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***Kids get preview of college experience***

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**Special To The Times**

The noise and the smiles spread as the 14 elementary and middle-school Young Scholars Institute students approached Eickhoff Dining Hall at The College of New Jersey.

The [Bonner](#) Scholars at [TCNJ](#), a volunteering society, have been working with these Trenton school students and helped organize the event. The event began with a tour of the college dorms and ended with the Thanks for Giving feast at the main campus dining hall.

Janis Blayne-Paul, major events director at [TCNJ](#), said that at [TCNJ's](#) 150-year-anniversary, the college decided to bring the Thanks for Giving Feast back. They also decided to reach out to the community and invite a different group each year to come to the college to share in the feast. Blayne-Paul said that it is "important to go back to symbolism of this holiday."

John Dunston, assistant director at the Young Scholars Institute said, "I think (the event) is to expose them to college life."

This institute, a private, urban learning [center](#) in Trenton, has one of the largest after-school programs in New Jersey, with 260 students. [TCNJ](#) has been involved with the institute through different programs including the Comic Book Project, a ladies' discussion group, and tutoring. The Comic Book Project was started by professors at Columbia University who devised this program to help "early and refined literacy" and for students to tell stories, write them, and draw the pictures to go along, according to Dunston

Liz Moody, sophomore [Bonner](#) Scholar at [TCNJ](#), said that the purpose of this event is to show these students with hard work and dedication, they can get into college.

"I feel like I want them to know that this is an opportunity they can have," she said.

She believes she is a role model to these students. According to Moody, the community service that [Bonner](#) Scholars are required to do, 280 hours per year, becomes an internship to them and working with the children is one form of it.

Another sophomore [Bonner](#) Scholar, Fred Derilus said, "The goal tonight was to expose some of the students to the college setting."

By having the young students come to the college and see what dorms look like and eat a meal in a dining hall, they can see part of what the college experience is like. The positive features of college are highlighted and many of the students have enthusiastic goals for their future, such as being a brain surgeon. Even those who wanted to become athletes said that they have a backup plan, and they want to go to college.

"Personally, I truly feel like I'm doing something meaningful," Derilus said. The dinner continued merrily as the students ate ice cream and self-decorated cupcakes.

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