

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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Hot Dog! Quest Employees Raise Money for Children in Mentoring Program

What started out as a friendly competition between co-workers has developed into an annual charity event which to date has raised over \$15,000 for abused and neglected children in the area.

The Sixth Annual “Rutt’s Hut Challenge”, a hot dog eating contest sponsored by the employees of Quest Diagnostics in Lyndhurst and Teterboro, was held recently at the Clifton eatery on Main St. The money raised is used to help children in the Volunteers in Protective Services (VIPS) Mentoring Program of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County.

Nine Quest employees ate a total of 61 hot dogs, complete with drinks and fries, during the half hour long competition, while co-workers encouraged them along. This year, the first ladies’ team was named the winner. Sue Moran of Vernon and Ro Moretto of Lyndhurst, beat out all the male competitors by consuming 12 hot dogs.

“Six years ago, two guys in our Information Technology Department wanted to prove who could eat the most hot dogs in a single sitting,” says Dave Hertzell, Senior Account Manager and employee volunteer coordinator. “The entire office heard about it, started taking sides and cheering on a favorite. We decided that given the enthusiasm that was being generated, we should turn it into a charity event through our **reach!** Program.”

Reach! stands for **R**emember **E**very **A**ct **C**an **H**elp, the company-wide employee volunteer program of Quest Diagnostics.

The employees decided that the contest would be a fund-raiser, with people pledging a dollar amount for each hot dog eaten by the contestant of their choice.

Pledges would be paid, win or lose, and the money would be donated to a local charity. Dave asked the team to choose the organization to which the proceeds would go. “Let’s give it to ‘the kids’”, they all agreed.

“The kids” are participants in the Volunteers in Protective Services (VIPS) Program, sponsored by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. VIPS recruits, trains and supports caring men and women who provide friendship, guidance and consistency to abused, neglected and/or isolated children.

”The money raised at the Rutt’s Hut Challenge is used to plan trips and parties for these kids who are in desperate need of a little fun and attention in their lives,” says Faith Samples Smart, VIPS Program Director. “We cannot thank the employees of Quest enough for their continued caring and support.”

“This contest has been one of the most fun and rewarding on-going *reach!* events we sponsor,” says Dave Hertzell. “The spontaneous spirit of fun, the collaboration of all involved, and the joy of sponsoring the children so deserving of our employees’ efforts, has been a wonderful spectacle to behold. We are still accepting donations for the kids. Call me at (201) 729-7550.”

To find out how businesses and community groups can get involved in similar promotions, or to become a mentor, contact the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, at (201) 489-9454, or visit the website at bergenvolunteers.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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pic # 1748: The contestants at the recent Quest Diagnostics Hot Dog Eating contest, which has raised over \$15,000 in six years for abused and neglected children in the mentoring program of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. L to R: George "NJ Devil" Tomko of Lodi; Joe "Bring On Another Rutt's" Redlitz of Lodi; Guillermo "Bill Jr." of Jersey City; Gary "Grape Nuts/Wantage Tornado" Margiotta of Wantage; Art "The Animal" Diaz of Vernon; Susan "Chili Dog" Moran of Vernon, and Ro "BadaBing" Moretto of Lyndhurst.

Not shown: Rob "Jets, Jets, Jets" Christian of Bloomfield



Pic #1757 The first female team won the 2009 Quest Hot Dog Eating contest, which has raised over \$15,000 in six years for abused and neglected children in the mentoring program of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. Susan "Chili Dog" Moran of Vernon and Ro "BadaBing" Moretto of Lyndhurst share the Hot Dog crown!