



Contacts: Kurt Praschak / 973.992-7800, x.289 / kpraschak@successcomgroup.com
Debra Lewis / 973-740-0588, x120 / dlewis@ncjwessex.org

National Council of Jewish Women/Essex County Section
staging 15th annual Back 2 School Store

300 volunteers helping 1000+ students in need

Through its charitable foundation, Kearny Bank contributes \$18,000

ESSEX COUNTY, NJ (July 12, 2023) – For the 15th consecutive year, the National Council of Jewish Women – Essex County section (NCJW/Essex) will be holding its Back 2 School Store, providing essential, school-related items to students in need across Essex County. This year’s Store will be held on July 30.

The approximately 1,000 students who benefit – each of whom must be registered in advance through any of about 40 supporting charitable or municipal agencies – may “shop” for a range of clothing, school supplies, personal care items, and various accessories. Available attire includes coats, underwear, socks, pants, tops, hats, and gloves. All items are new, and children have choices of current, popular styles.

“Obviously, making sure children are warm, comfortable, and have the supplies they need is vital, but the Back 2 School Store is also intended to be empowering,” says Caitlin Higgins Joy, NCJW/Essex Executive Director. “We regularly hear children say they have never before had an opportunity to shop for and choose their own things. With this initiative, if a child wants – for example – a purple coat, they can pick a purple coat.”

Kearny Bank has supported the Back 2 School Store since 2012. This year, through its charitable foundation, it has donated \$18,000.

“Our company is committed to helping those communities where we conduct business, and the Back 2 School Store is precisely the type of program we’re proud to support,” says Kearny Bank President and CEO Craig Montanaro. “When you realize just how many children don’t have access to what most of us consider the most basic necessities, you get a little hitch in the back of your throat. At the same time, it’s inspiring – it’s heartwarming – to see what the NCJW/Essex folks are able to achieve each year.”

The Back 2 School Store is a huge, collective undertaking, which requires an ongoing, year-round effort. And that’s why NCJW/Essex sets approximately 300 volunteers to the task. Of note, agencies with clients who aren’t able to shop in person will pick up specially packed bags during the week following the July 30 Store event.

“What our volunteers accomplish is amazing – maybe even miraculous,” explains 2023 Back 2 School Store Co-Chair Susie Botwinick. “The logistics are daunting, but the biggest and most creative challenge is making the funds we have go as far as possible. Our volunteers are constantly tracking down all kinds of sales and discount opportunities. Even a small amount of money saved means being able to purchase another coat, more notebooks, or some other essentials.”

When the children visit the Store on July 30 to shop, volunteers there in Millburn will serve as personal shoppers to help them determine what fits and what looks great. At the same time, parents and other adults who transported the children to the event are able to participate in health screenings and access a range of information from local agencies on topics that include social services, mentoring, and managing personal finances.

Marcina Fox, Executive Director at the Valley Settlement House child-care center in West Orange – which has taken part in the Back 2 School Store since it began – notes: “Our parents are working parents, and we provide childcare and support, including participating in the Back 2 School Store. To see the look on the kids’ faces after they have shopped is amazing, and the items they receive are often enough to last throughout the year. Not to mention, adding so many resources for the parents to explore while their kids are shopping was wonderful.”

About NCJW/Essex

The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. NCJW/Essex members and volunteers give back to our community, advocate for issues and form forever friendships. The National Council of Jewish Women was founded in 1893, in Chicago, and the Essex County section was established in 1912. For more information about our mission and our programs, visit www.ncjwessex.org.

About Kearny Bank

Combining the finest traditions of community banking with the industry’s latest, most effective financial products and services, Kearny Bank provides business and personal clients with the tools for success. Established back in 1884, and now operating from corporate offices in Fairfield, NJ, Kearny Bank’s footprint covers most of New Jersey, along with Brooklyn and Staten Island. Additional information is available at kearnybank.com or by visiting Kearny Bank’s social media channels: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

###