

# CCE CORNER

The Center for Community Engagement's newsletter designed to share community engagement highlights each semester with our larger TCNJ community and network



PHOTO CREDIT: ALTHIA MUSE

## Bonner Scholar Coordinates Meals for TCNJ Students

BY KATIE KAHN

Each TCNJ Bonner Scholar is assigned to one primary service site to dedicate their time and efforts in the local community. However, it is not uncommon for these amazing students to go above and beyond when they see a community in need. One such student is Janelle Ntim, a junior political science major who recognized in late October that many residential students would be going without access to meals on campus over the week-long Thanksgiving break.

Janelle reached out to The Shop at TCNJ, the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, and her Bonner peers to ensure that each of the 50 students living on campus would receive five days worth of hot meals. Early on Monday, November 23rd, Janelle and several other Bonners met up at TCNJ, ready to head to TASK and pick up 250 meals. Aided by TCNJ campus police, the students worked together to ensure each residential student received their meal safely and while social distancing. Said one TCNJ staff member, "This really goes to show what a caring community TCNJ and Trenton are, and how much we can do when we work together."

The Shop is open for any TCNJ and Ewing community members. Please visit our website to learn how you can schedule a time to access free food and hygiene items.

## NEWS & FEATURES

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# FYCEL in a Virtual World

BY MEGAN TEITELBAUM

First Year Community Engaged Learning (FYCEL) is a graduation requirement that reinforces the College's values, and introduces students to the culture of the community. FYCEL students complete this requirement by taking course IDS 103, which is a two-week course that consists of three in-class sessions and one half day of service that addresses one of the unmet needs of the local or regional community.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions during the fall 2020 semester, instead of being assigned to a service experience, students were given an opportunity to identify their own service experience. Students were able to choose between finding an experience that fulfilled a need in their local community, a virtual service opportunity, or connecting with a local TCNJ partner.

There were 724 students who completed their FYCEL experience by doing service projects in their local or virtual communities. Some examples are:

- Virtual service experiences were done by serving as volunteer listeners with 7 Cups, transcribing documents for the Smithsonian, mapping areas with Missing Maps or assisting with a project through Zooniverse.
- Some students chose to create their own service projects like starting a donation drive, making and donating masks or completing a park/trail clean up.
- Through connections with the CCE, students served with TCNJ partners including Children's Futures, Mercer County Parks Commission and Arm in Arm.

By modifying the design of our service project, we've been able to allow our students to think creatively about the service they can offer and what their community currently needs during these uncertain times.

93% of surveyed First Year students agreed that their FYCEL course was overall a valuable experience.



PHOTO CREDIT: ALYSSA RISDON



# Parent Connections Workshop

BY LUKE THOMPSON

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to transition to virtual learning, parents across the United States suddenly needed to supervise their children full-time as they learned from home. Families without computers or Internet access found it difficult to stay engaged, and nearly 40% of students nationwide failed to attend a single online class between March and June 2020.

Trenton Public Schools tackled the “digital divide,” leading outreach efforts to ensure every student has a Chromebook with an internet connection. This Fall, the district strengthened its efforts, providing an online hub for parents learning new technologies like Google Classroom. As part of its Every Day Matters attendance campaign, the district’s Parent Coordinator Denise Kreiss and The College of New Jersey’s Connect Trenton Coordinator Luke Thompson began organizing the Parent Connections workshop series. In each session, community providers offer expertise to parents and families as they navigate virtual instruction and support the social-emotional wellness of their children.

Without the digital connection, a mother of a local Trenton student wouldn’t have been able to join the workshop from her home country of Jamaica. Through Zoom, Kreiss and Thompson were able to help the mother access the school’s parent portal so she can keep an eye on her son’s grades and attendance – all the way across the Caribbean.

To learn more about Trenton Public Schools’ ongoing Parent Connections series, visit [trentonk12.org](http://trentonk12.org). To learn more about Connect Trenton, a school-community partnership offered through The College of New Jersey’s Capital City Youth Violence Coalition, visit [connecttrenton.org](http://connecttrenton.org).

Thank you for taking the time to celebrate these stories with us. We welcome new TCNJ and community partnerships, ideas for community engagement, and donors to support our ongoing work. We would be happy to share more information with anyone interested.

## CONNECT WITH US

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