

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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Brookside School Students Learn Leadership Skills Then host picnic for less fortunate families

Allendale: The 8th grade class of the Brookside Middle School in Allendale, participated in their Second Annual Leadership and Service Day on June 12th.

In the morning, the 113 students attended several short seminars where actual community leaders of Allendale taught them communication and character building skills.

Allendale Mayor Vince Barra, Principal John Keenan and Vice Principal Joe Occhino of Northern Highlands Regional High School, Councilwoman Liz White, Pastor Bruce Bassett of Calvary Lutheran Church and Brookside School Principal Bruce Winkelstein taught the students about the valuable tools needed to be successful leaders, including recognizing the characteristics of a good leader, social skills, active listening skills, body language and communication styles.

Later that day, the students put their new found knowledge of leadership to good use, by hosting a picnic for the children and families enrolled in the Volunteer Center of Bergen County's two mentoring programs. **Volunteers in Protective Services (VIPS)** provides caring men and women mentors who act as role models and friends to neglected and abused children, many of whom come from broken homes. The **Mentoring Moms** program matches overwhelmed mothers with women mentors who help them with parenting issues, financial issues and generally act as confidants and friends, to help the women, many of whom are single parents, provide for their families.

With the help of a committee of parents, the students planned the picnic, set up and served the food, and organized the activities that almost 70 children, parents and

mentors enjoyed from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm that evening at Crestwood Lake Park, just across the street from Brookside School.

Each of the Brookside students signed up to be a buddy for one or more of the guest children from VIPS or Moms. The students made sure that their guests enjoyed the food, participated in the activities and had a very good time.

“The Eighth grade class of Brookside School was absolutely fantastic,” says Faith Samples-Smart, program director of VIPS. “They went out of their way to make all of us feel right at home. They organized games, crafts and other activities, which gave the children in our programs some much needed fun, and the parents a chance to see their families happy, enjoying life’s little pleasures.”

Cindy Andrade, Mentoring Moms program director, agrees. “The parents, teachers and administrators of Brookside School should be proud of these outgoing, gracious students. The moms in our program really delighted in watching their kids interact with their new “buddies” as they enjoyed some good, healthy outdoor fun. So often for the children and parents, life is a hardship, with little or no opportunity to relax and just have a good time.”

The children from the VIPS and Moms programs were overheard saying at the end of the day: “Do we have to leave? Can we do this again?”

For more information about the mentoring programs, and all the programs and services of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, call (201) 489-9454, or visit their website at www.bergenvolunteers.org.

The mission of the Volunteer Center 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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The 8th Grade Class of Brookside School in Allendale, participated in a Leadership and Service Day recently, then put their new-found skills to work by hosting a picnic for the children and families enrolled in the Volunteer Center of Bergen County’s Mentoring Programs, which help overwhelmed mothers and their families, and neglected or abused children.



Councilwoman Liz White explained how students can “Communicate With Style”



Pastor Bruce Bassett of Calvary Lutheran Church (second from R) led the class in a role playing exercise on “Social Skills”



Bruce Winkelstein, principal of Brookside School (L) discussing “Characteristics of a Leader” with the class



Allendale Mayor Vince Barra (center) teaching the class in “What To Look For in a Leader”



Mr. John Keenan, principal of Northern Highlands Regional High School,(standing) stressed the importance of “Good Listening Skills”