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Bergen Volunteers Unveils Expanded Mentoring Program

(Hackensack NJ, January 19, 2021) Bergen Volunteers, the longtime hub for community connection building, revealed its newly re-envisioned Mentoring Program, to coincide with January's National Mentoring Month.

After 40 years in partnership with the State of NJ, Bergen Volunteers received the news that, due to COVID-19 budget cuts, all state funding to the Mentoring Program was eliminated.

"The changes in funding provided us with the opportunity to redefine and reimagine mentoring. Over the last 40 years we matched 4,700 individuals with mentors and we did not want budgetary cuts to restrict the impact we have serving the community," said Nina Bachrach, CEO of Bergen Volunteers. "We moved quickly to pivot our approach to ensure that we could continue running our Mentoring Program throughout the pandemic and into the future."

With support from our Mentoring Task Force we developed a new program and framework. The goal continues to be to match individuals in need of support with caring mentors who offer assistance, guidance, and education. The program helps individuals learn about the resources available within the community, while tapping into their strengths to identify and work on individualized goals.

The program is open to walk-ins as well as referrals from partnering agencies, who feel a client could benefit from mentoring. Bergen Volunteers is particularly focused on outreach to individuals from marginalized and minority communities as well as low-to-moderate income households to give them the opportunity to connect with a caring and supportive mentor. The program is currently in need of black and brown male mentors to be matched with mentees in the program.



"We know that by providing friendship, guidance, and support, mentors can help strengthen relationships and encourage healthy family functioning," Bachrach said. "Mentors serve as a bridge to guide individuals across systems, city agencies, and organizations, to ensure they are accessing the resources to meet their needs, achieve their goals, and become self-advocates."

The new Mentoring Program focuses on a two-fold approach, involving a year-long model with the option to renew and a month-to-month model. The year-long option is open to youth and adolescents ages 8 - 18+, caregivers (parents, guardians, grandparents, foster parents, people caring for senior parents, etc.), and first generation college students. Goals, which are set individually by each match, can range from improving financial literacy to experiencing the local arts to strengthening family connections, or can be customized based on individual needs.

The month-to-month program is open to high school students and up as well as senior citizens. The goals for this program are to provide check-ins and conversation for those struggling with isolation. A new component of this program area is the launch of the Seniors-to-Seniors subgroup, in which Seniors in high school can check-in on senior citizens.

There are a variety of ways in which to participate in the program - as a mentor, mentee, or supporter. There are also options for businesses and nonprofits to become involved and benefit from the program.

"We are thrilled to be able to offer support via our new Mentoring Program and encourage our community to get involved in this important and critical program," Bachrach concluded.

Individuals need mentoring now more than ever especially with COVID-19 related isolationism. If you are interested in being matched with a mentor, or volunteering with the Mentoring Program, please reach out to Lisa Tredici at ltredici@bergenvolunteers.org or visit www.bergenvolunteers.org/programs.



About Bergen Volunteers:

Founded in 1966, Bergen Volunteers turns caring into meaningful action by engaging volunteers to improve lives and strengthen the community via a three pronged approach: Our own and external community programs, community engagement, and civic leadership.

We recruit volunteers to provide critical services to youth, families, veterans, seniors, and those who are economically disadvantaged, through our own programs and by supporting the nonprofit community. We offer individuals and businesses volunteer, networking, service, and training opportunities that address community needs. We also provide leadership and professional development opportunities for individuals living and working in Bergen County, educating people about our community and training them to be civically active.

To learn more, visit www.bergenvolunteers.org and follow us on social media, including Bloggr, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter @BergenVolunteers. Bergen Volunteers is a not-for-profit 501 (c)3 organization.

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