

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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January is National Mentoring Month **Expand Your Universe. Mentor**

North Jersey---The Ninth Annual National Mentoring Month is scheduled for January 2010.

The Harvard Mentoring Project of the Harvard School of Public Health and MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership jointly created National Mentoring Month, and are collaborating with the HandsOn Network, as well as other non profit groups to reach out to Americans to “Expand Your Universe. Mentor”.

The Volunteer Center of Bergen County, the local affiliate of the Hands On Network, has been sponsoring mentoring programs for over 30 years, and is currently in need of men and women age 18 and up to become volunteer mentors to meet the increasing needs in several areas of the community.

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 girls and boys who are waiting to be matched with someone with whom they can develop a positive relationship. There is an especially great need for male mentors and bi-lingual Spanish speaking mentors of both sexes.

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. Bi-

lingual Spanish speaking women are also needed to become mentors for this program as well.

A free six-week, 15 hour training program is provided 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.

VIPS training begins Wednesday, January 13th. **Mentoring Moms** begins training on Monday, February 1. Both trainings will also be held again in April 2010.

. All trainings are held at the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, 64 Passaic Street in Hackensack, from 7:00 pm to 9:30pm.

Janet Sharma, executive director of the Volunteer Center, says, “To be a mentor, you don’t need any special skills—just an ability to listen and to offer friendship, guidance and encouragement to a child or an adult. And you’ll be amazed by how much you’ll get out of the experience. So, share what you know. Become a mentor.”

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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