

THE STOCKTON CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE-LEARNING

Spring 2023 Newsletter



(L-R, back row): Saul Petersen (Executive Director EngageNJ), Luis Pacheco-Ortiz, Madelyn Sacco, Janai Reaves-Ortiz, Christine Whaley, Kathy Quintana-Godoy, Olivia Lovett, Nathalie Valladares. (L-R, front row): Lauren Whaley, Kerstin Maguire, Jessell Pacheco-Ortiz

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STUDENT LEADERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

SPRING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

SERVICE-LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

MLK DAY OF SERVICE WRAP-UP

Student Fellows and Bonner Leaders Present at the EngageNJ Thrive Conference

Saturday, February 25, 2023, staff and student leaders from the Stockton Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning (SCCESL) attended the EngageNJ 4th Annual THRIVE Student Conference and Opportunity Fair at Middlesex College, in Edison, New Jersey. According to Janai Reaves-Ortiz, SCCESL's Engage NJ Tutoring and Mentoring Vista, "this event was a celebration of this generation's thriving service work and community engagement projects, as well as providing the opportunity to expand professional development, networking with like-minded individuals from other NJ universities, and discuss [various topics] such as diversity, cultural competency, advocacy, digital disinformation, preserving democracy, climate change, and food and housing insecurity." (Continued on Page Two)

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Olivia Lovett, a junior sustainability major with a concentration in policy, presented on the SCCESL's Afterschool Homework Completion Program which has been running in Atlantic City and Pleasantville. Olivia Lovett began volunteering at this site as part of a Service-Learning component of her coursework, and later transitioned to the role of a Student Fellow; she has been working at Stanley Holmes for the past two years.

Lovett's presented "Opportunities for Successful Cultural Competency to Occur". She explained how cultural competency encompasses self-awareness and multiple perspectives, cultural understanding, flexibility and adaptability, and relationship building. To foster these themes in the Homework Completion Program, Lovett told the crowd that SCCESL volunteers and student leaders aim to "understand that the youth have different backgrounds and ways of doing things" and to never judge a child for their beliefs.

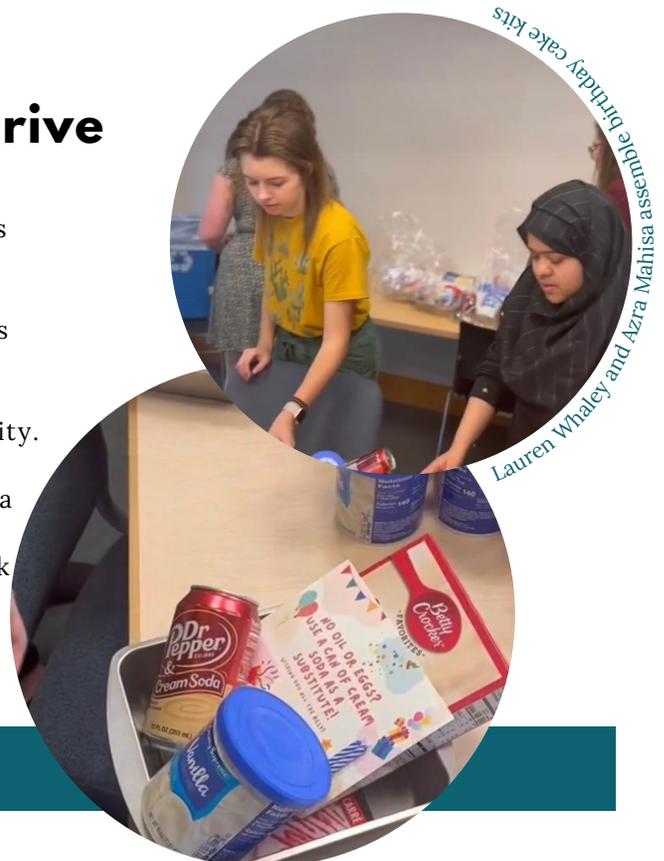
It is "absolutely essential to listen to the youth as they tell their stories" and be flexible in providing activities when youth do not have homework to complete but want to remain in the community room. According to Lovett, "cultural competency isn't a skill that's gained overnight. It comes with continuous effort in building a relationship with the youth and actively listening to them."

Dr. Merydawilda Colón, Executive Director of Stockton's Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning stated, "I expected Olivia's presentation to be well received. Olivia's insight into the many aspects of the homework program and the relevance of cultural competence is very valuable and important to share. Thank you, Olivia, for a job well done!"

A Different Kind of Food Drive

Everyone deserves to be celebrated! During the SCCESL's Week of Training in April, student leaders organized a cake mix and frosting food drive on campus. The students bundled cake mix, frosting, a cake pan, a can of cream soda, and birthday candles into gift bags to take to the Osprey Food Pantry on the Galloway Campus and the Oceanside Family Success Center on Montpelier Avenue in Atlantic City.

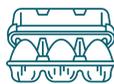
Not everyone knows that you can bake a cake with a boxed cake mix, using a can of soda to replace the eggs and oil. 25 packages were sent out and we look forward to the feedback from our community.



News from the Professional Staff

Patricia Collins and Shawn Cooper attended the "Philadelphia Women in Leadership" Symposium on March 14, 2023, held at Rivers Casino in Philadelphia. The symposium allowed professionals to share goals related to empowerment, and personal and professional experiences focusing on encouraging the group to become community-wide and workplace leaders.

The event also provided an opportunity to network with other professionals in and around the Pennsylvania area and discuss issues related to employee relations, workplace challenges, diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Stockton student volunteers which include Bonner Leaders, Student Fellows, and EOF students (from the Atlantic City and Galloway campuses) supported the operation of the monthly food

distribution events of the Westminster Christian Worship Center of Atlantic City, NJ, which is managed by their minister, Dr. Thelma Witherspoon. Nearly 1,110 families per month have been served. The experience has been rewarding for the Stockton staff and volunteers and we look forward to continuing to support the Westminster Christian Worship Center.

SCCESL Hunger Initiatives

Update from the Faculty Fellow

During the Spring 2023 semester, Dr. Anthony Dissen aided in the planning and offering of a "Service-Learning Roundtable Discussion" during the CTLD Week of Teaching, in order to aid interested faculty in how to lead successful service-learning courses and engage in best practices in scholarship of engagement. On March 9, 2023, Dr. Dissen worked with Dr. Colón to lead a faculty focus group to better understand faculty opinions, needs, and perceived benefits and barriers to service-learning, civic engagement, and community-based scholarly work. On March 23, 2023, a Community Engagement "Splash" session was offered for faculty, staff, students, and community partners to learn how planning your work can be a tool for preventing burnout and promoting self-care. Finally, Dr. Dissen developed 2 videos that will be used for the purposes of educating faculty on how to best design and propose a new service-learning course, as well as how to form meaningful and mutually beneficial connections with community partners, in order to better support faculty who wish to engage in service-learning and civic engagement.



Anthony Dissen, EdD, MPH, MA, RDN, CPH
SCCESL Faculty Fellow 2022 - 2023

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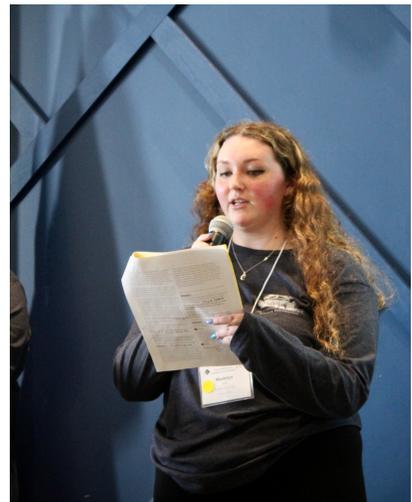
Instagram & Tik tok: @ stocktonscceSl

Facebook: Stockton Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning

The Northeastern Bonner Foundation Sophomore Exchange hosted at Stockton University

On April 15, 2023, the Stockton Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning hosted the inaugural Northeastern Bonner Foundation Sophomore Exchange at the John F. Scarpa Academic Center in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Chaired by EngageNJ Changebuilder VISTA Christopher Lipari Pazienza and Program Coordinator Shawn Cooper, under the supervision of Executive Director for SCCESL Dr. Merydawilda Colón and Bonner Foundation Program Manager Jeniffer Gonzalez Reyes, this conference was attended by 106 faculty, staff, and sophomore Bonner Leaders from 11 institutions around the tri-state area. This year's theme was "Reflect, Reframe, Restore, Reengage."

The event aimed to help students remember the reason they serve and increase their engagement within the community. Attendees participated in an Oxfam Natural Disaster simulation which was facilitated by Stockton Bonner Leaders Divya Rajput, Andrea Sandoval, and Madelyn Sacco. The simulation showed the participants how natural disasters disproportionately harm lower-income societies more than more affluent societies. Students and staff from Rider University, Montclair University, The College of New Jersey, and the Bonner Foundation presented workshops as well as the SCCESL's Kerstin Maguire. All attendees left with a rejuvenated desire to serve their community and be the change they want to see.



Top left to right: Stockton Bonner Leaders after a successful event, Divya Rajput and Madelyn Sacco present the Oxfam Natural Disaster Simulation to the group.

Bottom right to left: SCCESL staff Kerstin Maguire, Chris Lipari-Pazienza, Merydawilda Colón, and Shawn Cooper; Kyle Annasenz and Ashley Ramirez talk with Bonner leaders from around the state; Kimberly Kwok enjoying the presentation.



2023 Student Leader Graduates



Samantha Adelman
Izabelle DelRoss
Ivett Carrasco
Kiara Cisneros

Vakaz Akram
Kyle Annasenz
Stephanie Bamfo
Nicholas Camacho



Kimberly Kwok
Anh Pham
Divya Rajpu
Lynn Tran

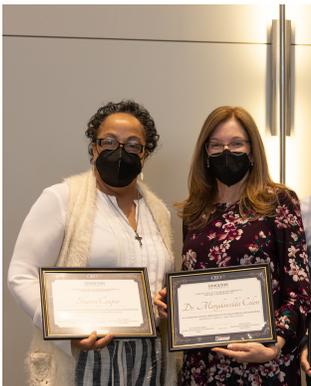
Nicholas Cerniglia
Megha Chuahan
Nidaa Bukhari
Bianca Gamadia

A special congratulatory toast to all the Bonner Leaders and Student Fellows of the Stockton Center for Community Engagement and Service-Learning who graduated this Spring. And a special congratulations to our Senior Bonner Leader Intern, Divya Rajput, who gave the commencement speech to her fellow Class of 2023 graduates. She told them to “pursue their dreams and to make sure that they aim for infinity and beyond because with the potential and drive that they have within themselves, there is no telling how far they will go!”

We thank each one of our Student Leaders for their commitment and for utilizing their skills in service to communities on- and off-campus and wish all of them the best in their future endeavors.

-Merydawilda Colón, Shawn Cooper, Patricia Collins, and Heather Swenson Brilla

Staff Accolades



Pictured L to R: Shawn Cooper and Dr. Merydawilda Colón



Dr. Merydawilda Colón, Patricia Collins, and Shawn Cooper received an “Inclusive Leadership Award” at the April 2023 Inclusive Leadership Conference, in recognition of their dedication to serving students and promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.



Shawn Cooper was nominated for the “Unsung Hero” Award at the Student Involvement Awards 2022-2023 Ceremony.



Pictured L to R: Patricia Collins and Jim Gwathney, Coordinator for Intramurals and Recreation



Patricia Collins received a plaque from Stockton's Intramural and Recreation Council, thanking her for "years of service helping future leaders."

SCCESL Homegrown Programs

46

Youth participated in the Homework Program at Stanley Holmes Village

16

Youth participated in the Homework Program at the Pleasantville Library

112

Stockton Students Volunteered in the Homework Programs

6

Atlantic City and Pleasantville Police Officers and Fire Fighters Volunteered in the Homework Programs

An average of 15 youth participated in the Homework Program at Stanley Holmes Village every day

100%

of the parents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the homework completion programs benefitted their children

14

People participated in the Naturalization classes this spring and one participant became an American citizen

Youth participated in the Homework Programs up to 88 times in the spring semester