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**TCNJ salutes Katrina volunteers**

**By JOHN NALBONE**  
**STAFF WRITER**

[Bonner Scholars](#) are winners as Lions fall EWING — Rich Wilson thought he had seen the face devastation in June of 2006, when his boyhood home on Columbia Avenue and 99 percent of the section of Trenton commonly known as "The Island" was ravaged by flood.

More than 6,000 local residents, including Wilson and his family, were forced to flee when the Delaware River overran its banks from the New York state line to Trenton.

That was before Wilson, a 6-foot-6 forward on The College of New Jersey men's basketball team from 1997-2001, traveled to New Orleans Jan. 12-19 with the [Bonner Community Scholars](#) corps to help rebuild some of the homes and lift the spirits of those displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

"Our house was completely flooded and we were evacuated for more than two weeks," said Wilson, a full-time employee of [TCNJ](#) who has been in the [Bonner Scholars](#) program since November. "To go there and see a whole different level of damage was unreal. When I finally went back home after that last flood it took a little while, but things eventually got back to normal. In New Orleans, it's been two years and there is still complete devastation and there is that dead silence all around you."

Wilson and about 50 members of the [Bonner Scholars](#) program were acknowledged for their selfless acts of volunteerism during halftime of yesterday's 76-60 loss to Brooklyn College at Packer Hall.

The brief ceremony, organized by [TCNJ](#) sports information director Ann King, kicked off a week of events honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and proved to be far more inspirational than the Lions' performance over the final 6:46.

[TCNJ](#) (5-10) was held without a field goal over the final 5:18 and lost for the third time in the last four games as a 57-56 lead quickly gave way to a 20-3 Brooklyn run.

"Their guys stepped up and made shots in the second half," interim [TCNJ](#) head coach Matt Hunter said after Brooklyn (13-4) scored the game's final 14 points. "They played big."

There was a time when basketball consumed most of Wilson's day.

Now the 28-year-old former standout at Notre Dame High spends his time thinking of ways to serve others, both through the [Bonner Scholars](#) program and as sets out for his master's degree in counseling at [TCNJ](#) beginning in June.

Dr. King would be proud.

"The philosophy of our whole department is based around service to the [community](#), and being in New Orleans was a great chance for all of us to directly see the difference even one individual can make," Wilson said. "I think Dr. King would be happy to see such a diverse program, with people of all different backgrounds and races, coming together with a common goal to serve others. He would be proud to see that in 2008 we have evolved to the point where we can come together to help others without having any of those racial or socioeconomic barriers stopping us from proving that service. Then, to have all 50 of us, from all different backgrounds, humbled by what we experienced in New Orleans was just very rewarding."

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Contact John Nalbone at [jnalbone@njtimes.com](mailto:jnalbone@njtimes.com)

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