SNAPSHOT
September 2013

Serve-A-Thon
TCNJ Bonner staff and Scholars raise over $7,800 in 3rd annual Serve-A-Thon.

9/11 National Day of Service
TCNJ Bonner staff and Scholars serve in Trenton during National Day of Service on September 11, 2013.

Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy
TCNJ partners with Trenton Police in violence reduction strategy.

SERVE-A-THON

The TCNJ Bonner Center held its Third Annual Serve-A-Thon on September 7, 2013.

The Serve-A-Thon, structured similarly to a walk-a-thon, is an opportunity for students in the Bonner Scholars program and Center staff to collect charitable donations or sponsorship for a day of service, in an effort to build the capacity of the program that provides scholarship and meaningful service and employment opportunities. On Saturday, September 7th, Bonner Scholars and staff served at three sites in the greater Trenton area: Trenton Central High School, Fernbrook Farm, and downtown Trenton. At the high school, volunteers worked hard to prepare the building for the upcoming school year, cleaning lockers, adding a fresh coat of paint in areas, and clearing out other spaces throughout the school. Bonner Scholars have returned to the school each week since the 7th to continue painting and cleaning up the building. At Fernbrook Farm, Scholars and staff helped the partner prepare for one of its biggest fundraisers of the season. The “Farm Run” raises revenue for the Farm’s nonprofit education center that serves inner-city youth. Volunteers assisted with widening and clearing trails, clearing streams of tripping hazards, stenciling bibs for runners, and creating signature name tags for visitors.

Community Engaged Learning

The TCNJ Bonner Center has plunged headfirst into the CEL season with several great projects that advance the teaching and learning goals of the College while serving the community. Within the first month of the 2013-2014 academic school year, over 250 TCNJ students have begun their CEL experience. On Saturday, September 28th, students from Professor Matthew Bender’s First Year Seminar Program course on the ‘Power of Water’ visited Union Beach to help with clean up efforts following Hurricane Sandy. The course focuses on topics ranging from the aqueducts of the Roman Empire, Chinese philosophy on water, to water conflicts in California and Hurricane Sandy. Eleven months after Superstorm Sandy hit the New Jersey shoreline, much of the damage has been cleared, but there is still a lot of work to do. Students in the course had an opportunity to Union Beach community, one of the hardest hit areas, in its recovery efforts.
Serve-A-Thon continued...
Thanks to the group’s efforts, Fernbrook hosted a very successful event two weeks later! Finally, about 30 students and staff helped clean up an empty lot and turn the abandoned eyesore into a community garden. Trees, bushes, and other plants were donated by Fernbrook Farm, which volunteers planted along with laying down tire and brick planters and a gravel walkway. Volunteers have returned to the site each weekend to continue the beautification project and maintain the new garden.

Trenton Prevention Policy Board

The TPPB held its monthly meeting on September 11th with a presentation on violence prevention by Dr. Sandy Gibson from The College of New Jersey. Important points highlighted in the presentation included a detailed description of youth violence and its affect on human development, and the many elements involved in prevention including individual, family, social, community, and policy factors. The next meeting will take place on October 10, 2013. More information can be found on the board’s website at http://tppb.pages.tcnj.edu/.

9/11 Day of Service

On September 11, 2013 the TCNJ Bonner Center and New Jersey Bonner AmeriCorps program came together to commemorate the day through community service in downtown Trenton. Close to 40 volunteers split into groups to help the Trenton Down Association, Isles, Inc., and the SAGE Coalition. The completed various beautification projects including planting and gardening in the Gandhi Garden and surrounding areas, as well as improving the D&R Canal Path with new signs and general maintenance.

Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy

The TCNJ Bonner Center worked closely with the Trenton Police Department, Rutgers-Camden, and the Attorney General’s Office to secure $1.1 million in funding to address the violence in Trenton.

On Thursday, September 26th, the Office of the Attorney General announced a new long-term, multi-disciplinary strategy, the Trenton Violence Reduction Strategy (TVRS). The strategy, which originated as a TPPB recommendation in 2012, was developed in partnership among TCNJ, the Trenton Police Department, researchers from Rutgers-Camden, and community leaders. The strategy is a multi-disciplinary program that will offer repeat offenders and those at risk of becoming involved in gangs a stark choice: prison or a way out.

TVRS is built on evidence-based models such as Operation Ceasefire and Project Safe Neighborhoods that have proven successful in other parts of the country, but has been tailored, based on an analysis of crime trends, to meet the specific needs of Trenton. Assistant Professor Louis Tuthill of Rutgers-Camden, Detective Alexis Durlacher of the Trenton Police Department, and Assistant Provost Pat Donohue of TCNJ shaped the proposal. “There is a tremendous amount of knowledge and expertise on campus, in the offices of the local non-profits and governmental agencies, and in the neighborhoods,” said Donohue, “We can make a difference when we find common ground and work together.”

Assistant Professor Sandy Gibson and a team of CEL program staff will lead TCNJ’s effort to integrate the research, evaluation, and direct service needs of the project into the College’s community engaged learning program. Associate Professors Shaun Wiley, Diane Bates, Bruce Stout, and He Len Chung among others will share their skills and shape opportunities for their students. For more information on the initiative, visit http://nj.gov/oag/newsreleases13/pr20130926a.html

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