

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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Volunteer Center Seeks Donors to Fill Holiday Gift Requests Amid disaster recovery, hoping to impart small sense of normalcy

North Jersey---As the lead agency in the Bergen County VOAD—Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster—the Volunteer Center of Bergen County has been coordinating the superstorm Sandy relief efforts of charities, civic organizations and volunteer groups for hundreds of local residents whose lives were turned upside down by this disaster.

Recovery and rebuilding throughout the community will continue for months. In addition to its role in disaster recovery, the Volunteer Center has, for the past 14 years, sponsored **All Wrapped Up**, a holiday giving program benefiting thousands of needy clients at its member service agencies in the area. These clients face daily hardships throughout the year, such as poverty, abuse/neglect and homelessness. They were identified by the social service agencies in early September, and there are 3600 names on that list. The Volunteer Center is reaching out to companies, religious and civic groups, chambers of commerce and other community organizations, as well as individuals and families, to ask for their help in remembering these people as well.

All Wrapped Up has been matching generous donors who provide gifts and gift cards to needy children and families, troubled youth, lonely seniors and disabled adults. People may be passed over this holiday season unless generous donors come forward to offer assistance.

Information for potential donors wishing to make contributions can be found at www.bergenvolunteers.org; click on Holiday Programs. Registration is open now; donor-client matching has already begun.

“We are asking groups of all kinds to step up and help those in need. We’ve already received a record number of requests from social service agencies for their clients. Groups can collect gifts or raise funds to help others find some joy in the holiday season,” says Janet Sharma, executive director of the Volunteer Center.

All Wrapped Up has two components: **Adopt-a-Family** and **Heart to Heart**.

For **Adopt-a-Family**, the Volunteer Center has already received gift requests for more than 800 families, ranging in size from two to seven people, and that number is expected to grow. Donors will be given a family profile, with specific gift requests that could include clothes, toys or household items. Donors should plan to spend about \$50 per family member. Donors may also provide gift certificates to stores or supermarkets.

Donors with limited budgets or those who would like to focus on one needy person may help an individual through the **Heart-to-Heart** program. The Volunteer Center has already received over 1,000 requests for assistance were submitted for seniors, lonely or disabled adults and children. Donors are asked to provide supermarket gift certificates, clothing and gifts for the individual they select and should plan to spend approximately \$50.

Non-profit agencies are currently submitting profiles of needy individuals and families to the Volunteer Center. The Volunteer Center, in turn, is compiling lists of groups and individuals willing to help. Donors will have no direct contact with individuals or families; all gifts will be delivered to and distributed by the non-profit organization.

To participate in the program, visit the Volunteer Center's website at www.bergenvolunteers.org, click on **Programs, All Wrapped Up** to complete an application form. Donors will receive profiles with specific gift requests. For more information, call Debbie Emery at (201) 489-9454 Ext. 118.

The Volunteer Center continues to serve as the communications facilitator among groups who want to help in the Sandy recovery efforts. Anyone who would like to learn of any upcoming relief projects can register on their website at www.bergenvolunteers.org, or "like" them on the Volunteer Center of Bergen County Facebook page".

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