

SOCIONEWS

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the Department of Sociology and Anthropology
of The College of New Jersey

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Ehrenreich Raises Awareness of the Working Poor

Laura Dirscherl

On October 6, 2004, The College of New Jersey held its 5th annual Community Learning Day. Barbara Ehrenreich, acclaimed author, kicked off the celebration as keynote speaker. In a humorous, yet, clear-cut presentation, Mrs. Ehrenreich touched on subjects ranging from some of the lighthearted experiences gained in research done for her book, to more serious subjects such as the need for a livable wage.

Barbara Ehrenreich is the author of Nickel and Dimed, a first hand account of the lives of unskilled workers in America. Mrs. Ehrenreich posed as an unskilled worker and joined the workforce in three different cities to see if it was possible to get by on the wages she would be paid. The result, which she shared with the TCNJ community, was shocking accounts of homelessness, physical exhaustion and much more, with the conclusion that it is not possible to get by as an unskilled worker in America.

In her address to the TCNJ community, Ehrenreich discussed how “meaningless the official poverty level in the U.S. is,” by describing how the gap between the rich and poor is growing at an enormous rate. She spoke of the need for affordable housing, universal health care and a living wage, as she tried to motivate students to get involved in the cause. She discussed how the unskilled worker provides those in higher positions with many of their needs and at a wage that makes the work comparable to charity. In Ehrenreich’s words, it is “time to end the involuntary philanthropy of America’s working poor.”

Community Learning Day winded down with breakout sessions held concerning the WalMart issue, drug laws, gay marriage and a performance on the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The day was a success, in large part due to Ehrenreich’s moving speech.

Watch for announcements around campus for more programs sponsored by the Committee for Cultural and Intellectual Community throughout the year in order to get the chance to see other talented speakers.

TCNJ Institutes a New Scholarship Program

Sue Wyrovsky

We all know that there are athletic and academic scholarships, but what about a scholarship for service? In order to show that TCNJ values civic engagement and community service, this fall marked the entrance of the first class of Bonner Community Scholars. Based on a service model from the Bonner Scholars Program out of the Bonner Foundation in Princeton, TCNJ has begun this four-year scholarship program.

Bonner Community Scholars will receive tuition for four years in exchange for 300 hours of service per year. Students were chosen on past service experiences, as well as from an interview. The first group of Bonner Scholars consists of nine freshmen and one senior, who is a pre-social work major and has had previous experience with the Bonner Leader program. The freshmen come from a variety of majors including business, nursing, psychology, criminology & justice studies and sociology, among others.

This semester, under director Dave Prenskey, Bonner Community Scholars will be performing direct service at three local agencies. Three students are based at Trenton Area Soup Kitchen, three are at Mercer Child Care, and the final four have been placed at The Crisis Ministry of Princeton and Trenton. Service is focused on poverty-stricken populations and on having the students build relationships with agencies throughout the area.

By instating and funding this program, TCNJ is showing both students and the community that the College places a value on civic engagement as well as service. Involved students have already begun to interact with their surrounding community, in addition to getting to know the social service industry and dealing directly with problems related to poverty.

Tutorial Class Teaming up with TCNJ Magazine

Liz Kornbluth

Have you ever wondered how to describe a typical TCNJ student? Soon we will be able to examine the opinions and personalities of today's students thanks to the Sociology Tutorial class of the Fall 2004 semester! In this sesquicentennial year, Diane Bates' class, with input from TCNJ Magazine's editor, is conducting a survey of first year and junior students at the college. Their purpose is to compare and contrast current students with those of the past and future, as well as with national results. The class is designing a survey similar to the General Social Survey, an omnibus survey that has consistently provided accurate and useful information about Americans since 1972. Like the GSS, the TCNJ survey will conduct personal interviews to acquire precise information about students currently enrolled in the college. The survey covers a broad range of topics, including personal background information, campus involvement, attitudes and beliefs, and cultural preferences. Using stratified random sampling, as many as six hundred and forty first-year and junior students will be interviewed. The sociology students, juniors and seniors themselves, are designing, collecting, and analyzing the survey data. Their results may be published in the Spring 2005 edition of TCNJ Magazine to commemorate the sesquicentennial year of the college, making them available for alumni, educators, parents, and many others to read.

Faculty Advisor's Note: The survey data, a product of the highly professional and hard work of Sociology 402 students, will be available to interested parties (although within limitations set by the TCNJ Institutional Review Board). If you want to see the results when they're available in Spring 2005, please contact me (Diane Bates).

Angel's Wings in Need of Dedicated Volunteers

Nicole Burkowski

I have had the unique opportunity to do my internship for Senior Seminar at Angel's Wings. Angel's Wings is an interim shelter for children who have been placed into the DYFS system for a variety of reasons- from parental drug use to no electricity in the home.

I had previously heard of this organization because a club was started here at TCNJ called Students for Angel's Wings. This club hoped to get students involved in community service for the organization, even if they weren't necessarily able to go the shelter and help. Unfortunately, the club never really materialized due to a lack of interest, but it was a very good idea. I believe if there was more to it and more meetings and advertisement, that it could be an amazing club on campus.

Angel's Wings has never really had a problem with getting volunteers. Since I have started working there, I have seen many different people come and go, as well as having seen the volunteer book with hundreds of names in it. The problem is with the low retention of these volunteers. I have been there for about two months now, and I do not believe I have seen any regular volunteers that come twice a week or even once every week. The only exception to this are the paid child care providers and the interns who are required to complete a certain number of hours for their class.

Unfortunately, even though Angel's Wings has an abundant volunteer list, they need more regular volunteers, even if regular means once a week. Preferably, it would be wonderful for people to volunteer at least twice a week; these kids have enough instability in their lives and they should not be subjected to more in a place that is supposed to be a safe haven. More than likely, they are probably afraid to get attached to anyone because they see too many people come and go. They should be able to have some type of relationship with these caregivers, for they are undoubtedly lacking it from their families at present. I hope by reading this, more people will be inspired to regularly donate some of their time to help out some amazing children who just need extra attention and loving care.

What Makes Dr. Borland Tick?

Lynn Avery

Fall can be a hectic—but exhilarating—time of year. The incoming freshmen settle into a new environment, graduated seniors try their hand in the real world, and everyone gears up for a new academic year. Dr. Borland, the newest addition to the sociology department, is also adjusting to change. When she is not advising freshmen or teaching classes, she is out exploring the campus, meeting students, and putting down roots in the community. If you have not bumped into Dr. Borland on the third floor of the Social Science Building, read on for a look into the life, passions, and hopes of a fascinating woman.

The move to TCNJ marked this native New Yorker's first time home in over ten years. After graduating from Smith College, Dr. Borland entered a graduate program at the University of Arizona. She received a Ph.D. in sociology with a minor in Latin American Studies, writing her dissertation on organizations in the women's movement in Buenos Aires, Argentina. During the interview, she spoke extensively about the protests she witnessed during her time in Argentina: "When I arrived, in December 2001, there were enormous protests going on throughout the country." The president had resigned a few days prior to her arrival and the country was in an uproar. "There [were] people blocking streets demanding attention to unemployment, assemblies and women seizing factories ... (Continued, Next Page)

(Borland, continued from previous page) ...[I]t was an amazing time to be in Argentina." While completing her Ph.D., Dr. Borland taught at the University of Arizona and a community college in Tucson.

Dr. Borland was attracted to TCNJ because of its emphasis on undergraduate education. Having attended a liberal arts college, Dr. Borland knew that she wanted to work at a place where professors were "intensely involved" with their students. She had hoped to work at a small school where teaching would be her first priority. Now that her first semester is underway, she is focusing on implementing new courses in gender and applied sociology, publishing her dissertation—which she hopes to eventually turn into a book—and getting students involved in her research. Dr. Borland is currently on the lookout for students with Spanish speaking skills and an interest in the women's movement. As for the department as a whole, she hopes to create opportunities for students to get involved with local community organizations. "I think getting students involved in applied sociology will be great for the community [and] great for the students," she commented.

When asked what inspires her, Dr. Borland stated, without hesitation, that she finds inspiration in the women she studies. She explained that through her research she has "met all kinds of women that have overcome enormous barriers in their lives." She motioned to the cloth poster hanging over her desk that displayed women peering through iron bars. It was created by a woman whose daughter "disappeared" during the repression in Latin America. To Dr. Borland, the poster represents all the women she has encountered who fight daily for human rights. "I find it inspiring that they didn't retreat into themselves, despite all the hardships they faced, but rather they have continued to be dedicated to their cause."

After meeting with Dr. Borland, I am convinced that she will breathe new life into the sociology department. She has a clear passion for sociology and seems eager to establish herself as a leader in the college community. More importantly, she understands the need for professors to maintain strong relationships with their students. At the end of the interview she stated, "I would encourage students to take the time to get to know their professors. I'm pretty accessible, and I'd like for students to come meet with me during my office hours." Like the women who inspire her, Dr. Borland is clearly dedicated to her cause.

Confused about Social Work?

Florencia Hirsch

The majority of the sociology majors on campus understand about the "regular track," which is a major strictly in sociology. However, many of these students don't necessarily understand the differences between this and the social work track. Pre-social work majors take the same core classes as sociology and elementary education sociology majors do, such as Introduction to Sociology, Development in Socio Cultural Theory and Quantitative Research Methods. After that, however, social work students take a different route, as I plan to. We additionally take Introduction to Social Work, which introduces us to the practice and in which we also do a 30 hour service project at the agency of our choice. Our tutorial is known as Methods of Social Work Practice; it includes an 80 hour internship at a social work agency that begins to connect the theory with the practical. After taking this class we then move on to Senior Seminar in Social Work, which stresses theory while allowing the main focus to be a 200 hour internship.

It is easy to see by our course requirements that the social work track does not emphasize research as much as the other sociology majors. It is still a fairly small track in terms of students, one that not very many people know much about it. Hopefully, with knowledge about the major and the course requirements, a bigger interest will be created.

Catching Up With Recent Grads

Michelle Uffer

I had the opportunity to speak with two graduates, both of whom were Sociology students at The College of New Jersey within the past two years. I did this in order to find out what they are now doing, as well as to see how they think their education at The College of New Jersey helped prepare them for their lines of work.

First interviewed was Joanna Pappa, who graduated in May 2003, having majored in Sociology with a concentration in Social Work. After she left the College, Joanna decided to delay getting a full time job associated with her degree in order to travel and do volunteer work. She spent three months in Costa Rica teaching English to both school children and adults, and she also helped build houses with Habitat for Humanity. Upon her return to New Jersey, she went back to a job she had previously held: a classroom assistant in a special education school. From there, she had the opportunity to travel to China for 3 ½ weeks to tour the country and experience what life was like in another culture. After returning home from China, she received an offer from the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) to be a family service specialist. She recently completed her training with DYFS and has just received her first case as a caseworker.

Joanna feels her experiences as a Sociology major have helped open her eyes to new people, places, and things, and that it has helped her to accept and embrace people's differences that are unknown and unfamiliar to her. She has also realized that it is everyone's uniqueness that makes our world what it is. She credits the major with giving her a broad base to further her education with.

When asked what advice she could provide to Sociology majors about life after college, Joanna replied that, "before starting your career, take as much time as you can to see firsthand what you have learned about. Also, travel now while you can, and do not spend your time doing anything that is not worth your efforts. You have your degree, now go enjoy life!"

The second interviewee was Kristen Deitrich, who graduated from the College in May 2004 after majoring in Elementary Education with a concentration in Sociology. Kristen has become certified in New Jersey to be a K-5 teacher.

Since graduation, Kristen was appointed head teacher of a summer camp program at Merrill Lynch Family Center. She was in charge of supervising staff, planning trips and lessons, and booking guest speakers. After the summer ended, she was asked to stay and be the lead teacher of a preschool class. She now teaches children two to four years old, and is challenged by having to meet the various physical, mental, and emotional needs of children at different developmental levels.

Kristen feels she does not directly apply what she has learned as a Sociology major to her current job. However, she plans on attending graduate school to become an elementary school guidance counselor, and believes that she will have a strong foundation for her future studies.

When asked about what advice she has for Sociology majors about life after college, Kristen replied that "you should take some time to sit down and really think about the kind of people you want to work with, and then come up with some places that you feel would most likely have those types of people. Once you figure that out, one of the most important things you could do is network with people in your line of work. In today's world, it is all about who you know. And above all, always remember to have fun and enjoy life!"

Being Exposed to Something New

Beth Hurley

Before this semester, I can honestly say I did not know one thing about the country of Liberia, except that it could be found in Africa. I would not have been able to find it on a map, nor did I know its capital city, any of its history, or even what its flag looks like. However, as the year progresses, I continue to learn more and more about Liberia and its people because of the internship I am partaking in for my Social Work Tutorial, SOC 305. In September 2004, I began my time at Lutheran Social Ministries (LSM): Immigration and Refugee Services in Trenton. Being a pre-social work major, I had always looked forward to working with diverse groups. Working with refugees is a population that I had never considered, not because I would not be suited for it, but simply because it never crossed my mind. Refugee and asylee statuses are two terms that I never knew the definition of before. I now make it my responsibility to become well versed in Liberian culture and norms so I can best help refugees assimilate and become acclimated to America culture.

I am proud to say that I am now able to locate the country of Liberia on a map and that the capital is Monrovia, named after James Monroe. Liberia is a country made up of former slaves and is modeled after America. Terrible civil wars in the '80s and the late '90s left the country in such a terrible state that the United Nations gave Liberians the opportunity to apply for refugee status. Refugees were then sent to camps in or near Liberia, often in Ghana. These people are given numbers and entered into a lottery to see who will be the next to come to America. Many Liberian refugees have resettled in Trenton and its surrounding areas and have become clients with LSM Immigration and Refugee Services.

My role at the agency is two-fold and provides me with a variety of interesting and enlightening experiences. First, I assist the Family Enrichment Coordinator, whose job it is to promote better parenting skills and enhanced communication between parents and children. Secondly, I work as the School Liaison by tutoring and mentoring refugee youth. Because of the civil war in Liberia, refugee youth have not had an opportunity for structured education in many years, leaving them far behind American youth of the same age. Because of this, I am grateful to have the opportunity to work with LSM Immigration and Refugee Services. It continues to push me to new understandings of my own strengths and weaknesses, while exposing me to new people, ideas, and cultures.

Giving Due Credit

Jessica Barakat

In the SocioNews Spring 2004 issue, I wrote an article attributing the current socio-economic state of Trenton, New Jersey to its history of deindustrialization and the larger shift from civic to national capitalism. I failed to include a reference in this article: [A Social History of Economic Decline: Business, Politics, and Work in Trenton](#), by John T. Cumbler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989). Cumbler coins the terms "civic" and "national capitalism" as he traces the economic history of Trenton from the 19th century to the present. In this book, the city of Trenton represents the entire 20th century United States, as industry moves from local to national hands. Cumbler's work was valuable in constructing my argument, and is thus cited now.

Amendment Brings AKD Closer to the Community

Shari Harris

The Sociology Honor Society, AKD, recently decided to add a new requirement for its candidates. The club feels that a community service requisite for initiation is vital to its standards. Its adopted community service organization is WomenSpace, a local association that provides shelter and resources for battered women and children. Chrissy Minerva, one of AKD's very own, works for them and has been a liaison between the honor society and WomenSpace. They sponsor fundraising events that go directly to the welfare of their clients. The members of AKD have been given various opportunities to assist WomenSpace in their endeavors. There are chances for walkathons, gift wrapping, and soup kitchens.

I volunteered my time at the walkathon in Hamilton at Veteran's Park on Sunday September 29, 2004. It was a 3-mile walk on the park's nature trail, with marked off points of progress. Chrissy and I rode together to the park to meet up with all the walkers, where as many as 50 people showed up in support. Dave Harker, AKD's President, was present, along with some early-bird TCNJ students. After providing all the necessary personal information and turning in a sponsor donation, purple t-shirts were distributed to identify all the walkers, and a healthy smorgasbord of breakfast delights was provided. It was a beautiful sunny day and warm enough for a comfortable walk. There were purple pastel decorations everywhere and excitement in the air. People of all ages participated, from little kids to the elderly. Some even brought their dogs to lend a hand in support, making for a very relaxed environment.

WomenSpace had partnered up with Zonta, a local organization, to finance the walk. Proceeding the walk, speeches were given by the two sponsors, as well as Hamilton's prosecutor and the mayor. The prosecutor's speech was particularly interesting as she pointed out the ignorance she is faced with concerning domestic abuse. She noted that educating people was the most important thing they could do for the Hamilton community, because so many think domestic violence is non-existent. The walk was a success; everyone had a wonderful time and enough money was raised for both parties. I look forward to more service opportunities with WomenSpace in the future!

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The Department of Sociology and Anthropology at The College of New Jersey.

Social Science Building, 3rd Floor, PO Box 7718, Ewing, NJ 08628

Phone: 609-771-2670

Fax: 609-771-5186

Web: www.tcnj.edu/~socanth

Editor and Layout: Karen Bocian

Faculty Advisor: Diane Bates

Contributors:

Lynn Avery, Jessica Barakat, Nicole Burkowski, Laura Dirscherl, Shari Harris, Florencia Hirsch, Beth Hurley, Liz Kornbluth, Michelle Uffer, Sue WYROVSKY,