



NEWS

Business Volunteer Connect, a program of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County

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Companies needed to organize summer food drives for children BVC Kicks off “Brown Bag Buddies”

North Jersey--Hundreds of children from needy families receive breakfast and lunch during the school year through subsidized school meal programs. When schools close for summer vacation, these meals are not available, and low-income families are often unable to fill the void, many having to make the choice between paying rent or going hungry.

Companies are needed to host employee food drives during the summer to help these families.

Business Volunteer Connect (BVC) a program of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, is coordinating a summer food drive with both its member companies and other interested companies, to collect “kid-friendly”, non-perishable breakfast and lunch food items. The food collected during this initiative, entitled **Brown Bag Buddies**, will be delivered to the Center for Food Action and other local food pantries during the months of July and August. A free information kit that describes the program and provides “how-to” instructions on running an employee food drive is available by calling (201) 489-9454 Ext. 133.

According to statistics from the National School Lunch Program, more than 385,000 children in New Jersey, including over 20,000 who live in Bergen County, receive free or reduced price meals in their schools. Last year, only 11 percent of the children participating in the National School Lunch Program had access to nutritious meals in the summer.

“The wages of the working poor have not kept up with housing, transportation and child care costs. Without school meals, families must turn to the food pantries to provide nutritional meals for their children,” says Ellen Lutvak, BVC Manager.

Since 2000, over \$346,000 (*add last year's number to this one*) worth of food and grocery gift cards, which equates to over one hundred thousand pounds of food, have been distributed through Brown Bag Buddies. The goal for 2014 is 10,000 pounds of food. The sponsors for this year's drive are *who are the sponsors for 2014?* United Water, BD, Rockland Electric, and Sealed Air(Community Bank of Bergen County and KPMG may also sponsor so let's talk before you send pr.“We are asking all companies in northern New Jersey to encourage their employees to participate in this summer food drive,” continues Ms. Lutvak. “Remember, hunger never takes a vacation.”

For more information about Brown Bag Buddies or the other programs of the BVC, call (201) 489-9454, Ext. 133 or e-mail elutvak@bergenvolunteers.org.

The Volunteer Center's Business Volunteer Connect provides consultation to companies on everything connected to employee volunteering and community engagement. Services include customized volunteer projects, guidance and expertise on employee volunteer program management, assistance with skills-based volunteering and participation in several annual volunteer initiatives.

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