The Star-Ledger
NEW JERSEY
ESSEX COUNTY

Students from Christ the King and St. Vincent Academy in Newark put their work gloves on to sift the compost at Newark Conservancy (Prudential Learning Center) event. The event was organized by the Student/Partner Alliance as an opportunity for sponsors and students to get together doing community work.

Partners and students with the Student/Partner Alliance serve the community and spend time together. Pictured are sponsors Bruce and Susan Reitz with their students and family members at the Community Food Bank in Elizabeth.

SCHOOL NOTEBOOK

UNION COUNTY

Alliance partners with students to provide tuition assistance

The list of options for high school-bound students in Essex, Hudson and Union counties is longer thanks to a non-profit organization in Millburn.

The Student/Partner Alliance functions to provide financial and personal support to high school students from inner cities in New Jersey. Specifically, the group provides private school tuition assistance and mentoring for the students' four years of high school.

The Student/Partner Alliance started in 1993 when founder Tom Cash helped pay tuition for four students. Since then, the organization has grown and this year approximately 270 students will be participating in the program, according to marketing director Marianne Busby.

Both individuals and larger foundations and groups serve as sponsors. Generally, when an individual signs up as a partner, he or she is matched with a particular student. Most partners have one student, but some foundations support more than one student. For each sponsored student, the partner agrees to provide a minimum of $1,500 per year for four years of high school. All money collected from the partners is used for the students' tuition.

In addition to the financial support, there is also a mentoring component to the program. The organization schedules events throughout the year so students and partners can get together. The S.P.A. has arranged for the sponsors, students and their families to visit a food bank this November for a day of community service. On their own time, some partners get more involved than others, even going to school plays and recitals, Busby said. Beyond the financial aspect, the level of involvement often depends on the student and the partner, she said.

Participating high schools include: St. Anthony High School in Jersey City, St. Benedict's Preparatory in Newark, Christ the King Preparatory in Newark, Hudson Catholic Regional High School in Jersey City, Immaculate Conception High School in Montclair, Marist High School in Bayonne, St. Mary's High School in Jersey City, Marylawn of the Oranges in South Orange, St. Patrick's High School in Elizabeth and St. Vincent's Academy in Newark.

The organization's selection of students is based on financial need. Students need not be at the top of their elementary school class to be accepted.

For more information about the Student/Partner Alliance, students should contact their grammar school or the private high school they wish to attend. They can also contact S.P.A. directly at: PO Box 566, Millburn, NJ 07041, by phone at (973) 379-6658 or (973) 379-5878 or at studentpartneralliance.org/.