NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day of Service

North Jersey—Make January 21, 2013 a day "on", not a day "off".

That was the intent when, in 1994, Congress passed the King Holiday and Service Act, designating the Martin Luther King Holiday as a national day of volunteer service. Instead of a day off from work or school, Congress asked Americans of all backgrounds and ages to celebrate Dr. King's legacy by turning community concerns into citizen action.

" We celebrate with passion and commitment the ideals set forth by Dr. King, who inspired Americans to transform their communities through service and civic dialogue," says Janet Sharma, executive director of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County.

"We encourage agencies, municipalities and schools to think of projects that can engage people in service as a tribute to Dr. King," continues Ms. Sharma. "Some ideas for projects might be getting a space painted, having closets or pantries organized, or sponsoring a collection of items your agency needs and distributes to the community, such as food, office or school supplies, baby or children's products."

Ongoing relief efforts for the local victims of Superstorm Sandy are in need of volunteers. Go to www.bergenvolunteers.org and register to receive notification of projects as they are organized.

"If you work with seniors, ask a group of teens or members of a community organization to come in and organize a puzzle party or a social event. All these projects

can help your agency and celebrate the lasting legacy of Dr. King," continues Ms. Sharma.

The Volunteer Center of Bergen County has several on-going direct service programs that are in need of volunteers throughout the year.

Mentoring Moms are volunteer women who serve as friends and role models to isolated, overwhelmed mothers in need of guidance in parenting, managing households, providing for their children or overcoming other obstacles. Call (201) 489-9454 Ext. 123, to become a Mentoring Moms volunteer.

The Mentoring Youth program consists of adult men and women who serve as caring mentors, friends and role models to troubled, abused or neglected children, helping youth to see a positive future, and breaking the cycle of abuse and neglect. Call (201) 489-9474 for more information about Mentoring Youth.

The **Chore Service** provides crews of volunteers who perform minor home repairs that help elderly or disabled persons remain safe in their homes. These minor, yet essential repairs are those that clients can neither do for themselves nor get anyone else to do.

"We hope people in and near Bergen County will continue this upward trend of service, and continue to seek out volunteer opportunities that enhance and improve our communities." says Ms. Sharma.

Additionally, the Volunteer Center will be collecting donations of back packs, toiletry items, sweatshirts size large and extra large, and gift cards to Walmart, Shop Rite, McDonald's, Subway, and Pizza Hut, to be distributed to homeless veterans in the area during the week before the Martin Luther King Holiday, January 14-18 from 9 am to 4 pm at its offices at 64 Passaic Street in Hackensack. Monetary donations for the veterans can be made at www.bergenvolunteers.org.

Call 201-489-9454 or visit www.bergenvolunteers.org for information on this project and for more ideas on how to observe this day, performing service to the community. For additional information on how people are volunteering nationally, visit www.mlkday.gov

Founded by the Junior League in 1966,the Volunteer Center of Bergen County strengthens the community by connecting people with opportunities to serve, operating

model direct service volunteer programs, building capacity for effective volunteering, and participating in strategic partnerships that meet community needs.

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