



# NEWS

## VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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### For immediate release

June 18, 2004

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## VOLUNTEER CENTER HONORED WITH NATIONAL AWARD

*Award presented by Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network*

Kansas City, MO (June 7, 2004) – The Volunteer Center of Bergen County, Inc., of Hackensack, N.J., was recognized as the recipient of the 2004 George W. Romney Volunteer Center Excellence Award from the Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network. The national award was presented Monday, June 7, before an audience of hundreds during the morning plenary session at the 2004 National Conference on Community Volunteering and National Service, which was convened by the Foundation and the Corporation for National and Community Service at the Kansas City Convention Center June 6 – 8.

When Bergen County residents want to find volunteer opportunities, they turn to the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, Inc. (VCBC). VCBC is known throughout Northern New Jersey as *the* place for individual adults and students, as well as groups from schools, businesses and community organizations, to find out about volunteering. VCBC maintains ongoing relationships with more than 600 nonprofit agencies in and near Bergen County that need or have the potential to engage volunteers.

Led by Executive Director, Janet Sharma, a resident of Cresskill, VCBC's mission is to strengthen the community by mobilizing people and resources to meet community needs. Its mission 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.

Founded in 1966 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, VCBC primarily connects volunteers with opportunities to serve through a relational database of agencies that currently includes 959 on-going volunteer positions at 324 agencies, plus scores of short-term episodic opportunities. Besides being posted on the Center's website, [www.bergenvolunteers.org](http://www.bergenvolunteers.org), the information in the database forms the core of the ***Hands-On Guide to Volunteering***, a 114-page book that is published bi-annually, and that has proven to be an extraordinarily well received and valuable community resource.

The VCBC also sponsors the following programs:

- Northern New Jersey Business Volunteer Council, an alliance of 32 companies whose employees participate in strategic activities to meet the needs of children and families. Co-sponsored with Bergen County's United Way, the BVC generated nearly \$200,000 in resources to meet critical needs of low-income children and families.

- Volunteer Ventures, a group of 250 busy, working adults who help nonprofit agencies with evening and weekend group projects;
- RSVP (Retired and senior Volunteer Program), which link senior volunteers with volunteer positions that have measurable impact on the community.
- Chore Service, in which volunteer handymen and handywomen perform minor home repairs that keep 1,200 elderly and disabled Bergen County residents safe in their own homes
- Three mentoring programs in which trained and caring adult volunteers mentor abused or neglected children, teen mothers and overwhelmed parents in need of guidance and parenting skills. At any given time the Volunteer Center is supervising more than 150 ongoing mentor-mentee matches.
- All Wrapped Up Holiday Giving Program which links willing donors with individuals and families in need of assistance during the holidays. Last year, All Wrapped Up generated \$225,000 in resources to support 4,000 people in need.
- Bergen County VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) which works closely with the Office of Emergency Management and American Red Cross to ensure appropriate volunteer response in the event of emergencies.

The Volunteer Center of Bergen County also serves as custodian of funds for the Bergen County Summer Campership Fund, a public-private collaborative which enables children of low-income working parents to attend summer day camp.

George Romney was former governor of Michigan, CEO of American Motors and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. In 1974 he founded the National Volunteer Center in 1974, which merged with the Points of Light Foundation in 1990. Governor Romney believed passionately in the importance of a strong, viable and highly visible national network of Volunteer Centers that he envisioned to be as accessible as the Post Office. The George W. Romney Volunteer Center Excellence Award was established in 1996 to honor Governor Romney and his personal commitment to Volunteer Centers and to service at all levels.

The George W. Romney Volunteer Center Excellence Award recognizes excellence in the Volunteer Center core competencies of connecting volunteers with the opportunity to serve; promoting volunteerism; building capacity for effective local volunteering; and participating in strategic initiatives that mobilize volunteers to meet local needs. Previous recipients of the award include: Volunteer Services of Manatee County, Inc. (Bradenton, FL), Volunteer Jacksonville, Inc. (Jacksonville, FL), Volunteer Mobile, Inc. (Mobile, AL) and Volunteer Resource Center (Minneapolis, MN).

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The Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network engages and mobilizes millions of volunteers who are helping to solve serious social problems in thousands of communities. Through a variety of programs and services, the Foundation encourages people from all walks of life - corporations, faith-based organizations, low-income communities, families, youth, and older adults - to volunteer.

By calling 1-800-VOLUNTEER, or visiting [www.1800volunteer.org](http://www.1800volunteer.org), interested persons can get connected to volunteer opportunities within their communities.