

## Somerset County United Way, Comcast work together to improve literacy

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COURTESY SOMERSET COUNTY UNITED WAY

The Somerset County United Way and Comcast recently completed a successful book drive that resulted in the collection of more than 200 new and gently used books. The effort was part of Comcast's Cares Day activities and in support of Somerset County United Way's "READY to Learn" Program. Pictured from left to right are Suzanne Franklyn of Comcast, Althea Henderson of Comcast, Lynn Weckworth of the Somerset United Way and Thomas Daley of the Somerset United Way.

The Somerset County United Way and Comcast recently completed a successful book drive that resulted in collecting more than 200 new and gently used books totaling almost \$1,500 in value.

The effort was part of Comcast's Cares Day activities and in support of Somerset County United Way's READY to Learn Program.

"We were excited to have the opportunity to partner with Comcast for this book drive and want to express our appreciation to their staff who contributed to this effort," said Lynn Weckworth, vice president of Community Building and Resource Investment for Somerset County United Way.

As part of Comcast Cares Day, more than 200 employees in six New Jersey Comcast Call Centers held book drives and collected over 1,200 books, which were donated to local United Way chapters throughout the state for distribution to after school programs, day care centers and community reading programs.

The books, for children ages 12 and younger -- along with materials donated by Comcast including book bags, pencil cases and a kid's atlas for each child -- were compiled and assembled during breaks and before and after shifts by Comcast employees working on April 25, which was the company's national day of service.

"As a 24/7 operation, a large portion of our employees work on Comcast Cares Day, but still want to be involved in volunteer efforts to help our communities," said Kimberly Smith, Comcast's Director of Government Affairs. "This was the perfect way to make sure those employees who wanted to help were able to do so.

"Our employees were particularly pleased that the books were going to their local United Way. They recognize that we share the same goals of community service and helping others."

The READY to Learn program promotes youth literacy by focusing on early childhood reading. With the goal of increasing literacy and school-readiness for young children, the program provides age-appropriate books to children from low-income families, as well as to the child care, preschool and kindergarten classrooms. Access to books, encouraging parents and other caregivers to read to children, and connecting volunteer readers to classrooms all reinforce the enjoyment of reading and help children become more competent readers.

On Comcast Cares Day more than 4,000 Comcast volunteers throughout N.J. and the Philadelphia area volunteered for projects ranging from downtown beautification efforts and park clean-ups to working at food banks and sprucing up local YMCA facilities.

An independent nonprofit organization, Somerset County United Way helps people who live and work in Somerset County through its vision that all residents possess a living income that will be attained through achieving financial stability, healthy lifestyles, and life readiness. United Way's mission is to lead a caring community to create solutions that transform people's lives. To learn more, contact Somerset County United Way at (908) 725-6640 or visit [scuw.org](http://scuw.org).

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