

NEWS

Volunteer Center of Bergen County – Business Volunteer Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Volunteers Bring the Joy of Reading to Children in Need

Bergen County - - Over 7,500 new children's books were collected through the Business Volunteer Council's **Books in a Bag** program. Books in a Bag is conducted annually by the Volunteer Center of Bergen County's *Business Volunteer Council (BVC)*, a program which engages companies in employee volunteering and workplace giving.

Volunteers from Business Volunteer Council member companies United Water and Hudson City Savings Bank packed 2,760 of the books into drawstring bags in early March, which were then distributed to 460 pre-K and kindergarten students at the Quarles School in Englewood. On March 18th, in honor of Read Across America Day, volunteers from BVC member company TD Bank read the books to an attentive audience of children at the school.

The remaining books will be distributed to children ages 3-18 who are being mentored through Bergen Mentors, another program of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County. Bergen Mentors is comprised of Mentoring Youth, which provides mentors to children who have suffered from abuse or neglect, and Mentoring Moms, which provides mentors to mothers who are struggling to provide for their families. A combined 182 children are served by the two programs, 95% of whom are from low-income families. A book fair is planned for later this spring that is exclusively for these children, and provides an opportunity for them to select brand new books to keep as their own. Buying books at a bookstore or at their school book fair is a luxury that is often not in the family budget for many of the children in Bergen Mentors, so this special book fair will enable the children to have books of their very own to keep and enjoy.

"According to Project Literacy of Bergen County, more than 150,000 people in Bergen County cannot read beyond the 4th grade level," states Erica West, the Volunteer Center's Director of Corporate Engagement. "The Business Volunteer Council recognizes that literacy is not just the responsibility of our educational system, but the entire community and is poised to change the statistics. Books in a Bag was created not only to teach our children the value of

reading, but to educate parents on the significant impact family reading can have on a child's development.”

Books were generously donated by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, United Water, KPMG, Konica Minolta, Jacome America, Scholastic, BD and Books and Greetings bookstore. Books in a Bag was sponsored by Business Volunteer Council member companies Konica Minolta, United Water, BD and Rockland Electric. Sonja Clark of United Water states, “The books donated for the Books in a Bag initiative are an important first step in promoting and encouraging the importance of reading in young learners. United Water has been a key supporter of the Books in a Bag program and as a result is making a lasting contribution to children and families in need throughout Bergen County.”

The Business Volunteer Council gives businesses a platform to successfully engage employees through volunteer service and workplace giving. The BVC provides customized volunteer projects, including skills-based volunteering and support for corporate social responsibility initiatives. The BVC makes doing good an easy part of doing business by building high-impact employee led-programs that are locally significant and socially relevant. Companies with the right engagement tools and guidance can create incredible social change, while having a fun, memorable team building experience! For more information about the BVC, contact Erica West at 201-489-9454, ext. 133 or ewest@bergenvolunteers.org.

The Volunteer Center of Bergen County strengthens the community by connecting people through service and developing civic leaders.

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Captions:

#732: Volunteer Joshua Feldman of TD Bank read to young students at the Quarles School in Englewood through a project organized by the Volunteer Center's Business Volunteer Council in honor of Read Across America Day.

#737 and #772: Children from the Quarles School in Englewood were thrilled by to receive new books donated by member companies of the Volunteer Center's Business Volunteer Council through the *Books in a Bag* program. Volunteers from TD Bank, one of the sponsors of the program, read to the children in celebration of Read Across America Day.

Sorting1: Volunteers from United Water sort donated books that will be distributed to children in need through the Volunteer Center's Business Volunteer Council *Books in a Bag* program.

#460: Volunteers from Hudson City Savings Bank packed 460 drawstring backpacks with books donated for the *Books in a Bag* program. The bags of books will be distributed to local children from low-income families.

