothers who have experienced difficulty in coping with parenting, managing households, providing for their children or other obstacles. The mentors listen, share ideas and offer encouragement, so that the mothers can improve their lives and that of their children.

A free six-week, 15 hour training program is provided several times a year to mentors in both programs. During this time, the volunteers take workshops on developing listening skills, communication and problem solving. Guest speakers such as current mentors and social services case workers share their experiences so that new mentors have the background and knowledge to help support their mentees. All mentors undergo a comprehensive screening process which includes fingerprinting and other background checks.

For more information about becoming a mentor, and to find out when the next training sessions will be held, call the Volunteer Center of Bergen County at (201) 489-9454, or visit their website at www.bergenvolunteers.org and click on Mentoring Programs.

The mission of the Volunteer Center 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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