

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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November 13 Conference: Connecting School and Community through Service

Bergen County A conference designed to help schools and community organizations learn about Service-Learning will be held on Friday, November 13, 2009, at Bergen Community College. Hosted by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, with sponsorship by the Fred J. Brotherton Foundation and State Farm Insurance Companies, the **Third Annual Service Learning Conference** will run from 8:30 AM to 12 noon. The conference will be held in BCC's Technology Education Center, 400 Paramus Road in Paramus. The cost is \$35 per adult and \$15 per student, which includes continental breakfast and all course materials.

Service-learning brings together academic work and service to the community through an intentional curriculum. Students learn by doing, through a clear application of skills and knowledge, while helping to meet needs in the school and community. A national study of Learn and Serve America programs suggests that effective service learning programs improve grades, increase attendance in school and develop students' personal and social responsibility.

This conference is open to Middle and High School teachers and students, service advisors, administrators, as well as volunteers and staff of community and faith-based organizations.

Opening speaker at the half-day conference will be Arlene Lester, Public Affairs Specialist for State Farm Insurance, whose company has strong focus on supporting service learning activities.

Bergen Community College students involved in a fascinating service learning project will head a panel discussing the benefits of this kind of school-community partnership. The students were involved in a project of the College's Institute for Suburban Criminal Justice that studied how positive service activity can impact negative behavior and poor academic performance. Breakout sessions on topics related to service-learning will round out the agenda for the day.

“Service learning is different from volunteering in that it is an approach that integrates community service into a school's curriculum to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities,” says Janet Sharma, executive director of the Volunteer Center. “This conference will provide a wealth of information for those interested in developing or expanding service learning, and will offer participants an opportunity to learn from schools and agencies that have well-established programs.”

For more information about registering to attend **the Third Annual Service Learning Conference** on November 13th , contact Debbie Emery at (201) 489-9454, ext. 118, or demery@bergenvolunteers.org.

Founded by the Junior League in 1966, 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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