

# Transformations

Winter 2009



## First Born Learning Trail Built in Somerset County to Promote Early Childhood Learning and Family Fun!

On Thursday, October 27, local United Ways and eight Johnson & Johnson volunteers created an interactive early learning trail at Duke Island Park to help parents, grandparents and caregivers turn everyday excursions into fun learning moments.

The Born Learning Trail is a series of learning activities that any adult can play with young children at the Duke Island Park, Bridgewater. It is the FIRST Born Learning Trail in Somerset County and it is sponsored by Health Care Systems, a J&J company.

Based on the latest early childhood research and approved by national early learning experts through United Way of America, the Born Learning Trail is designed to help adults interact with children to boost language and literacy development and to help caregivers understand how to best support early learning in everyday, outdoor moments. There are nine signs on the trail that feature activities such as Watch! Stop! Learn! Play! This game encourages the caregiver to follow the child's lead, building the child's curiosity and confidence and reinforcing the learning already underway. The Born Learning Trail promotes interaction between adults and children, a vital component of early childhood learning. "Research tells us children are literally born learning and that means five years of education takes place before our children enter kindergarten. We know that what happens in a child's early years matters for success in life and for school readiness. And we want to help parents, grandparents and caregivers use everyday outings including trips to this new Born Learning Trail to support that learning," said Phil Brown, CEO of Somerset County United Way.

Companies who are interested in sponsoring a "Born Learning Trail" in their neighborhood or need more information are encouraged to contact Lynn Weckworth at 908-253-6505 or [lynn.weckworth@scuw.org](mailto:lynn.weckworth@scuw.org).



Johnson & Johnson Volunteers dig, paint and construct the Born Learning Trail at Duke Island Park in Bridgewater.



## 2009 Business Volunteer Council Meeting February 6, 9 am

Please join us to discuss volunteering in the community, and to brain storm creative "Take Your Children to Work Day" United Way volunteer activities for your workplace! The meeting is open to local businesses of all sizes. Please contact Lisa Galonardo at 908-253-6503 or via email at [lisa.galonardo@scuw.org](mailto:lisa.galonardo@scuw.org).

**Baby Supply Drive in April**  
Our annual baby supply drive is right around the corner! To get involved, please contact Irene Natale at 908-253-6511 or [irene.natale@scuw.org](mailto:irene.natale@scuw.org) to learn more!

**Help invest your donation!**  
Volunteers are needed to review programs applying for funding. For more information, please contact Monica Conover at 908-253-6529 or via email [monica.conover@scuw.org](mailto:monica.conover@scuw.org)



# GIVE

“Creating an annual volunteer project for local high school kids has been very rewarding. Our hope is that we can inspire the kids as much as they inspire us!”

**James and Theresa DeMuro**  
**DeMuro Associates**  
**Somerville, NJ**

In an effort to “Live United”, we hold our Annual Haunted House every October to raise money for the Somerset County United Way. This event usually attracts over 1,200 people and this year raised over \$3,000. We unite our company with the neighboring school student volunteers and numerous adult volunteers in a coordinated effort to transform our office into a haunted house. This year, through the efforts of the Somerset County United Way, we also had the contribution of time from many volunteers from local Girl Scout troops. In addition to our annual Haunted House fundraiser, we have a "Giving Tree" on display in our office during the holiday season and we encourage our employees to bring in gifts that we pass along to the Somerset County United Way for their “Gifts of the Season” program. We also volunteer for the sorting of the gifts collected from this program in preparation for their distribution.

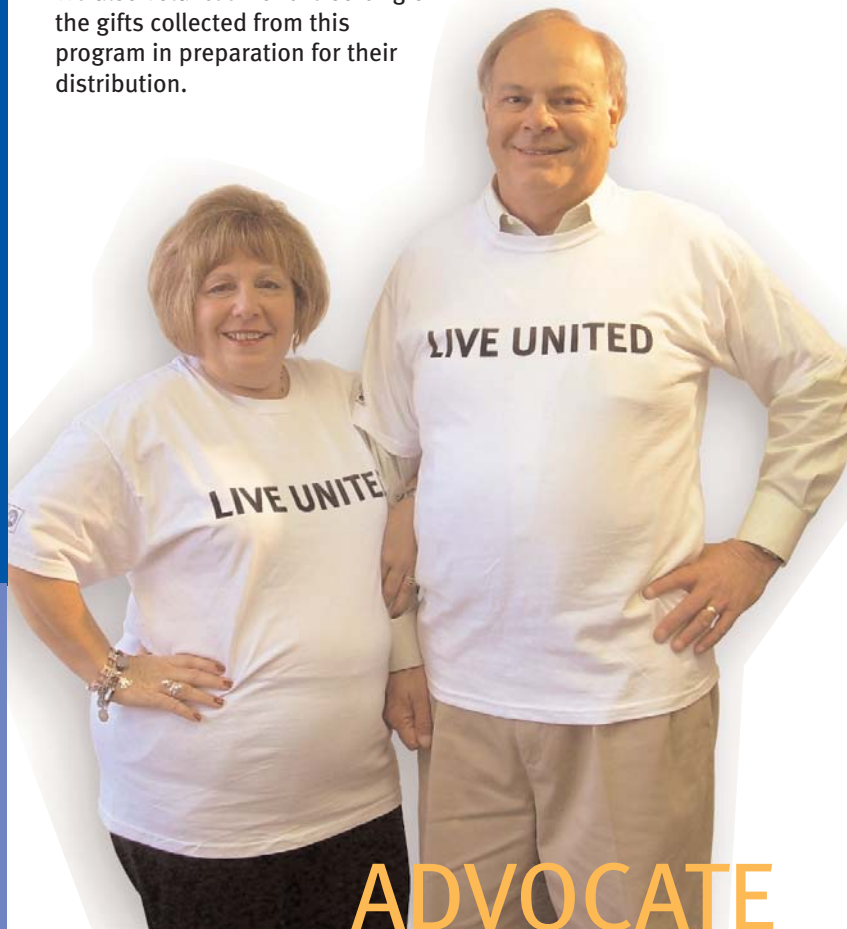
## Thank you to all of our creative United Way Workplace Giving and Retiree Campaigns!

Photos Above: 1. AkzoNobel creates fall harvest luncheon complete with hot Chili, apple cobbler served with ice cream and a crowd pleasing scarecrow decorating contest. 2. AZ Electronics hosted a Hawaiian themed laui with tropical drinks and dance lessons/demonstrations 3. Henkel hosted an ice cream sundae social with tasty toppings and hot fudge.

Ortho Clinical Diagnostics, National Starch, and Ethicon run creative Retiree Campaigns. To learn more about how to help make a retiree campaign happen at your place of work (or where you retired from!) contact Jim Rude on 908-253-6515 or via email [jim.rude@scuw.org](mailto:jim.rude@scuw.org)

## Save the Date! Friday, April 17, 2009 Women’s Initiative Annual Breakfast Topic “Gratitude - Staying Focused on What’s Important”

This year’s Women’s Initiative breakfast event will take place on April 17th and will feature Sue Urda, Co-Founder of Powerful You!, a company designed to assist women in business to live balanced and powerful lives and to grow both professionally and personally through network meetings, workshops and building relationships. Contact Lynn Weckworth for sponsorship opportunities, tickets or online auction details at [lynn.weckworth@scuw.org](mailto:lynn.weckworth@scuw.org) or 908-253-6505.



# ADVOCATE

How do you LIVE UNITED? Contact [jackie.scott@scuw.org](mailto:jackie.scott@scuw.org)

## The Health of our Community Depends on Our Local Food Drive Initiatives!

Our many thanks to all of the companies who participated in various Somerset County United Way food drives to help those in need during the holiday season and the cold winter months ahead. Frito Lay, Aon, at&t, Roche Diagnostics, AkzoNobel, Schering Plough, Phillips-Van Huesen, and many of the Johnson and Johnson Companies (just to name a few!) have recently conducted food drive programs.

*Volunteer Photos: 1. at&t volunteers present a \$7,000 check to Somerset County United Way for local food banks 2. Phillips-Van Huesen employees host a corporate food drive and deliver food to local food banks 3. Schering Plough employees collect food items and raise funds and awareness at a local grocery store.*



## CA\$H Program Gearing Up for a Tremendous Second Year!

Somerset County United Way is focused on increasing the number of individuals and families receiving the tax credits they have earned. To do that, we have created the Somerset County CA\$H (Creating Assets, Savings and Hope) program, in partnership with the Emanuel Community Development Corporation (ECDC), to offer FREE tax preparation assistance to working, low-wage earning families and individuals.

The CA\$H Program will help these individuals and families to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other tax credits they qualify to receive. This service will be provided by trained volunteers at easily accessible sites around Somerset County. Extensive outreach and marketing will be done in those communities with a high percentage of lower-income families to encourage them to take advantage of this service. All tax returns prepared through this service will be filed electronically with direct deposit of the refund encouraged. For those individuals who do not have a bank account, it provides the opportunity to open an account and start to use mainstream banking products.

To make an appointment for free tax assistance, call 908-725-6640. For more information about the CA\$H program or to volunteer, please contact Lisa Galonardo at 908-253-6503 or via email at [lisa.galonardo@scuw.org](mailto:lisa.galonardo@scuw.org).

VOLUNTEER

## Volunteers Recognized

Somerset County United Way presented the Joseph M. Lee Leadership and the Christian T. Nielsen Unsung Hero Awards to two of their finest volunteers. Rainer Muser (seated on the left) and Linda Bradway (seated on the right) accepted their awards at an informal ceremony with friends, family, and Somerset County United Way board members and staff at the United Way office. The Joseph M. Lee Leadership Award, awarded to Muser of Rocky Hill, recognizes an individual whose contribution of time, talent and treasure results in significant impact on Somerset County United Way's work in improving the community for all of its residents. The Christian T. Nielsen Award, awarded to Bradway of Branchburg, recognizes an individual who donated his/her skills which resulted in significant benefits to Somerset County United Way, and did so without fanfare or expectation of recognition.



**A Message from the President & CEO of Somerset County United Way**

Hello Friends,

With the holiday season just ending, many of us may be more concerned with how the current economic crisis will impact our own families. While we may have less to give this year we cannot ignore the great needs faced by individuals right here in Somerset County over the coming weeks, months and possibly years. In our community and across the country, the income gap is the widest it's been in generations; unemployment is expected to reach its highest levels in decades; one out of every three Americans uses a credit card to pay for basic necessities like food and rent; and more than 47 million Americans, young and old, lack health insurance. We all win when everyone in our community thrives, and it's up to us to work together and help each other. When we reach out a hand to one, we can influence the condition of all. At United Way, we have established a call-to-action – LIVE UNITED – to motivate everyone to help by donating through volunteering, advocating or giving financially.

Whether you choose to become a volunteer tax preparer, mentor a family trying to escape poverty, provide baby or school supplies to a struggling family, or write a letter to a local representative about an important community issue—you are Living United and your actions will positively impact Somerset County for generations to come. When we harness spirit and ingenuity to work toward common goals, the possibilities are limitless. It's not just something to believe during tough times, it's real . . . every day. This is not something the citizens of Somerset can – or should – do alone. Collectively, we can help improve the lives of those in need in our community and together, LIVE UNITED.

Sincerely,



Philip A. Brown, III  
President and CEO, Somerset County United Way



## 19th Annual Holiday Gift Drive is a Big Success!

Somerset County United Way has completed its 19th annual Gifts of the Season program to provide holiday gifts to local families facing financial hardship. The partnership between Somerset County United Way, the Food Bank Network of Somerset County and the Somerset County Board of Social Services offers an opportunity for people to provide gifts for local individuals and families in need during the holiday season.

If you would like to get involved with this program next year or require more information, please call Irene Natale at (908) 253-6511 or visit [www.scuw.org](http://www.scuw.org).

**Need help?  
Start here.**



With just one call to 2-1-1 you'll connect with a caring professional who knows the resources that are available in your area. Or, please go online at [www.NJ211.org](http://www.NJ211.org).

Please visit us online [www.scuw.org](http://www.scuw.org)

**Somerset County United Way**  
P. O. Box 6835  
Bridgewater, NJ 08807

NON PROFIT  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BRIDGEWATER, NJ 08807  
PERMIT NO. 42