

NEWS

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF BERGEN COUNTY, INC.

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For immediate release

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End date: January 18, 2012

Wanted: Heroes for Kids

North Jersey—Local boys and girls are looking for heroes.

These children have been referred to the Volunteer Center of Bergen County's Mentoring Youth program, which, for more than 30 years, has trained and supervised adult volunteers to serve as mentors to children, age 5 to 18, who are confronting adverse challenges at home and in life, and experiencing social, emotional and behavioral problems. Mentors serve as positive role models; provide guidance, friendship and support, and advocate on behalf of children when necessary.

The next 6-week VIPS mentor training program begins on Wednesday, January 18, 2012. Each Wednesday session is held from 7:00 pm to 9:30 pm at the Volunteer Center of Bergen County, 64 Passaic Street in Hackensack.

"Volunteers in the Mentoring Youth program improve the lives and experiences of children who need someone they can trust, someone to show them they are not alone," says Janet Sharma, Volunteer Center Executive Director. "There is an especially great need for men to mentor boys and for bi-lingual Spanish speaking mentors of both genders, and there are not nearly enough volunteers enrolled so far."

"These children are waiting for someone to step in and believe in them, to encourage them to laugh and succeed," says Dr. Faith Samples-Smart, Mentoring Youth Program Director. "We consider time spent with mentors as free time: free of the challenges children confront in their daily environments at home and/or at school. What a gift to have this respite and safe zone with a caring adult."

The 15-hour Mentoring Youth volunteer training is provided at no charge and covers such topics as the benefits of mentoring for volunteers and children; child and adolescent development; understanding child maltreatment; effective listening and communication skills; building rapport and developing strong mentoring relationships; the role of the mentor; and the matching and closure process. Applicants are required to undergo a comprehensive background check and must obtain written letters recommendation as part of the training course.

For more information about the Mentoring Youth program, contact Eva Tobias at (201) 489-9454 Ext. 121, or visit www.bergenvolunteers.org and click on mentoring programs.

Founded by the Junior League in 1966, the mission of the Volunteer Center of Bergen County is to strengthen the community by connecting people with opportunities to serve, operating direct service volunteer programs, building the capacity for effective volunteering and participating in strategic partnerships that meet community needs.

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