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TCNJ student volunteers honored for D&R canal cleanup project

EWING — A team of Bonner Community Scholars from The College of New Jersey was honored by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection on Thursday, Dec. 4 at a reception at the governor's mansion in Princeton Township.

The team received the 2008 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award in Environmental Education/Student Led Projects for their efforts working in Trenton through the Bonner Community Scholars program at TCNJ.

The four-year program requires that each student must spend a minimum of 300 hours a year working with community partners to improve the surrounding area. The

Bonner scholars are organized into 13 different issue-based teams charged with mobilizing their undergraduate peers to take on these challenges.

This year, the Bonner environmental team mobilized a group of 260 of their peers to work along the Trenton portion of the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park for an intense eight-day cleanup project. With the help of representatives of the Bellevue Avenue Civic Association, the Capital Corridor Community Development Corporation, and members of the Shiloh Baptist Church, the volunteers cleared seven tons of trash from the canal on a single day.

"With the state facing a budget crisis, the need for volunteer help

to keep the parks clean and beautiful is only magnified," said Michael Brower, environmental site team leader. "We try to focus on sections of the canal that go through lower-income areas, parks which serve people who need them most, where the park is their back yard and vacation spot all in one."

Patrick Donohue, director of the Bonner Center for Civic and Community Engagement said of the project: "We were excited to mobilize professors and students in environmental projects. It's satisfying to know that we are helping to restore the urban environmental assets in our own backyard."

For more information about the Bonner Center, visit (tcnj.edu/%bonner).