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Local volunteers lobby Congress to fight poverty

Aug 23, 2013

Several local volunteers made a trip to Washington, D.C., from July 19 to 23 to lobby Congress on behalf of low-income Americans.

The trip was part of the 2013 International Conference of RESULTS, a grassroots organization that works to end hunger and poverty in the United States and around the world.

Local RESULTS members who attended the conference were Tracy Sullivan of Basking Ridge, Susan and Paul Rack of Martinsville and Frank Siwec, NancyLee McLure and Jeff and Marian Olson, all of Bernardsville.

At the conference, more than 500 RESULTS volunteers from 34 states and 22 countries worked together to learn about effective ways to reduce poverty through legislation and partnership with local organizations, nonprofits and other groups.

They learned about a group of retired generals and admirals who consider the welfare of American children a national security issue. They also learned strategies for effective communication with members of Congress. On July 23, they all headed to Capitol Hill to challenge their senators and representatives to take action.

The seven Somerset County residents are part of a local group, RESULTS Bernardsville, that focuses on domestic poverty issues, such as nutrition programs, tax policy and investments in early childhood. They talked to New Jersey senators and representatives about:

- 1) Maintaining funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food stamps;
- 2) Making permanent the 2009 improvements to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC);
- 3) Developing tax policy to encourage saving in low-income households;

4) Increasing investment in early childhood programs such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

“RESULTS provides us with good, solid information,” said Nancy Lee McLure. “I feel confident speaking about Head Start because I have plenty of background information. And if a question comes up that I can’t answer, I know the RESULTS staff can help me find it.”

The Bernardsville RESULTS group is currently following up with Congressional staff to learn whether the requested actions have been taken. They have also arranged for Rep. Leonard Lance, R-7, to visit the Early Head Start center in Ringoes during the August recess.

RESULTS Bernardsville meets twice monthly to learn about and take action on a range of issues affecting low-income households.

To learn more, visit www.results.org, or the RESULTS Bernardsville Facebook page, or contact Marian Olson at olson555@verizon.net.