



MIDDLESEX COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MCFOODS Looks to Plays-in-the-Park to Make Up for Recent Donation Shortages

MIDDLESEX COUNTY – The Middlesex County Food Organization and Outreach Distribution Services (MCFOODS) is once again teaming up with Plays-in-the Park in an effort to drum up donations during what officials are describing as a summer shortfall of supplies.

This partnership dates back more than a decade, when organizers from Plays-in-the-Park, a County-sponsored organization that holds summertime productions at Roosevelt Park in Edison, first began encouraging patrons to tote and donate non-perishable items at the shows.

“This year, as Plays-in-the-Park marks its 50th anniversary, the need for donations couldn’t be greater,” said Freeholder Director Christopher D. Rafano. “What separates a great community from an average community are the citizens who reside in it. In addition to supporting the arts, we hope that our citizens will also see the less fortunate’s plight with hunger as a cause deserving of their attention.”

There are several factors contributing to the seasonal donation shortage that has gradually become a trend, said MCFOODS Project Manager Jennifer Apostol.

“During our weekly distributions, the average pantry representative walks out with approximately 200 pounds of food, not to mention produce, bread and bulk cases; in many cases, these organizations are stretching supplies to feed hundreds of people,” Apostol said. “But when summer is in full-swing, donations tend to drop-off, typically limiting distributions to 150 pounds, either because food drives are virtually non-existent, people are on vacation or community hunger is not at the forefront of residents’ minds.”

Plays-in-the-Park hosts tens of thousands of fans each year. Apostol notes that even one donation item per patron would make all the difference in the world to some of the County’s neediest residents.

“With school-aged children on summer break, there’s a need for donations now more than ever – hunger does not take a vacation,” she said. “Parents, who might depend on subsidized meal programs through the school systems, are left to worry about three square meals a day, not to mention other seasonal expenses cutting into their household budgets, like child care.”

Operated by the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, MCFOODS serves more than 100 area pantries, soup kitchens and other emergency food providers with weekly distributions. The Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders provides the New Brunswick warehouse where these weekly disbursements, which total 18,000 pounds of food, are based.

Plays-in-the-Park officially kicks off its 2012 season on June 20, opening with *My Fair Lady*. The line-up to follow this first production is *Damn Yankees*, running July 11 through 21 and *Grease*, with performances spanning between Aug. 1 and 11.

“No one should have to go to bed hungry, least of all children,” said Freeholder Stephen J. “Pete” Dalina, chair of the County’s Infrastructure Management Committee, which oversees the Office of Parks and Recreation. “If the resources are there to share, this is the perfect opportunity for residents to do their part and donate. Making a simple charitable act while attending Plays-in-the-Park, are just two ways to best demonstrate the community spirit we pride ourselves on here in Middlesex County.”

Plays begin at 8:30 p.m. each night of the week, excluding Sundays. Tickets can be purchased between 5:30 and 9 p.m. at the box office, located on Pine Drive within the Roosevelt Park grounds. For more information on Plays-in-the-Park, log onto www.playsinthepark.com or e-mail pipoffice@playsinthepark.com.

Anyone, who is interested in donating but unable to attend Plays-in-the-Park, may do so at participating libraries across the County, including: East Brunswick, Edison, Metuchen, Milltown, Monroe, North Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Piscataway, Plainsboro, South Brunswick, Spotswood, South Amboy and Woodbridge.

Currently, MCFOODS is in most need of the following items: tuna fish, cereal, macaroni and cheese, condensed milk, canned meats and pasta, peanut butter, jelly, vegetables, stew, brown rice, fruits, paper products, toiletries and baby supplies, such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, diapers and wipes, Apostol said.

For more information on the MCFOODS program, log onto www.mciauth.com or contact Apostol at 609-409-5033 or by e-mailing ja@mciauth.com.

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