



[NJDOE News](#)

Contact: Richard Vespucci
For Release: December 13, 2001

Gagliardi Commends Freehold Students for their Impressive Fund-raising Efforts; \$20,000 Raised to Help Families Affected by the September 11th Tragedy

Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. today commended students at Barkalow Middle School in Freehold for their outstanding efforts to assist the families, and especially the children, who were affected by the September 11 attacks at the World Trade Center.

Students from the Barkalow Middle School presented Commissioner Gagliardi with a \$20,000 check to the Disaster Fund for Children of New Jersey when he visited their district earlier this month.

"I was genuinely surprised and very much humbled by this generous donation," Dr. Gagliardi said. "While school children around the state have responded to the tragedy with an outpouring of support and kindness, the Barkalow students deserve special recognition for going the extra mile to help children who have lost family members in the terrorist attacks."

"While I have many pleasant memories of my visits to schools throughout the state, the generosity of Barkalow School will always stand out," the Commissioner continued. "I was overwhelmed by the students' dedication, determination and commitment to come to the aid of other children."

Each year, students at the middle school hold an annual fund-raising walk-a-thon and dedicate the funds raised to some school purpose, explained Freehold Township Schools Superintendent Peter Bastardo. After September 11th, however, the students decided to change the purpose of the walk-a-thon and donate all the proceeds to the Disaster Fund for Children of New Jersey. Their decision was unanimously embraced by the school administration, teachers and the parent-teacher executive board.

On October 26, students walked 15, 499 laps. The 1,867 sponsors, who pledged funds based on the laps walked, contributed the funds.

"The Disaster Fund for Children of New Jersey was selected from the other charities because of its mission to help children," said Barkalow Middle School Principal John Soviero. "It was the goal of this community to send a profound message that children will always help other children in a time of tragedy."

The Disaster Fund for the Children of New Jersey was established in partnership with the State Chamber of Commerce and the New Jersey Department of Education to provide financial relief and other resources to children and families who have been affected by the tragic events on September 11th. The \$20,000 contribution represents the single largest school contribution to the fund since it was established on September 26. Total contributions to date are approximately \$3.2 million. Of that total, approximately \$500,000 has been distributed to 92 families to assist in their purchase of food, housing costs, tuition, utility bills, clothing, transportation and child care.

Gifts to the fund are tax deductible, and every dollar contributed will support the needs of children affected by the tragedy. Donations to the fund can be made by sending checks or money orders to:

Disaster Fund for Children of NJ
c/o New Jersey State Chamber of Commerce Foundation
216 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey

For more information on how to donate, or to make a gift by charge card, call 609-989-7888, ext. 126.

During his visit to Freehold, Commissioner Gagliardi reviewed project plans for a new elementary school and for renovation and expansion projects for the district's existing seven schools. He also sat in on a new, highly touted remedial reading program. At the conclusion of his tour, Soviero and Assistant Principal Sandra Brower presented Gagliardi with a ceremonial check in the amount of \$20,000.