

How did a raccoon get into the Pantry in the Student Center? The answer lies within. See Page. 2



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"We've got it covered!"

The student press of Mercer County Community College since 1968

# Financial aid outsourced: Staff laid off before spring registration

By Jyotika Aggarwal & Bianca Araujo Menezes  
Editor in Chief and Co-Managing Editor

All of Mercer's in-person financial aid officers were laid off just days before spring course registration started on Nov. 10. No formal notification has been sent to students, as of Dec. 8, to let them know they must now rely primarily on remote services from a Florida-based company called ProEducation Solutions (ProEd).

In an interview with Carolyn White, vice president of student affairs, she told The VOICE, "Given the increasing complexity of financial aid and servicing our students and the difficulty of hiring full complements of financial aid departments and financial aid professionals, the college determined that contracting with an external provider was the most efficient and reliable path forward to ensure that our students had the best services possible."

In an earlier email from White, shared by deans with faculty on Nov. 18, she wrote, "We will have the call center number to you next week. In the interim, students can call

the Financial Aid Office."

In contrast, White told The VOICE, "So the call center was put in place on that Halloween day," apparently before the Nov. 18 email was circulated. Inconsistencies in knowing what services would be available and when may be contributing to student confusion.

For example, when VOICE staff tried at various times to schedule a time to speak about financial aid services by logging in at the kiosk at the One-Stop in the Enrollment Center, the scheduler's message was: "No time slots available for now, check back later."

Student Bianca Gonzalez, a first-year digital media major, says what many students have told The VOICE that information about the changes to the financial aid office has not been systematically communicated.

She said, "I didn't get an email. There were no notes on the board where I look, or on Blackboard."

Brandon Milord, a sec-

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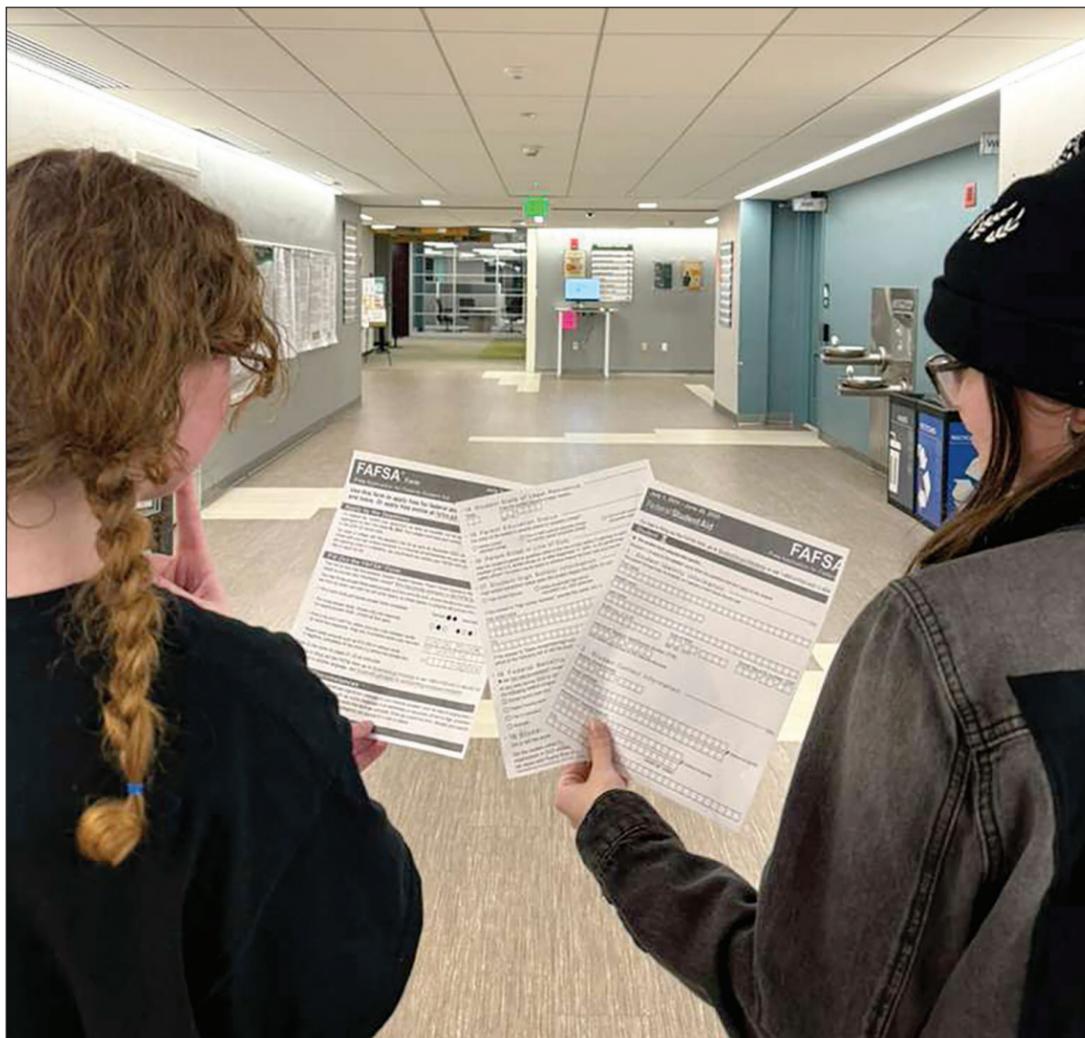


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION | JYOTIKA AGGARWAL

Students seeking answers about their financial aid often end up at the Enrollment Center, where only limited support is currently available.

# TikTok trend prompts peeing on college campuses

By Natalie Carchia  
Reporter

Mercer second year Liberal Arts major, Xylah Guerrier, is one among many local students who have discovered something odd on social media.

"I discovered it on Tiktok. It didn't originally come up on my For You page, it came up on my friends and then they sent it. It was actually my old high school that got peed. Or got peed on. Yeah it was crazy, and then I saw it at like TCNJ and whatnot," Guerrier says.

The trend of students peeing on college campuses and featuring the act on TikTok has spread nationwide and Mercer County has been no exception.

"I actually thought it was pretty funny because why are we

walking up to schools and peeing on them, and, you know, recording it and stuff?" Guerrier said.

In a VOICE survey of 30 MCCC students, 63% said they know about the trend.

The earliest records of this trend can be traced back to late August of 2025, originating at a few East Coast university campuses. Since then, it has quickly spread across the nation, and Mercer County has been no exception.

TikTok user "lawrencenj-pisser677," a resident of Lawrence Township, amassed over 1,000 followers within a few short weeks by uploading videos of themselves peeing on public spaces all around the community. The videos are typically 4-8 seconds long, featuring bleak audio as well as a clear indicator of location.

His counterpart, "ewing\_

pisser," who also gained over 1,000 followers, leaned more towards educational spaces including The College of New Jersey, Ewing High School, and Fisher Middle School. The account was shut down but is now back as of this reporting.

Repeated attempts to contact both users for comment were unsuccessful.

TCNJ Associate Vice President of Public Safety Timothy Grant told The VOICE, "Yes, we've had it here."

Grant says "We have over 300 cameras on campus," he adds, "actually we picked [the student] up on one of the cameras."

According to Mercer Professor Avery-Natale of sociology, there may be a variety of reasons people would do this.

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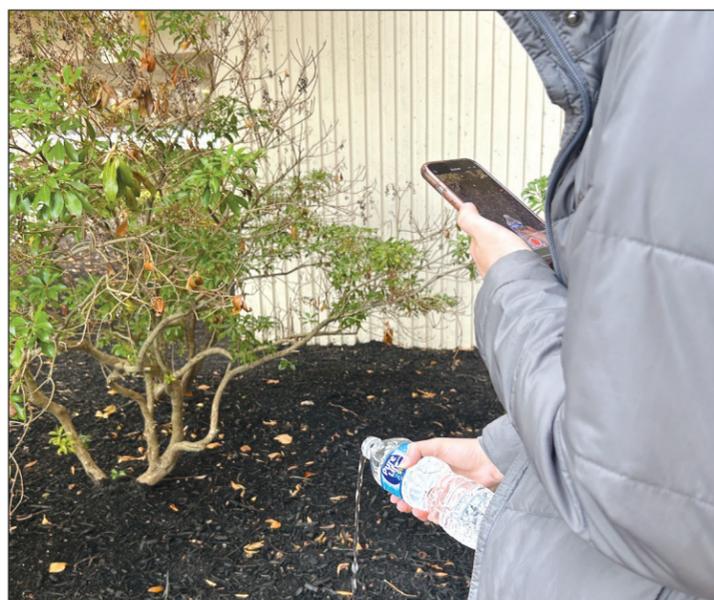


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION | BIANCA ARAUJO MENEZES AND NATALIE CARCHIA

Although seeming to pee on college campuses and local public spaces and posting TikTok videos, college security officers are finding the perpetrators are using water bottles instead.



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# Rocky the raccoon raided the Pantry on Halloween

By Jyotika Aggarwal & Domenica Gamero  
Editor in Chief and Co-Managing Editor

A raccoon broke into food supplies in both the food Pantry and cafeteria kitchen on the MCCC West Windsor Campus late on Halloween. Patrolling security guards saw lights on and went to investigate.

According to Josh Johnson, Director of Facilities, the raccoon—later nicknamed “Rocky the Raccoon” by the Pantry coordinator—gained access through an open door on the loading dock at the back of the Student Center building and travelled across the ceiling via the HVAC system.

College Safety noticed motion-activated lights triggered by the raccoon’s movements inside the Pantry and contacted Facilities, who then called Animal Control. Workers from Animal Control came and set a cage trap that night.

“Eventually the raccoon made its way into the trap and then was removed and taken out into the woods behind the college and released [in the morning],” Johnson said.

Staff then conducted a thorough cleanup, discarding contaminated items, disinfecting surfaces with a fogging system similar to what was used during COVID, and replacing the damaged ceiling. Facilities staff reminded workers to keep exterior doors closed to prevent future incidents.

Erica Oliver, the Vice President of Advancement, Marketing, and Communications, told The VOICE, “[Animal Con-

trol] did not harm the animal or anything. So I just want to make sure that’s clear, that they took care of the animal and I don’t know where they released him. But I did hear he was cute.”

Shannon Rhym, a food service worker at the cafeteria, said of the raccoon entering the kitchen, “It just got back here [in the kitchen]. [It ate] some sugar, the craisins...just a few boxes and things that we store food in.” She added, “We had to throw certain things out. It wasn’t too much damage [in the kitchen], but in the Pantry, it did a real bad job.”

Jodi Marra, the Pantry coordinator put up a sign on the door cautioning raccoons to stay away.

She said, “It was absolutely nothing anybody could have predicted. And obviously [the Pantry] wasn’t vandalized. It was an innocent raccoon, and absolutely nobody could have predicted it all. It was funny and a lot of students didn’t know about it so that’s why I put [the sign] on the door.”

Despite the unusual visitor, Marra emphasized that while the Pantry isn’t available to wildlife it is an open resource for students.

She says, “We’re open. Students are welcome to come.”

Johnson said, “You know, raccoons are creatures of opportunity. This wasn’t an incident where the building was compromised and that’s how he made his way in. It was just somebody left the door open.”

He added, “He ate well. I will say that.”



Animal control caught the raccoon that broke into the MCCC food pantry using a humane trap. PHOTO | Courtesy of Josh Johnson

## Garden dedicated to Mercer Math Professor Mary Hayes

By Elijah Shepherd  
Reporter

Mary Hayes was a mathematics and computer science professor who worked at Mercer for 26 years before retiring in 2026. After passing in 2011, her presence now is celebrated on campus in the form of a memorial garden built in her honor.

Professor Amy Ricco of the Ornamental Horticulture A.A.S. program explained that the purpose of the garden and hardscaping, besides being a place for the arts, is to grow plants that would attract, “birds and pollinators and things like that, because those were things that Mary loved.”

The initial garden was built by the college’s landscape class in 2013. They planted boxwoods and other pollinator friendly greenery to reflect Mary’s deep love for nature.

Over time, however, the area’s condition fell into decline. The plants deteriorated, the pavers buckled, and weeds overtook the space.

Between 2024 and 2025, Professor Ricco and her students worked to restore the space to its former beauty.

Beginning in 2012, Joan Silver, Mary’s sister, donated money to Mercer in increments

over a period of ten years. With this funding, Mercer was able to complete the memorial which is located outside of the Communication building.

A Mercer student in the Horticulture Program, Matthew Shteynberg, said that he hoped after this renovation his peers will “be more on top of it” in maintaining the memorial

Former Professor of English and Dean of Liberal Robin Schore, who retired in 2016 after 43 years at the college, described Mary as a “genuine faculty leader” who “did not tolerate fools.” He laughed as he remembered the things they had in common, including shared birthdays and similar political viewpoints.

Another former colleague, math Professor Don Reichman, who started working at MCCC in 1977 and retired in 2020 said, “Mary was an innovative instructor who used examples in math class that were beyond the scope of the textbook.” He added, “We were both comrades in crime. Mary was really smart and had a wonderful sense of humor.”

The gazebo project brought together students to contribute to something meaningful. The space now serves as a reminder of Hayes’ legacy and dedication to Mercer.



PHOTO | ELIJAH SHEPHERD

TOP: Mary Hayes (Courtesy of Hayes family). BOTTOM: Memorial garden at MCCC restored by students in the college’s Horticulture program in 2025.

### GREAT NEWS

The College VOICE has won more state and national awards than any other community college newspaper in New Jersey.

### NEED TO KNOW

MCCC’s West Windsor campus is home to the largest solar farm on any community college campus in the country.

### JOURNO LINGO

The term “Solutions Journalism” refers to a style of journalism where articles are organized to focus on what people are doing to address problems.

### FAST LAW FACT

At a crime scene the police designate a PIO or Public Information Officer to talk to reporters. The PIO can give key facts but never opinions about the situation.

# Medical lab tech club hosted fall blood drive

By **Jasmine Wermers**  
Reporter

The New Jersey Blood Center, a division of the New York Blood Center, was at MCCC's student center on the West Windsor campus on September 30th from 10 am to 4 pm for a fall blood donation drive.

Many students were able to walk in and donate. The organizers asked that students sign up in advance, but walk-ins were welcomed.

Incentives were offered in the form of a free t-shirt and beanie, though for most students, that was not why they chose to donate.

Dan Basquiara, a nursing major, said about his first time donating "I feel like it's like any kind of community service, like you could help."

According to Lisa Shave, a professor at Mercer and the program coordinator of the Medical Lab Tech program, the college hosts a minimum of four blood drives per calendar year, during which they typically collect a total of 35 units of blood, which has the potential to save up to 105 lives. This year, the Medical Lab Tech Club organized and spon-

sored the Blood Drive.

Shave says, "[It] really helps those in need in the community, because every day a patient somewhere at some point in time, really every minute, needs a blood transfusion, whether it's red cells or plasma or platelets. I think what's most exciting is being able to offer it on our campus."

Lisa Shave confirmed that 35 units were successfully collected, which have the potential to help save up to 105 lives within the community.

The New York Blood Center account manager, Tomasz Lunieswi, who helped coordinate the event, said there are misconceptions about who can donate.

Lunieswi said, "So, number one misconception is that if you had a tattoo, you can't donate. That is completely untrue. If you had a tattoo in New Jersey, you can donate literally after your tattoo is completely healed."

People also wonder if they can't give because of the medications they take.

Lunieswi said, "Also, if you take a different type of medication, blood pressure medications, if you're diabetic, you can't donate. That's also not true. Because then we wouldn't be able

to collect blood from anybody. Because a lot of people are diabetic and are on blood pressure medicine."

According to the New York Blood Center's website, "our area faces a high demand for blood. Close to 2,000 donations are needed each day in the New York/New Jersey community."

Lunieswi explained that the NYBC runs up to twenty community blood drives per day, and even more on weekends.

Many schools, including high schools in the area, offer blood drives, and anyone over 16 (with parents' permission), is able to donate.

According to Shave, MCCC aims to host two blood drives per semester, spaced eight weeks apart, so that students who donated the first time are eligible to donate again if they'd like.

Professor Shave says, "I am actually a Blood Bank Medical Laboratory Scientist, where I work in the hospital setting. Although being a professor is my full-time role, I still work per diem at a hospital, where I see firsthand the need for blood products that go to patients."

Lunieswi says, "The need for blood never stops. It's 24-7."



PHOTO | JASMINE WERMERS

Dan Basquiara, a second-year Nursing transfer student, donates blood for the first time at the campus drive.

## CAMPUS PEEING

Continued from page 1

Profesor Avery-Natale says there is a theory that suggests people sometimes do things to form a group identity, called symbolic interactionism.

He says, "I don't know what the hell the identity you're forming by peeing on a building is, but that it is somehow like 'I'm part of this group. I am part of the group of people who are getting attention and doing this thing'"

In some cases, it's not actually clear if what the people are doing is peeing.

Grant at TCNJ says, "What we also found-and good luck to that perpetrator-was that he was actually using a water bottle."

He continued, "Well, since it was apparently water in the water bottle, you know, it wasn't even sort of criminal mischief...It wasn't any crime."

Crime or not, students are having a strong reaction to the peeing trend.

Mercer student Jayden Johnson says, "All that's creating from this peeing thing is this animosity...cause no one knows who this guy is." He adds, "I want to shut it down. I want to make sure they never make these videos again."

Another student, Brian Lanza, who is an Automotive Technology major says, "Yeah, I love Mercer so much that I don't want anything to happen to it. I'm like the Captain America for Mercer."

MCCC's security guards declined to comment on the trend or whether they are concerned our college will be next.

Professor Avery-Natale says, "You know, there's that very, very old saying, like if everyone else jumped off a bridge would you too? And I think Tiktok shows us that a lot of people would."

## FINANCIAL AID

ond-year nursing major, says he faced major challenges with financial aid this semester after becoming unexpectedly ineligible despite previously receiving assistance. When he tried to reinstate his aid in person, he was directed to use ProEd's phone or email instead. He said response time was slow.

"They finally got back to me [via email]," but, he added, "The lady didn't answer all my questions in the email."

In addition to concerns about response times and getting full information, students uncomfortable with talking about financial information over the phone or Zoom, facing English-language difficulties on the phone, or dealing with privacy concerns may be left with few alternatives.

Students like Ashley Tello, a second-year plant science and biology major, say, "I kind of have social anxiety, so talking online can be a little bit difficult for me."

When asked about students who would feel uncomfortable sharing financial information on the phone, Dr. Preston said, "Financial aid conversations tend to be about process and documentation more so than finances per se, and I find that most of my actual finance conversations, say with a bank or investment professional, happen over phone or Zoom. I think that's the trend in communication these days."

She added, "However, I understand that we will have a financial aid professional on site one week per month for re-

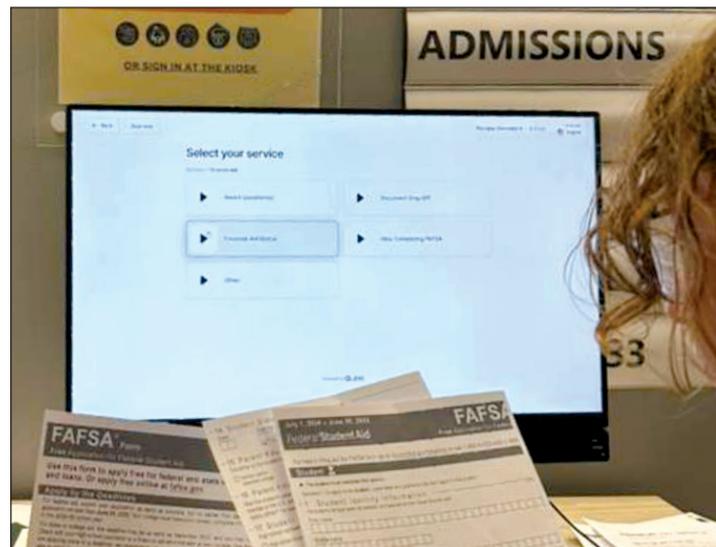


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION | BIANCA ARAUJO MENEZES AND JYOTIKA AGGARWAL

As of time of publication, students checking in at the Enrollment Center kiosk seeking financial aid assistance get a notification "currently unavailable" for every financial aid option they may select.

ally tricky cases or students who feel uncomfortable with technology."

She did not offer any details about how students will know to find this professional.

While the administration maintains confidence in the new model, the process by which it was implemented has drawn criticism from staff and their union representatives.

At the MCCC Board of Trustees meeting on Nov. 24, David Valentino, president of the union representing the professional staff at the college, made an impassioned statement during the open public comment period.

He highlighted the case of one of the financial aid employees who, he says, was told that her job was no longer

in existence and was escorted to her vehicle. He noted how her health insurance had ended at the end of the month after working at the college for almost a decade.

Valentino said, "The Professional Staff Union, along with other unions in this college, are not going to stand by and let the college eliminate positions of our unit and treat people the way that they have been treated."

But while the staffing cuts and transition have drawn sharp criticism from employees and union representatives, the impact falls directly on students who need support most.

A survey conducted by The VOICE of 30 Mercer students found that 73 percent

faced challenges surrounding financial aid for the upcoming term. Sixty percent currently receive aid, and 43 percent said they would not be able to remain enrolled without it.

Not everyone is worried. Some believe the change may bring benefits to students. Christopher Lowsky, a current employee at the One-Stop, said he thinks students will still receive accurate information.

"The biggest difference would be they don't have the in-person aspect. But they're still getting the same information in a fairly similar timely fashion regarding the processing of FAFSA information."

He added, "Sometimes it's nice to be able to come in, and if a person's there, you can just quick grab them. When it's online, it's more of a first-come, first-served. In a way, it is more organized."

However, students say they continue to struggle with uncertainty about whom to approach with their questions.

Milord, for example, says the confusion is taking an immediate toll.

"It's frustrating. I have finals this week. I couldn't really concentrate on studying because I'm working. Because I'm trying to get more on top of it now, because I know I'm not going to get financial aid," he said.

Additional reporting was provided by *Domenica Gamero.*

# Local artists play WTSR's Underground event

By Madison Babiarz-Walsh  
Reporter

The College of New Jersey's Alternative Radio station, WTSR, hosted their biannual music event, Underground, on September 21 and 22 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Underground, in collaboration with TCNJ's Lions Television Network, invites ten local bands to the university's TV studio to perform three songs live for the alternative rock music station.

Originally intended as a space for WTSR to film the bands, Underground recently opened to the public.

Andre Paras, the Music Director at WTSR, says, "These events are kind of like designed for us to film the bands, but I kind of wanted to start bringing in more people to these, so we've been trying to advertise more."

They had a full sign up sheet this semester, suggesting the efforts have been successful.

Babe City, a New York-based shoegaze/indie pop five-piece, had the largest audience by far, with roughly ten people attending their performance. Babe City, directed by TCNJ senior Chrissy Cinque, performed their songs "Two Tabs," "Vodka Soda," "Lucky," and "Kiss Me Again."

Babe City is not Cinque's first venture in directing, as she's been doing it for three years.

Cinque says, "I find it



PHOTO | MADISON BABIARZ-WALSH

*Babe City playing at The College of New Jersey's alternative radio station WTSR's Underground on September 21, 2025.*

fun. It's like playing... it's like treasure hunt, almost. You're trying to find what parts of the song are gonna work best with which angles."

Assisted Living, an alternative rock band from Philadelphia, performed directly after Babe City was finished.

On playing at the event, vocalist Shane Moore said, "We could tell it was a long weekend for the students... but the excitement and energy was still high.

And infectious."

Assisted Living itself is actually familiar with the radio and film industry, as three of the four members work within the aforementioned industries, and Moore used to have a radio show during his time at Emerson College.

Moore says, "To see young folks engaged, excited, and getting practical experience brought me back to when I was just starting out. It was rad."

WTSR's Underground will return during TCNJ's spring semester, and the radio team hopes to attract a larger audience this time around.

Underground information is posted on the station's Instagram account, @wtsr913fm.

Paras says, "We definitely want more people to swing by. We think there is a lot of awesome talent here that is definitely worth seeing."

# Mercer twin models balance school and fashion

By Keith Morris Jr.  
Reporter

It all started as a post just for fun between two twin brothers named Billoh Bah, a second year psychology major at MCCC and Billal Bah, a second year finance major at MCCC. Little did they know that post would change their life for the better.

Billal says "Back in high-school, my brother posted a flick of us in the cafeteria on his TikTok before going to bed...When he woke up and checked his phone, there was a lot of likes, follows, and notifications. It was like we became micro celebrities in the school."

Following that success the two took up modeling for a clothing brand called 2Face.

Billal says "Rowan Richards, our good friend, had created the [2Face] clothing brand a year prior with about 2k followers. One thing lead to another and we ended up having a trip to New York for his brand."

What started as an invite for fun between friends evolved into a partnership that set up the twins to become core team members of the brand's success.

Richards says, "They brought decent content that paired with creative takes on common social media trends and again, generated a decent amount of sales in the early to mid stages of running my clothing brand."

The success the twins had from 2Face led to modeling shoots with other clothing brands

including Mosaic Hill, SplurgeT-roop, GloStar, Slate Apparel (now known as Memory Archives), No Love Clothing, and Dutty Gyal.

But well before the media attention, fashion already had a meaning in the brothers' lives.

Billoh says "I'd say fashion started playing a huge role in my identity, and who I am back in my senior year of high-school [in 2022]."

Billal says, "I started getting more into fashion by discovering what I liked on me. There are some influences I saw on Pinterest and a bit of anime, so I just started tailoring my influences to my liking. I began by making use of what I have in my closet."

Their style mixes modern grunge with streetwear, oversized hoodies, wide-leg pants, dark tones, and bold graphics that make every outfit very expressive. They coordinate their looks without fully matching, creating a twin dynamic that feels intentional and authentic.

Billoh says "I feel like my clothing choices definitely reflect my personality due to the fact that I buy things based on how I feel about the clothing. It's deeper than clothing."

Billal says "Fashion is a form of artistic expression. I learned new ways to express myself to the world in my sense of art. I dress in the way I want to be perceived."

The twins have to balance their college work with their modeling work.

Billoh says "I take pride in not being one dimensional, I always knew I didn't have to do one thing at a time, I just do what



Billal Bah(left) and Billoh Bah(right) at Princeton University.

PHOTO | Courtesy of Rowan Richards

feels right to me, and what feels productive."

Billal says "Multi-tasking now will strengthen my discipline that I'd need for my future and prepare me for entrepreneurship."

Qayyum Gray, a former MCCC student says, "The first time I saw the twins I knew they had to do something with the fashion scene, because their fits were always fire in school non-stop."

# Bomb threats on election day in NJ

By Jyotika Aggarwal & Domenica Gamero  
Editor in Chief and Co-Managing Editor

Two polling locations in Mercer County received bomb threats early in the morning on November 4th, Election Day. The threats, deemed noncredible by officials, were targeted at Ewing High School and Hedgepeth-Williams Elementary School in Trenton, the latter less than two miles from Mercer's JKC campus.

Patrol officers and K-9 units received word of the emailed threat around 5:00 A.M. and immediately responded, searching the building and finding no cause of suspicion.

These threats came among others targeted at polling places in counties throughout NJ, including Bergen, Essex, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Passaic Counties.

Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way released a statement regarding the incident saying, "We are aware of threats made to several polling locations in New Jersey. Law enforcement has determined that there are no credible threats at this time. We are doing everything in our power to protect voters and poll workers and coordinate closely with state, local and federal partners to ensure a smooth and safe election."

In a press release, Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin said, "Law enforcement officers have responded at each affected polling place, and they have worked swiftly to secure these polling locations and ensure the safety of every voter."

He continued, "Some of these polling locations have already reopened to the public. At others, voters will be directed to a nearby polling location to cast their ballot."

He also said that law enforcement officers were working hard to secure polling locations and ensure the safety of voters. The West Windsor Police did not respond to requests for comment.

Mercer County Executive Dan Benson said in a public statement, "The false threats made against polling locations in Mercer and other counties were a shameful and cowardly attempt to disrupt the exercise of free and fair elections."

Coming out of a polling booth, Mercer County resident Najeeah Ragland, 46, said, "I did hear about it [the bomb threat]. It made me a little leery but I was gonna still come out and vote."

She also mentioned she felt safe voting at the polling location. "One of the reasons I think it's [voting is] important is to help keep our constitution going, freedom of speech for everyone, and to protect our laws."

A West Windsor resident and election observer, Tom Calabria, said of the atmosphere at a polling place: "[It's] subdued. You don't have the vibe in the air like you do with the presidential election."

He added, "All I can do is keep my fingers crossed and- I don't pray because I'm an atheist-but hope for the best."

# Costa Rica to Mercer: a story of coffee culture and community

By Linnea Rameil  
Senior Reporter

A free coffee tasting event for all Mercer students was hosted by Mercer's Student Life on Wednesday, Oct. 1, during lunch. Turtle Beans Specialty Coffee Shop was invited to present some of its bestselling beverages for students to try. The event was held in the Student Center, Room SC125, in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Hispanic Heritage Month is a period from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 that celebrates the histories, cultures, and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

Steven Fonseca, the owner of the coffee shop, started the event by telling the students about how he went from picking coffee in his home country, Costa Rica, to opening his own shop in New Jersey, buying specialty beans from all around South America.

Messiah Snow, a first-year Mercer student, later said, "When I came here initially, I was coming here because someone said there is free coffee, but when I sat down and listened to his speech, I didn't really care about the coffee anymore. I mean, of course I had to try the product, but his story meant a lot more to me in general."

He was trying the coffee shop's Autumn Classic Latte, which is one of their specialty drink options that customers can exclusively get in the fall months.

In the back of the room, the Turtle Beans staff had prepared a coffee bar with eight different coffee varieties from their shop for Mercer students to try.

They had four iced or hot latte variations, two different cold brew options, and three of their single-origin choices.

Asia Spain Davis, a second-year Mercer student, said, "You can really taste the flavor."

The single origins come from different farms in South America, which Fonseca visits personally. He travels to farms in Costa Rica, Mexico and Guatemala to check on the coffee beans himself.

Their café de olla was also on the menu. The students later learned that it is a traditional coffee from Mexico which, according to the online coffee newsletter Perfect Daily Grind, was originally invented during the Mexican Revolution in the early 20th century so that soldiers could have a warm drink in the cold war camps.

Fonseca said, "Linda, my wife, she is definitely the creator of mixing the sweet stuff like the café de olla. She just made it, she made it from scratch."

Their Pura Vida Latte is the bestseller of the store and combines flavors of coconut and caramel topped off with real coconut flakes.

Fonseca said, "My sister was the one that came out with the Pura Vida. She is from Costa Rica too."

Fonseca said he had a tough childhood with a single mom who left him alone in Costa Rica at the age of 11 to go work in the U.S. so she could make enough money to support him.

"Life is a jungle. Either you get eaten or you get stronger. I stopped expecting anything, because I am in charge of my life. You are the bean and the brewer," he said to give the students something on their way.

Fonseca used to be a



PHOTO | LINNEA RAMEIL

Turtle Beans provided a variety of sample beverages including seasonal favorites like their autumn classic latte at the tasting event in the Student Center on October 1, 2025.

pastor and said, "Anytime I have a chance to connect with people, especially young people, that is my actual call more than actual business. I'm not a business person."

This event was not just about tasting coffee. The students had a variety of reactions to Fonseca's presentation.

Asia Spain Davis said, "I loved his story, it kind of touched home a little bit."

The couple opened the

shop in 2022. In an interview, Fonseca said that they opened the shop because, at the time, they were in one of the darkest places in their lives, and opening the shop was part of healing for them.

Fonseca said, "We just love to learn from other cultures but also share the goodness that we have in our hearts."

Mercer's Student Life and Leadership considered the event a success.

Raif Sanchez, a third-year advertising and graphic design student who helped organize the event, said, "I was really happy to see how many people came, and I was even happier for the business to get this recognition."

Davis said, "I feel like it brings us closer to not just the campus community but the outside community, so yes, I definitely would like more events like this."

## MCCC's new Ethics Bowl team made quarter-finals in Chicago

By Jasmine Wermers  
Reporter

Mercer's new Ethics Bowl team went to Chicago to participate in the 2025 Two-Year Regional Ethics Bowl and finished as quarter-finalists in a field that included a total of 16 teams from across the country. Mercer sent 6 students to the event, which took place on November 22, 2025.

Ethics Bowl is a new organization at MCCC, headed by faculty coach Philosophy Professor Ken Howarth, with a focus on major ethical dilemmas and philosophical debates.

The team's website explains that the ethics bowl "is a unique, collaborative experience for undergraduate students that provides valuable educational experience in practical and professional ethics... to see who has thought most deeply and presented their arguments most clearly on cases based on today's most pressing issues."

Nuray Temiz, a Liberal Arts major on the team says, "Honestly, I think as a team, we weren't really in it to win it because it's the first time Mercer has ever done something like an ethics bowl!"

Temulun Togocho, who is



PHOTO | PROF. KENNETH HOWARTH

Mercer's Ethics Bowl team in action at the Two Year Regional competition in Chicago on November 22.

also on the team said, "It really developed and worked on my critical thinking skills." When asked what has it taught her about ethical decision making in her own life, she says, "I think it's that morality, it might sound a little basic, but morality is really relative."

Logistics and teamwork seemed to be one of the team's major struggles, however, espe-

*"I think actually winning one of the matches that we did, gave them kind of an affirmation that they belonged there."*

- Professor Kenneth Howarth

cially after a student had to drop out of the trip at the last minute, forcing the group to quickly reorganize. But the managed to keep going and do well.

Professor Howarth said, "I think actually winning one of the matches that we did, gave them kind of an affirmation that they belonged there... We did get outperformed, but we are hoping to build on our success." He add-



COLLEGE VOICE FILE PHOTO

Professor Kenneth Howarth (left) with Mercer's Ethics Bowl team 2025.

ed, "They did a good job in what they achieved."

The team, unofficially called Chex Mix, was led by Captain Jyotika Aggarwal, who, according to Manashvi Vats, a Computer Science Major, was "like an anchor for me and I think all the other members." (Note: Aggarwal is Editor in Chief of The VOICE)

While the first two rounds were a bit of a learning curve, the team regrouped during the lunch break.

Antonios Kantarakias explained [that] "A lot of us were freaked out of the water when it came to like sudden shifts in what we were essentially trying to tackle. And then Jo [Aggarwal] could

like step in and essentially help us course correct. And it's like, oh my goodness, without her, we'd be dead fucking last."

Those who will still be at Mercer next fall are looking forward to taking the momentum from this semester and going to nationals stronger. First timers being quarterfinalists demonstrate the teamwork and effort each student made.

The consensus among the team members was expressed clearly by Vats, who said, "we were really happy with our work, we were happy with how we approached the cases, we were happy with the discussions we had"

# Come for the aliens, stay for the lattes at Grover's Mill Coffee



PHOTO | MICAH WITTER  
*Sneaky aliens at Grover's Mill Coffee*

By Micah Witter  
Reporter

Hidden in a strip mall on the side of Princeton-Hightstown Road in West Windsor is a storefront marked simply "COFFEE." But inside Grover's Mill Coffee, you encounter posters of aliens like those described in *The War of the Worlds*, a radio drama from 1938 that was so intense it made people believe aliens were really invading Earth right here in New Jersey.

Three-legged alien statues lurk around the coffee shop like little guests. Many of them are encased in glass or hidden in a corner, while one large one watches the guests come and go with its two eyes and many tendrils.

Rory Murphy, a regular customer, says, "[I come for] just the ambiance, the ability to sit here almost indefinitely and just enjoy somebody's company, or watch the comings and goings. The owner, Isa, is extremely friendly, very outgoing."

Isa Elci says, "I didn't make [Grover's Mill Coffee] alien themed. I purchased the place in 2023. So, it was already an alien themed coffee shop, so I just kept it and just added more of basically anything alien related."

The smell of coffee is powerful, smooth jazz plays on the speakers, and locals sit and chat on small sofas piled with pillows.

The menu on the chalkboard — which also features an alien — shows that typical beverages cost between \$3 and \$6, sandwiches are \$6, and pastries cost \$4.

There are many items to choose from on the menu, and out of all of them, the hot chocolate, egg pesto and provolone cheese sandwich, and a birthday cake-flavored cake pop are highlights of the menu.

A basic afternoon meal of hot chocolate, egg pesto and provolone sandwich, and a cake pop costs about \$20.

The hot chocolate spreads across the mouth and gives off a rich flavor, a pleasant



PHOTO | MICAH WITTER

*Grover's Mill Coffee's chalkboard features welcome, a list of beverages, and a space ship landing in a local field commemorating "War of The Worlds."*

*"[I come for] just the  
ambiance, the ability  
to sit here almost  
indefinitely and just  
enjoy somebody's  
company, or watch the  
comings and goings.  
The owner, Isa, is  
extremely friendly,  
very outgoing."*

- Rory Murphy



PHOTO | MICAH WITTER

*Isa Elci, owner of Grover's Mill Coffee in East Windsor, NJ working the coffee grinding machine.*

comfort that feels like cozying up by the fire on a cold winter night.

The egg pesto and provolone sandwich is a savory burst of pesto but is balanced out pleasantly by the provolone and egg flavors.

The cake pop, which was birthday cake flavored, feels like a taste of pure celebration, the shell and inside sweet and full of flavor.

Elci says of the prices, "I'm still making profit, so I just, you know, want to be reasonable to the people. Even though this is a wealthy neighborhood, with the economy, people are watching what they can spend

on coffee and, so if you increase too much, then you are going to lose some customers."

One way that Grover's Mill draws people in is live events, with an open mic every other Thursday from 6 to 8 p.m. and live music every Saturday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Chanel Friscia, a regular, says, "I live about 10 minutes away. I prefer to do business at locally owned places versus large conglomerate cooperations. So, I really like the atmosphere. I like what this coffee shop represents."

Taylan Postalci, an employee at Grover's Mill, says, "The coffee's genuinely good.

The drip house blend is, you know, it's a good cup of coffee. Just black. I think, when you make a certain standard and adhere to that standard for so long people really recognize that."

Owner Elci says, "[The previous owner] says because they live here in Grover's Mill in West Windsor and the Grover's Mill neighborhood and they decided to open a coffee shop in the neighborhood."

He adds, "We are actually a community store here. We do have the mayor come here, the counsel men, women, they come here."



PHOTO | MICAH WITTER

*A steampunk style alien finds a home at Grover's Mill Coffee.*

# Bagel Bazaar brings best breakfast ten minutes from campus

By Linnea Rameil  
Senior Reporter

Bagel Bazaar has already gained regulars who stop by up to three times a day, even after only a few weeks since it opened on November 14 according to owners Paul Salas and Randy Peltz. The restaurant is in Mercerville on Route 33, only 10 minutes away from MCCC's West Windsor Campus.

The moment you walk in, a warm, sweet, freshly baked smell fills the air. It sets the mood before you notice the wall paintings and all the natural light coming in through the big storefront window.

Customers can choose from fresh salads, flavorful spreads, and sandwiches, as well as many sweet bakery items and rare bagel flavors.

A good place to start on the menu is the bacon and egg option. The bacon is crispy and full of salty flavor. Generous portions of egg are not too heavily seasoned and round the bagel well.

The pecan caramel oat milk latte is a bit sweeter than typical, letting the caramel take the lead over the coffee.

The homemade chocolate chip cookies come fresh out of the oven every morning. The outside is crispy and caramelized, the inside is still gooey and tastes like biting into pure, only slightly-baked, cookie dough. The menu doesn't just stick to

*"We always made sure that we took our time and we put a lot of thought and energy into making sure that we were giving Hamilton the best we could possibly give."*

- PAUL SALAS

tradition. It includes creations like the fresh-jalapeño bagel, French toast bagel, and even an Oreo bagel.

All recipes are home-made.

Peltz says, "We wanted to kind of enhance everything and source new products because, over time, there's new products that become available, there's different techniques, and the palette of customers also changes over time."

Salas uses high-protein flour, traditional malt, and precise temperature control to make sure each bagel is treated with care.

Indeed, the bagels are exceptionally fluffy, almost cloudlike, with both sides toasted to a buttery crisp. Generous fillings that complement each other, make them satisfying but still light and fresh.

Salas says, "I started at 15 years old, working part-time on the weekends."

The turning point for him was when his former employer offered him ownership of his new Bagel Bazaar location.

He says, "One of the things that I never did, which I really always dreamed about, was franchising."

The interior is bright and polished, with small personal touches like branded mugs, shirts and thermoses that they sell. One of the walls is covered in hand-drawn doodles celebrating New Jersey pride.

Salas says four different designers helped to work on the hand-painted murals inside the shop. One side is airbrushed by former MCCC student, and well-known Trenton graffiti artist, Leon Rainbow whose work connects Bagel Bazaar to the local community.

The location of Bagel Bazaar was carefully selected.

Peltz says, "We think Hamilton is an amazing community, and we want to add value," owner

Salas adds, "We always made sure that we took our time and we put a lot of thought and energy into making sure that we were giving Hamilton the best we could possibly give."

Tatiana Espitia, another staff member said "All that



PHOTO | LINNEA RAMEIL

Paul Salas prepares a bacon, ham, and cheese bagel for a hungry customer at Bagel Bazaar in Hamilton, NJ.

we do is with our heart... It's not only food, it's giving an experience,"

For guests asking what to try, Cabrer points them toward one of the newest options on the board: "I'd probably say the Jersey Devil... just

a spicy chorizo with pepper jack cheese, eggs and jalapeño cream cheese."

About their food philosophy Salas says, "Everything that we do starts with one bagel."

# Tracey's Kitchen feeds a community, honors a mother's legacy

By Rasheed Simmons  
Reporter

Every Wednesday and Saturday, Trachele "Tracey" Johnson honors her late mother's dedication to community service by offering a \$10 meal special in her restaurant, Tracey's Kitchen.

"My mom was a cook," Johnson says. "She used to cook big pots of food. We grew up in a household of 13 of us. She just didn't feed us, she cooked enough food for us, our friends, and the homeless."

Like her mother, Johnson values the importance of providing home cooked meals to others.

"I try to give back to the community," Johnson says. "Food is expensive. I know it's expensive for me. I buy it, but I like to give back to my community. That's why I give out \$10 specials all the time. Some people can't afford \$25."

Tracey's Kitchen, Johnson's restaurant at 241 East Front Street in Downtown Trenton, is building a reputation with patrons as the cozy, caring home of soul food with Liberian culinary influence.

Upon entry into Trac-

ey's Kitchen the warm and savory aroma of turkey wings, candied yams, and green beans fill the air. Sounds of neo-soul play through the eatery, and a mural of the late Mrs. Johnson welcomes guests.

No stranger to travelers, Tracey's Kitchen has welcomed patrons from across state lines in P.A., up north in Essex County, N.J., and as close as a few blocks away in Trenton. Patrons are drawn by \$10 soul food dinner specials and a signature dish called "A Taste of Africa," the cornerstone of the restaurant's viral popularity and family legacy.

"A Taste of Africa" is a spicy spinach or cassava leaf dish with rice and a protein choice of either chicken or shrimp.

Trenton native Trecey Hayes, who has been visiting Tracey's Kitchen since its opening, says the special used to be her regular order.

"A platter I use to get all the time it's called 'A Taste of Africa,' with the spinach shrimp or the chicken rice with some spice," Hayes said. "It's good."

Another staple menu item revered by patrons at Tracey's Kitchen is the mac

and cheese, known for its fluffy texture, smooth mouthfeel and stringy cheese that stretches from fork to plate. Marlo Robinson of Bensalem, P.A., a weekly patron to Tracey's Kitchen, recommends pairing the mac and cheese with other side menu items.

"Oh my god, the collard greens are absolutely amazing," Robinson says. "I've waited three hours for those. I love the salmon, I love the garlic shrimp, the macaroni and cheese, especially the corners and circle all the above."

Another crowd favorite at Tracey's Kitchen is another dinner option of six well done, crispy, herb crusted wings coated in a zesty lemon pepper glazed.

Sudan "Nia" Baskin from Irvington, N.J. was searching for a place to eat and came upon Tracey's Kitchen through Google. Her experience, she says, makes her want to return.

"The food was great. Everything I had was good, very tasty, nothing overly cooked, temperature was great," Baskin says, adding, "Everything is amazing and I will come again."

Tracey's Kitchen serves up her Liberian-flared soul



PHOTO | RASHEED SIMMONS

Owner, Tracey Johnson (left) while preparing shrimp with Back of House Manager, Tiyonna Johnson at Tracey's Kitchen.

food six days a week, Tuesday through Sunday. And though communities from near and far rave about the cooking, it's not just the food that has customers

returning for seconds.

"Tracey's personality brings me back," Baskin says. "Tracey's personality matches the food."

# SPEAKING OUT O

WE ASKED, AND YOU ANSWERED. The College VOICE hit about the current economic condition in America. Here you quick round of Mercer Money, the ga



Prof. Dan D'Arpa

"I'm thinking about the housing prices. I know they're impossible for a lot of people, and we think about students, especially our international students; It's a concern of mine. The other thing is that people are losing tãheir jobs, people close to me have lost their jobs; sometimes you feel hopeless without a job."



Nicolas Maya

"I believe the economy is currently a little weak, but I do hope that soon enough we'll prosper and soon enough there will be jobs and a lot of opportunities for people to start working again."



Prof. Mitch Canter

"I'm concerned that students don't have a personal point of contact for financial aid."



Frances David

"I truly feel that they could do a lot better with how they handle financial issues at Mercer. Like, sometimes a student would have a loan, and they don't even know about it until like 3, 4, semesters in."



Aiden Storer

"With how expensive everything is, I'm kind of afraid that all I'm gonna be getting is like, just ramen noodles, and butter."

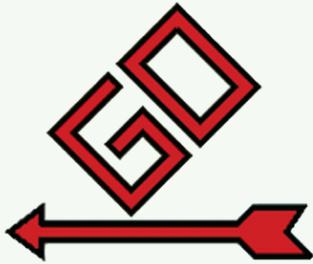
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	GET A PARKING PERMIT		TAKE A THEATER CLASS GET BIT PART ON HBO MINI SERIES		JOIN RAINBOW ALLIANCE GET FREE RAINBOW FLAG		ROLL AGAIN
	JOIN JAZZ BAND - PLAY LIVE GIGS		LOOKING		NEW COMPUTER \$800		CAR INSURANCE \$500
	NEW COMPUTER \$800		CAR INSURANCE \$500		CHECK MERCER MAIL		BUY A TOKEN THAT DOESN'T WORK
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# MERCER



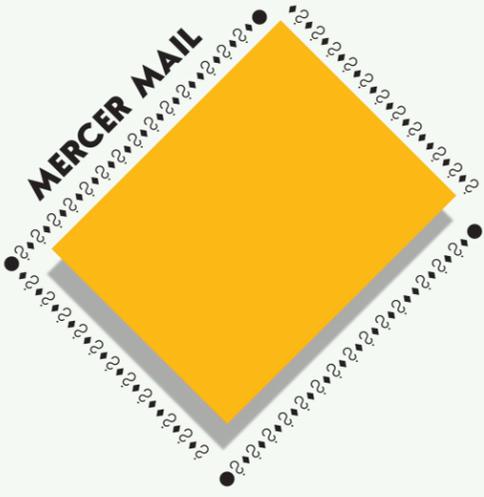
# N MONEY - 2025

the streets to ask students, faculty and staff their feelings  
 have a chance to read their responses, then you can play a  
 me of 2-year college fun and chance!

 SECURITY GET HIT BY A GOLF CART PAY \$300 HOSPITAL FEE	TRANSFER U. TO RIDER U.  GRAB DIPLOMA AND RUN	PHYS ED SEE SOCCER GAME FOR FREE	SECURITY GET HIT BY A GOLF CART PAY \$300 HOSPITAL FEE	? FAIL HPE 110 TAKE IT AGAIN	AVIATION LOOK FOR WHAT'S ABOVE ALL ELSE	FREE TUITION FOR YOU  NJ STARS	NURSING EARN MORE THAN YOUR PROFS. IN JUST A FEW YEARS	
CAETERIA PAY \$10 FOR SANDWICH THAT IS \$8 AT WAWA	SGA HOLD BAKE SALE EARN \$10	MASCOT  DRESS AS MASCOT	LIBRARY TALK TO ACTUA HUMAN ABOUT RESEARCH	GO TO WAWA 	ORNAMENTAL HORTICULTURE WIN PHILLY FLOWER SHOW	KELSEY THEATRE AT MERCER SEE A SHOW \$16 TICKET	TRANSFER U. TO RIDER U.  GRAB DIPLOMA AND RUN	SECURITY GET HIT BY A GOLF CART PAY \$300 HOSPITAL FEE
YOUR ID 	BOOK-STORE  PAY \$500	ENG 102 PRICE \$711 + COURSE FEE	QUALIFY FOR FINANCIAL AID  FAFSA FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID We Help Put America Through School ROLL AGAIN	ENG 101 PRICE \$711 + COURSE FEE	AVIATION LOOK FOR WHAT'S ABOVE ALL ELSE	FREE TUITION FOR YOU  NJ STARS	NURSING EARN MORE THAN YOUR PROFS. IN JUST A FEW YEARS	



# MONEY



"There is so much work that needs to be done, but at the same time so many roadblocks that are put in both the students and the faculty's ways to make it a better campus."



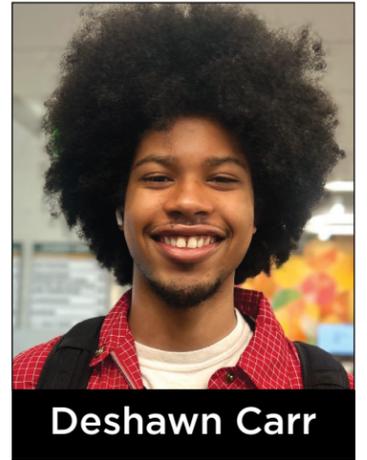
Karolina Zbaski

"There is a lot of miscommunication. It's not the best that it can be, Mercer has a lot of potential."



Andrew Semmel

"My friend is really struggling because the financial aid does not help. He's been trying to get in contact with them to help him with his situation, and they have not been helpful."



Deshawn Carr

"I believe the government has way too much money and is not giving it to places that actually need it, including schools like our school, Mercer. I feel like it's a lot about greed, a lot about power, and we're giving it to the wrong people; that's why we're in this situation."



Gabriella Ross

"I've noticed that the gas prices have gone down. And they've stayed down for a while."



Dylan Cohen

# Birders flock to county for “Wings Over Mercer” competition

By John Kaurloto  
Community Reporter

Teams of New Jersey birders, armed with binoculars, cameras, and special bird-identifying apps, spread out across Mercer County in a race against the clock to identify as many bird species as possible during the “Wings Over Mercer” competition that started at dawn on Saturday, October 4.

The team with the most birds counted by 5 p.m. was named the winner.

In the overall competition the winners were the Youngish Birders with an overall count of 92. The TCNJays (54) beat out Stockton in the student team category, and the The Brew Jays (46) took the new birder category. (See full results below).

Sean Graesser, Executive Director of Wild Bird Research Group [WBRG], the non-profit group that organized this community outreach and fundraising event said, “It’s the first time we’ve attempted this style of fundraiser where it’s a bird-athon and [we’re] getting people to learn about the birds of Mercer County and about [WBRG].”

WBRG conducts and supports science-based research and conservation initiatives that benefit birds and their habitats across the Americas. “Wings Over Mercer” was designed, in part, to raise awareness of these conservation efforts.

Ian Gray, a volunteer for



PHOTO | JOHN KAURLOTO

ABOVE: Serious birders often have professional level long-angle lens cameras to capture their sightings in intimate detail. TOP RIGHT: A northern flicker

WBRG, said, “Most of [WBRG’s] work is in the bird banding realm, [but] not all of it.”

Gray continued, “We’re also looking at the trends of how vegetation changes affect the breeding bird community, how they change together, and when those changes happen.”

The 2025 State of the

Birds report, an annual assessment of the health of America’s bird populations compiled by scientists from U.S. bird conservation groups, reported that America’s bird populations are declining significantly, with 229 species now in urgent need of conservation.

Graesser of WBRG says,



PHOTO | KIM DORMAN

in the face of this decline, Mercer County has been doing what it can to preserve and promote habitat and reverse this loss.

“The good thing about Mercer County is we have a lot of organizations that have done a lot to try to increase area for birds,” Graesser said, adding: “I would say while the overall trend outside of Mercer County is that bird species are going down, we have a lot of people trying to increase bird species in Mercer County.”

He continued, “So, like diversity wise, habitat wise, a lot of people have done a lot of good things to try to restore habitat and create more bird diversity. Mercer County Park Commission, the stewardship chapter, have done so much to uplift this. We have so many new birds breeding here.”

But the actual population size is harder to put in context.

WBRG volunteer Jack Hagan says he has observed year-to-year fluctuation in both bird species diversity and population size in Mercer County.

“Where I bird in the open areas of Mercer County, there can be years when a certain species is not very present, but

then another year comes along and there’s more of them,” Hagan says, adding, “The thing is, there’s no doubt that bird populations are going down, but there’s so few areas like [Mercer Meadows] where they can concentrate, that when you’re in an area like this, you can be fooled into thinking, ‘oh, these birds are fine. I’m seeing lots of these birds.’”

The ‘Wings Over Mercer’ bird-a-thon drew 58 community members to participate and engage with this conservation-awareness activity.

Rob Cook, a regular birder from Hamilton and one half of the birding team ‘Just Wing It,’ said the competition was an opportunity he couldn’t pass up.

“I’ve been birding in the area a while, and it’s like, how could I not do it if it’s in my home county,” Cook said, adding, “It just seemed new and interesting. I think going out all day is a good chance to do something I haven’t done here, and maybe find something cool.”

On October 5, the WBRG announced on Instagram that it surpassed its fundraising goal for “Wings Over Mercer.” The competition element, according to Gray, may have just been the key to raise conservation awareness.

“Our main purpose was to engage the community in the birding space in a way that’s maybe a little more welcoming than it is sometimes when you have an event for birding,” Gray said.

# Arm in Arm Mobile Food Pantry expands reach in Mercer County

By Alicia Williams  
Community Reporter

Cheryl, from Ewing, who asked to be referred to by her first name for privacy, says she first stumbled upon the Arm in Arm Mobile Food Pantry by accident.

“I was on my way back from the DMV and I saw all these people outside the library,” she says, adding, “I stopped to see what was going on and they gave me a bag. That was a year ago and I’ve been coming every Monday since.”

She says she appreciates the fresh fruits and vegetables most, though she says with a grin, “I don’t eat the corn. I have my own corn stand I go to for that. I pick up a bag for my niece too. She gets my corn.”

Every Monday from 2-4 p.m., the inside and outside of the Mercer County Public Library in Lawrenceville is transformed into a hub of food and social service assistance for the local community.

The pantry’s large blue truck, its sides painted with the names of corporate donors, is hard to miss, perched beside the library facing Route 1.

Outside the truck a long table is lined with blue bags. According to Andre Gause, the pantry’s coordinator, who has been running the Mobile Food Pantry since July 2024, each bag is stocked with fresh produce, cereal, canned goods, and shelf-stable milk. This is the weekly stop of the Arm in Arm Mobile Food



PHOTO | ALICIA WILLIAMS

ABOVE: The Arm in Arm Mobile Food Pantry offers canned goods as well as fresh fruits and vegetables. TOP RIGHT: The Arm in Arm truck.

Pantry, a lifeline for many Mercer County families.

Gause says when he began, there were 40-50 families visiting the pantry each week. Now, in the fall of 2025, there are between 120 and 150. In the last week of September, they hit a record for this location, feeding 157 families.

Gause says that the pantry, which spends about \$200,000 a year on fresh produce, was created to bring healthy food directly into communities where access can be limited. “We want to make it easy for anyone who needs it,” Gause says.

He said that people visiting the pantry must show proof that they live in Mercer County and are over the age of 18. Once they sign in, they receive a card with a number on it, which they

must turn in at the pantry table to receive their bag.

The operation relies on the support of staff and volunteers like Tyrone Riley, a truck driver who has been on staff for a decade.

“I’ve seen this grow from a handful of families to over a hundred every week,” Riley says. He starts his mornings early, picking up food and deliveries before the truck makes its way to the library.

Two other volunteers who help distribute the food are Joe Koehler, from Lawrence, and Ken Disbrow, from Hamilton.

They both say that the work gives them a deep sense of purpose.

“People are always so thankful,” Koehler says, adding,



PHOTO | ALICIA WILLIAMS

“You can see how much it means to them.”

James Damron, who works for the library and helps facilitate the process each week, says that Arm in Arm reached out to the library last summer about adding it as one of the Mobile Food Pantry stops.

Damron says that he didn’t realize there was such a need in the area.

“It never occurred to me how many people in the area are on a fixed income,” Damron said. “Coming here to get food really does help meet a need for a lot of people.”

Sue, a patron who lives in the senior building across from the library and asked to be referred to by her first name for privacy, says, “The produce is usually really good.” She adds chuckling, “Sometimes the bananas are rotten, but that’s okay — the rest is great.”

For many like Sue, the convenience and consistency of the Mobile Food Pantry make it

an invaluable resource.

At the same time as the Mobile Food Pantry serves those in need of food outside, the library’s community room transforms into a resource center of local support. Tables are lined with pamphlets and community agency staff offer guidance on low-cost transportation, veterans benefits, and social services.

Gause explains that on most Mondays the Mercer County Board of Social Services also parks a mobile unit outside the library, allowing residents to ask questions and submit applications.

“It’s one-stop access to food and resources,” Gause says.

The Mobile Food Pantry meets people at every stage of need.

Gause describes one patron saying, “[He was] a big guy. Then he got cancer and now he is so small. It breaks my heart. But he’s a fighter. I’m glad we are here to help.”

## Balancing safety and nature: what pruning around power lines means for neighborhood trees

By Maureen O'Brien Lebel  
Community Reporter

Fred and Ethel are homeless. For many years, the two squirrels, watched and admired by their human neighbors, lived in a tree in the Hiltonia neighborhood of Trenton, N.J.

In early September 2025, PSE&G contractors pruned the trees as part of regular maintenance to prevent branches from interfering with electrical wires.

After the pruning, Fred and Ethel's nest was swept up in the debris. Having raised two litters of kits in that tree, they have since been seen roaming the neighborhood looking for somewhere to build a new home as fall advances.

One human neighbor, who asked to remain anonymous to speak candidly, said, "Did PSE&G ever see a tree they liked?"

The odd shapes of trees cut back around power lines and the fate of creatures like Fred and Ethel have prompted neighbors to ask whether the process is really necessary and, if so, whether it is being done properly.

John Anderson, a retired tree expert with years of utility experience, says power companies are required to check and trim the lines every four years to keep branches away.

Branches that hit power lines can cause power outages, shocks, and serious fires. With the gusty winds typical of the Mercer County area, the chance of branches hitting wires and posing safety risks—to humans and squirrels alike—is especially high.

Todd Wyckoff, chief of forestry management at the New Jersey Department of Environ-



PHOTO | KIM DORMAN  
Mercer County squirrel resident.

mental Protection (DEP), says, "At the end of the day, the utility companies do need to maintain ... the right of way around those power lines. That is based off of federal regulations."

The PSE&G website says that contractors are required to use a technique called directional pruning to train tree branches away from power lines.

Municipal arborist Taylor Sapudar of Princeton, N.J., explains, "Directional pruning is an arboriculturally sound practice for encouraging growth away from the power lines."

Brian McDonald, a forester with the DEP, says directional pruning is meant to combine proper pruning techniques with utility safety needs. He adds that a tree pruned at precisely ten feet from the power line might not be properly pruned.

"Ideally, the cut would be taken back to the next branch or a proper location based upon science. However, that might

mean taking more of the branch than is needed to maintain the proper clearance," McDonald says.

While Fred and Ethel's neighbors worry that the directional pruning might make the trees unstable, the experts say the real threat to stability is damage to the roots.

Sapudar, the arborist from Princeton, says that strong roots are crucial to keeping a tree safe and stable. Many old trees have roots that have supported them for years and help them handle changes in weight and weather.

When roots grow strongly enough to push up concrete, they are often cut, buried, or covered with materials that keep out water and air, leaving them vulnerable to decay.

One approach communities are taking to address these challenges is adopting the "right tree, right place" concept. This means planting trees that match



PHOTO | MAUREEN O'BRIEN LABEL

Although the goal is public safety, having been pruned away from the electrified top powerlines trees can look disfigured or unstable.

their growth habits and biological needs with the specific conditions of their planting sites.

The PSE&G website offers a list of such trees and suggestions for planting patterns.

On the Princeton municipality website, a table shows the results of a cross-reference between utility-friendly trees and those commonly available through local tree providers.

But for trees that are al-

ready well established, the PSE&G pruning, while it can make the trees look awkward or even displace small animals, remains an important part of public safety.

Another Hiltonia neighbor, who also asked to remain anonymous, says, "I miss the rustle telling me Fred and Ethel are home. I find myself whispering apologies to them, hoping they know we didn't mean to be careless, just cautious."

## Nowhere to go: lack of public bathrooms impacts most vulnerable

By Kim Dorman  
Community Reporter

Rali, a driver for Uber Eats who asked to go by her first name for privacy, says, "Going to gas station bathrooms you never really know what's happening in there. Sometimes I would rather just hold it."

She adds, "There are times where it was just extremely uncomfortable...and I would literally have to shut off deliveries and find somewhere to go."

Rali is typically on the road 9 to 10 hours a day and makes roughly \$25 to \$35 an hour before expenses. But lack of access to restroom facilities can come with a price.

She says, "I would have to shut off for at least 30 to 45 minutes and, you know, take care of business before I was technically able to go back to work."

Public restrooms are not easy to find in most places in America, and New Jersey is among the hardest places to find them. The state is ranked 43rd in the nation for how easy it is to find safe, clean public bathrooms, ac-



PHOTO | KIM DORMAN

Many businesses go out of their way to make it clear that bathrooms are for customers only. A lack of access to public leads some towards public urination.

According to a 2025 study by Tena, a global hygiene and health company. The impacts range from mild inconvenience to health hazards.

Parks, libraries, transit hubs, gas stations, and even restaurants and bars are often the places people look when they need to go. As a result, these organizations, whether funded privately or with tax dollars, take on the costs associated with keeping restrooms clean, stocked, and safe.

Jessica Durrie, the owner of Small World Coffee, agrees

but adds that, "Maintenance, cleaning, and repairs are constant and costly. Supplies and paper goods add up quickly, and our staff spends significant time keeping them clean throughout the day, it is difficult to keep up because they are almost always in use." She adds, "I've never calculated the annual expense, but it's definitely not insignificant. Restrooms are an important service to the public, but they require ongoing investment and attention."

The costs associated with restrooms are, indeed, high. According to a 2025 article by

Christopher Mims in The Wall Street Journal, some cities, such as Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Los Angeles, have opted for a private pay model for public restrooms. The Throne, a pay-per-use system, allows users to enter using an app or a card, while most people have to pay. In some cases, service providers can give cards to those in need.

Philadelphia's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has gone the public funding route. In 2023 they launched the Philly Flush, which is a publicly funded program. These stand alone models are maintained regularly by a team hired by HHS and easy to find. But relying on municipal funding makes the program precarious to political pressures.

While lack of access to bathrooms affects everyone, some groups are particularly affected, such as delivery drivers like Rali.

A recent New York Times article reported that the New York City Council "announced a plan to nearly double the number of public facilities by 2035. The expansion is expected

to be particularly helpful to those experiencing homelessness, as well as to the city's approximately 80,000 delivery workers."

But while cities like Washington and New York are working to expand access to public bathrooms, they remain limited in most New Jersey towns.

This inevitably leads to public urination, and violations of local ordinances can result in fines up to \$500 and even jail time, which hits vulnerable populations like delivery drivers and unhoused people the hardest.

In a recent interview, one local who does not have access to housing and asked to remain anonymous because of the associated stigma summed up the frustration, saying, "As far as the homeless and the bathroom situation...put some porta potties out here, man."

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**CORRECTION:** An earlier draft of this article provided an inaccurate quote regarding bathroom usage at the Princeton Record Exchange. The article was updated to remove the erroneous content on December 13, 2025.

# Ila Mae's Restaurant in Trenton provides food for the soul

By Keith Morris Jr.  
Reporter

Ila Mae's Restaurant is a well-known favorite soul food restaurant in Trenton located at 313 Market St. They're known for their excellent dishes—including mac and cheese, collard greens, candied yams, fried fish, and fried chicken—and warm, friendly atmosphere.

When you step inside the restaurant, you see framed African items hanging from the walls, such as dashikis and African masks. The dining room has soft lighting, old school R&B music plays in the background, a few tables have chessboards, and in the back there's a display with African black soap, herbs, tea, and jewelry. Cook Afrika Brown says "it's a market back there."

Ila Mae's menu features a diverse range of options for customers, with large portions and reasonable prices, with basic dishes starting under \$10.

Some favorite menu offerings include "The Truth" fish sandwich which is fileted fried whiting, sweet and spicy wings, shrimp and grits, veg-

etable lasagna, and salmon cheesesteak. There are options for customers who are pescatarian, vegetarian, and even vegan.

But perhaps the most popular dish is the "Comeback fish sandwich," which is packed with multiple pieces of juicy fileted fried basa, that has a golden crust to it, on a hoagie roll topped off with lettuce, juicy slices of tomatoes, a smear of creamy tartar sauce, and a golden gloss of gooey American cheese.

"The Comeback is the goods, and that Kool-Aid is something different; it's not regular Kool-Aid. Once I found out about this place, and had that Comeback for the first time, it's all I came back for," says Trenton native Billoh Bah.

"The fish dinner platter is my favorite with the candied yams and mac and cheese, it's rockin'," says another Ila Mae's regular.

The candied yams have a cinnamon caramelized finish with a sugared coating that brings a rich flavor that delivers comfort with each bite. The mac and cheese is packed with flavor that brings out the savory blend of seasonings.

Ila Mae was born and

raised in Trenton.

"[Cooking] is embedded in my family," Mae says, adding, "My uncle owns a restaurant, and two of my cousins own a restaurant." Her father owned a restaurant, too. For 40 years he ran Amefika's on Stuyvesant Avenue.

Initially, Mae says, she pushed away from the family business.

"I wanted something different," she says. So she went to work in corporate America. But, she says, "I hated it." Thirteen years later, she went back to her roots.

Afrika Brown, a cook at the restaurant and also Ila Mae's grandson, says, "Everything we do in here is from the family. If you look at the names on the menu, they're all people from our family. It's not a job, it's a family business."

And that sense of family extends outwards.

"We serve the community. We look like the community. We nourish the community, not only mentally but nutritionally as well. We want the people we serve to live long, and when I say 'our people,' I mean our customers," Mae says.

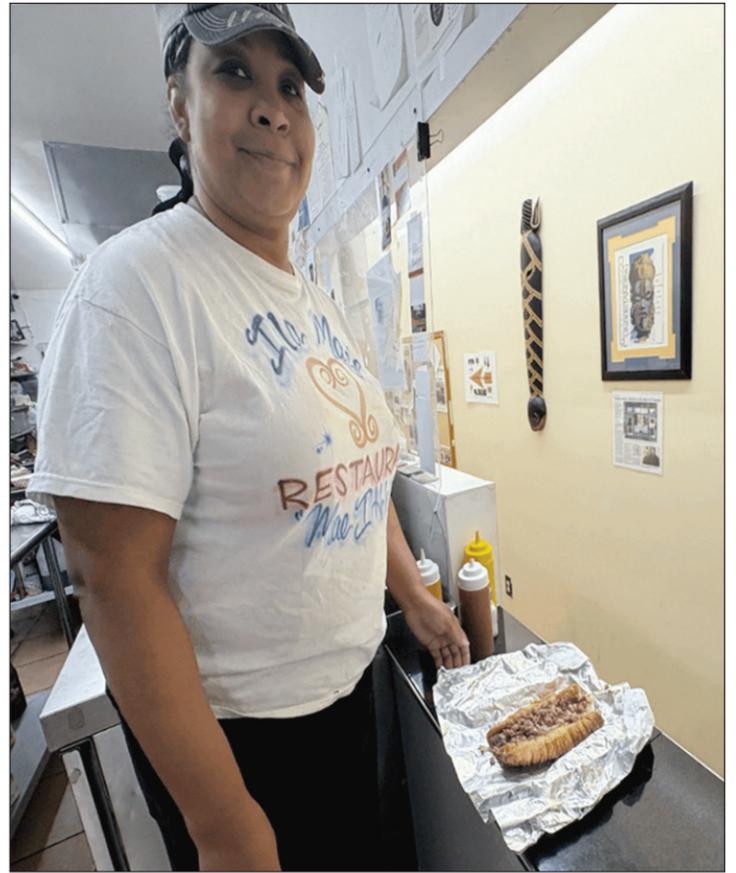


PHOTO | KEITH MORRIS JR.

ABOVE: Ila Mae prepping a classic cheesesteak at her soul food restaurant in Trenton. Raised in a family of restaurant owners, Mae initially decided on a corporate career, but ultimately found that like her father and uncles, the restaurant business was calling.



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## At Town Diner in East Windsor, NJ good food never goes out of style



COLLEGE VOICE FILE PHOTO

By Vitor Reis  
Reporter

From the outside, Town Diner on Route 130 in East Windsor, NJ looks like something straight out of a 1950s postcard. The building shines with chrome panels and red neon lights that reflect off the glass blocks. A big round clock sits above the entrance, while the red handrails lead you into the warm buzz of conversation and the smell of fresh coffee.

Inside, the theme continues. The booths are bright red with shiny white trim, and everything is spotless. Light bounces off the chrome tables, and ketchup bottles stand ready at every corner.

"I like coming here because of the food, the service, and the vibe," says Henry Rodrigues, a Rider University student, adding, "Of course, the price is what makes me come back more than anything."

Breakfast prices range from \$9 to \$16, and all specials come with a cup of coffee or tea. Lunch specials range from \$10 to \$18 and include a cup of soup.

According to regular customer Grace Cutler, "The pancakes are the main breakfast hit here."

Indeed, the pancakes

are soft and buttery, with a light crispy edge that gives the perfect contrast of textures. The eggs are cooked exactly as asked, and the bacon is perfectly crispy and full of smoky flavor.

Another great breakfast option is the French toast made with the diner's own homemade bread. You can see the cinnamon swirl running through each slice, adding a rich, full flavor that fills your mouth with every bite. The outside is golden and slightly crisp, while the inside stays soft and warm, soaking up just the right amount of melted butter.

As lunchtime rolls around, booths fill and a new round of customers pick from among the array of menu options.

The soups change daily. On a recent visit the soup of the day was Manhattan Clam Chowder, along with the daily soups matzo ball and chicken and rice.

A good lunch choice is the chicken Parm (\$15), which comes with linguini, and for the soup, Manhattan Clam Chowder.

The soup is served steaming hot and has that comforting smell of tomatoes and herbs. The broth is light and flavorful, full of small chunks of potatoes, carrots, and tender clams that give it a nice ocean taste without being too salty. Each spoonful had a mix of textures,



PHOTO | VITOR REIS

soft vegetables, chewy clams, and a little kick from the seasoning. It's the kind of soup you come back for on a cold day.

The chicken parm is golden, crispy covered in melted mozzarella and a bright, tangy marinara sauce. The first bite has that perfect crunch from the breading, followed by the softness of the chicken underneath. The sauce tastes fresh and slightly sweet, balancing nicely with the salty cheese. It comes with a generous side of linguini pasta, tossed lightly in marinara. It's one of those classic diner dishes that feels simple but completely satisfying.

One regular customer, Bill Mark, 69, says, "This is one of the few traditional diners, and good ones, that you'll find in the area."

Customers come back

again and again for many reasons.

Kristen Shlabber, a Town Diner regular, says, "I'm celiac. I have a gluten allergy, and this is one of the few places where they actually adjust my order to what I need." She added, "And my mom is vegetarian. Besides offering vegetarian options, they let her modify her order however she wants."

Shlabber says, "More than good prices and good food, it's about being able to order what you want without worrying if it's going to make you sick later."

Another regular Karla Baez, a Business student at MCCC, says, "I come here for lunch almost every day. It's one of the few places near campus where I can have a good lunch for just ten bucks."

Owner Tony Menendez,

originally from El Salvador and now an entrepreneur in the U.S. for over 30 years, works hard to keep prices down.

"Our community has a lot of seniors and students. These people have been coming here for years. I see a lot of familiar faces every day, so why not give back to the community?" Menendez says.

He says he believes it's possible to balance fair prices and community support saying, "[A few months ago] I increased one or two dollars depending on the item, but I kept all the breakfast and lunch specials exactly the same."

Town Diner is not just another spot on Route 130, it's a reminder that good food, fair prices, and a warm smile can still exist in the same place and comfort food never goes out of style.



PHOTO | VITOR REIS

TOP LEFT: The exterior of Town Diner in East Windsor, NJ sports the chrome and colors of a different era, easy to spot from busy Rt. 130. TOP RIGHT: Cook Janoch Valdivia plates a seafood dish in the Town Diner kitchen during the lunch shift. LEFT: A Town Diner server picks up a tray of breakfast and lunch dishes from the kitchen window during morning rush. RIGHT: Cook Pascoal flips an omelet over an open flame in the Town Diner kitchen.



PHOTO | VITOR REIS

**WHAT'S PLAYING**  
DEC 13 | 2-4 PM



Sat Dec 13 2025 |  
2:00PM – 4:00PM  
Kelsey Theatre  
**The Nightmare Before Christmas**  
Interactive Movie Event

**WHAT'S PLAYING**  
DEC 14 | 2-4 PM



Sun Dec 14 2025 |  
2:00PM – 4:30PM  
Kelsey Theatre  
**White Christmas**  
Interactive Movie Event

**WHAT'S PLAYING**  
DEC 19-21



Dec 19-21  
Check times online  
Kelsey Theatre  
**The Nutcracker**

**WHAT'S PLAYING**  
DEC 16



Sat Dec 16, 2025 |  
7:30PM - FREE  
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Mercer County  
Symphonic Band  
winter concert

**WHAT'S PLAYING**  
JAN 2-4



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**Spring 2026 lab starts Thurs. Jan. 22, 2026**  
**Time:** 5:30-8pm  
**Ages:** 18+

The Community Journalism "J Lab" certificate course sponsored by Mercer County Community College with support from the Princeton Public Library is offered twice a year. This free eight-evening class teaches participants the basic newswriting and reporting skills needed to cover issues of concern to their community. All materials are provided. No experience is required but students must commit to attending at least 6 sessions and be prepared to write a full article for their final project. Sessions are led by a journalism professor and include guest presentations from writers and editors from several community publications and national media outlets. Final projects are published online.

To register online visit [mcccvoice.org/j-lab](http://mcccvoice.org/j-lab)  
Registration opens Dec. 1, 2025  
For more information contact Prof. Holly Johnson at [johnsonh@mccc.edu](mailto:johnsonh@mccc.edu)



# FROM Ink TO IMPACT

HOW TO BUILD A COMMUNITY PLATFORM THAT LASTS

By KENNETH MILES



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## top ten

### Most Diverse States

1. California
2. Texas
3. Hawaii
4. New Jersey
5. New York
6. New Mexico
7. Maryland
8. Nevada
9. Florida
10. Arizona

Source: WalletHub

# F1 visas are a financial burden for students

## PERSPECTIVES



VITOR REIS

As an international student, you're expected to study full-time, pay full price, handle adult responsibilities, but not earn your own money to survive. From the moment I moved to the United States, I knew things would be expensive: tuition, rent, transportation, all of it. But nothing prepares you for the moment you realize that even if you work hard and try to be responsible, the system simply does not allow you to support yourself.

Studying in another country is already difficult. You deal with loneliness, language barriers, pressure to succeed, and the feeling that you don't want to disappoint anyone back home.

Adding financial stress on top of that becomes something heavier than people realize. It follows you everywhere, in class, in your room, even in your sleep.

What international

students want is simple: the chance to work a few hours legally, gain experience, and support ourselves with dignity. We're not asking for special treatment. We're not asking for full-time jobs.

Even 10-20 hours a week in a regular job would change everything.

I live in the U.S. with my family, but they are still my sponsors. Every month I see how much they sacrifice so I can stay in school. And even though I'm grateful, a part of me feels guilty. Not because I'm doing anything wrong, but because the rules make independence almost impossible.

To understand if other international students felt the same way, I created a small anonymous survey on campus. Fifteen international students responded. The results didn't shock me, but they definitely confirmed what many of us live every day.

First, I asked how students pay for their basic expenses.

Not a single person--said they use job income. This is not because they don't want to work, but because international students legally can't work off campus.

Almost half depend on a sponsor (47%), and another large portion (33%) chose "other." Many of those wrote "friend" in the blank space provided, which basically means

they rely on people around them to help whenever they can. That's not real financial stability; that's students trying to survive through favors and kindness because the system gives them no other choice.

Then I asked how strongly they agree with the statement "I feel stressed about money."

Almost 73% said they "agree" or "strongly agree." That tracks. When every meal, every bus ride, and every book depends on someone else's money, the stress becomes permanent.

But the answer that hit me the most was about the off-campus work restriction. Eighty-seven percent said this rule "strongly affects" their financial stability.

And one last question I asked is the one nobody likes to say out loud: Do financial pressures push international students to consider under-the-table jobs?

Every single person said yes.

Again, this doesn't mean students are doing it. But the fact that everyone believes the system pushes people to think about it says everything.

People love to say that F-1 students "have options," but when you look closely, those options barely help in real life. Yes, we can work on campus, but these jobs are extremely limited and usually not related

to anyone's field of study. They don't give meaningful experience, and they definitely don't cover the cost of living.

There is also CPT, Curricular Practical Training, which technically allows students to work off campus, but only if their program requires an internship as part of the curriculum. Many programs, especially at community colleges, don't qualify.

Then there is OPT, Optional Practical Training, but that only comes after you finish your degree, not while you're trying to survive during your studies.

There is one more possibility: applying for off-campus work due to "economic hardship." It sounds good on paper, but in reality it's extremely hard to get approved, takes months, and is only considered under very specific circumstances, like when a sponsor suddenly loses income.

So yes, technically we "have options," but none of them solves the actual problem: international students need to live while they study.

Right now, the message students hear is basically: "You're welcome to study here, but someone else must pay for your entire life until graduation."

We came here to study, to grow, and to build a future. All we're asking is the chance to live while we do it.

# A boyfriend would just be in the way

## MY VIEW



Linnea Rameil

Having a boyfriend is outdated. Women are busy, and men don't add as much as they used to. A lot of young women in college today are determined to build successful careers, and that ambition doesn't always leave room for a committed relationship.

I much prefer being friends with guys rather than getting involved in anything else. It's simply easier and saves me from awkward stages like the "what are we?" phase. In a friendship, there's less pressure and fewer expectations than in

a relationship. Sometimes, I just want to be alone without having to explain myself or talk about my feelings.

In a survey I conducted, 22 out of 30 female college students said that they don't have a boyfriend. Fifteen out of the 22 single students want it to stay that way.

If you want to do it right, being in a relationship requires a lot of effort, looking after your partner, checking in to see if they are feeling ok, trying to solve small conflicts or talking about concerns costs time.

I know many of us have had the opportunity to get into a relationship many times in the past and decided to say no, not always because of the partner itself but rather because of the idea of giving up peace and freedom.

Anna Fett, a first year Liberal Arts major at Mercer, says "The only advice my grandma always gave me was to make sure I marry a good man. Growing up, I realize there is, like, way more to my future than

that."

Women used to rely on men for financial survival because they weren't allowed to build careers or have their own money, because the system wouldn't let them. According to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, it took the US until 1974 to allow women to open their own credit card without needing a male co-signer.

The recent "tradwife" movement that has been emerging on social media, idealizes traditional male-female relationships. While that might be the right lifestyle for a certain type of woman, the real and bigger trend we are seeing right now is that women are becoming more and more independent. Being single is in.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, female students are dominating higher education, making up 61 percent of total postbaccalaureate enrollment in the fall of 2021. Pursuing a degree is a commitment that needs a lot of attention,

In my survey of 30 female college students 83 percent said romantic relationships are not going to be the most important thing in their 20s and 30s. They are most likely going to focus on study, friendships and their career.

Marriage and having children, which were once the ultimate goals are now being less romanticized and seen for all the work they really are: equivalent to a full-time job.

Men still have great valuable qualities, many are supportive, emotionally mature, and genuinely care about their partners, but seeing how quickly women are progressing and gaining influence in society, I wonder if men can keep up.

According to the BBC web experiment 'Sex ID,' intelligence is one of the most desired traits that women have for men. So if men want women to want them again, they are going to have to step it up. In the meantime, we are busy. A boyfriend would just be in the way.

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write to: **The College VOICE**  
c/o Prof. Holly Johnson  
Mercer County College  
1200 Old Trenton Rd.  
West Windsor, NJ 08690

ADVICE - ASK THE VOICE



Dear VOICE Staff,  
I went to my academic adviser's office and found him passed out on the floor. I was going to check his pulse but it seemed creepy, so I left. Yesterday I didn't show for class. Did I accidentally walk out on a dying professor?  
- Grim Reaper of MAT 120

Dear Grim Reaper,  
On the up side, you get a new adviser! Try not to kill this one, too.  
-The VOICE

Dear VOICE Staff,  
My car broke down and now I have to walk to class every day. It's an hour back and forth. Anything I can do help the cold and exhaustion?  
-Frozen

Dear Frozen,  
What are you complaining about? The parking lots on the campus are just as far. Think of it as getting your steps in. It's what the rest of us do.  
-The VOICE

Dear VOICE Staff,  
I think my Culinary Arts professor is actually a poorly-disguised wizard who is using various ingredients to make potions, not food. Do I ask him about it, or let him do his thing?  
-Regards, AppleDippy520

Dear Apple,  
Congratulations! You have perhaps one of the rarest experiences Mercer experiences of them all—a visting professor from Hogwarts. Enjoy the potions and send Professor Snape our regards.  
-The VOICE

Dear VOICE Staff,  
I overheard two other students talking about a hidden vending machine that contains gummies somewhere on campus. What's the address?  
-Exam Stoner

Dear Stoner,  
We have a map in the newsroom. Try reaching out to the librarians to see if you can get a campus map. They love to help students with research.  
-The VOICE

Dear VOICE Staff,  
Is there a raccoon in the cafeteria?  
-Scared

Dear Scared,  
No. We chased it off. You're welcome.  
-The VOICE

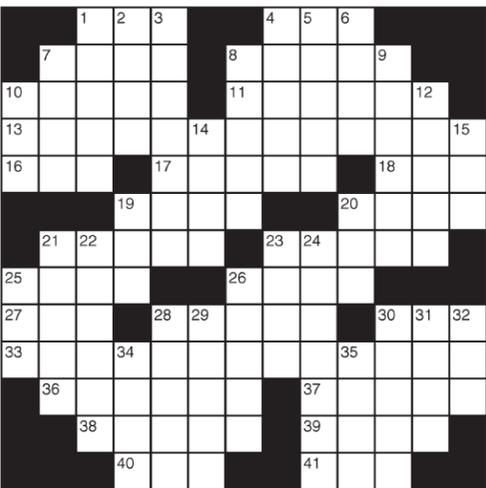
PEANUTS CHRISTMAS



King Crossword

ACROSS

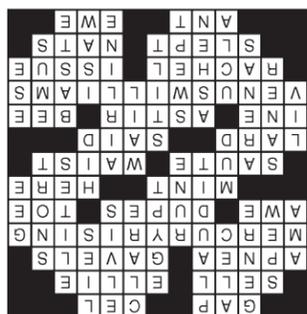
- 1 Opening
- 4 Cartoon frame
- 7 Vend
- 8 "Dallas" matriarch
- 10 Sleep problem
- 11 Court hammers
- 13 1998 Bruce Willis thriller
- 16 Shock partner
- 17 Hoodwinks
- 18 Water tester
- 19 Gum flavor
- 20 Roll call reply
- 21 Fry lightly
- 23 Belted area
- 25 Cooking fat
- 26 Uttered
- 27 Chemical suffix
- 28 Up and about
- 30 Quilters' get-together
- 33 Wimbledon champ of 2008
- 36 Wife of Jacob
- 37 Edition
- 38 Nodded off
- 39 D.C. baseball team
- 40 Picnic crasher



DOWN

- 1 Category
- 2 Sir Guinness
- 3 Enthusiastic approval
- 4 County of Ireland
- 5 Graceland idol
- 6 Fibs
- 7 Gush
- 8 Pharaoh's
- 9 Upper crust
- 10 Docs' org.
- 12 Bull's sound
- 14 Ancient letter
- 15 "My word!"
- 19 Wet dirt
- 20 Secreted
- 21 Less loony
- 22 Sports venues
- 23 Banshee's cry
- 24 Delta, for one
- 25 Actress Tyler
- 26 Long-legged shorebird
- 28 Wan
- 29 Used a broom
- 30 Butter up the turkey
- 31 Flightless birds
- 32 Compass pt.
- 34 Bruins' sch.
- 35 Caesar's "vidi"

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HOROSCOPES



Capricorn

Dec. 22 - Jan. 19

When life hands you mistletoe pucker up! It's time to find someone fun to spend the holidays with, even if a serious relationship is not your thing.



Aquarius

Jan. 20 - Feb. 18

It's okay to let things go: old clothes, old habits, old ways of thinking that held you back. Letting go doesn't mean you are rejecting the past, just embracing the future.



Pisces

Feb. 19 - Mar. 20

You need to take time for yourself even if it means hiding in the bathroom or your car to get away from all the things and people taking up every minute of your time.



Aries

Mar. 21 - Apr. 19

You've been on the move for months. Now that the winter is here it's time to curl up and settle down. Now is the time for cozy cups of tea not globtrotting. It's okay to be still.



Taurus

Apr. 20 - May 20

You are about to have a string of good luck, little things that break your way and start to add up. Turns out you're not as cursed as you have been thinking!



Gemini

May 21 - Jun. 20

This winter an animal will enter your life and change it forever. You won't know until it happens, so be sure to break for the deer in the road and pet every puppy you see.



Cancer

Jun. 21 - Jul. 22

Sometimes you have to go it alone, but that doesn't mean you have to be lonely. It's okay to ask other people if you can join them. Taking the risk will be worth it!



Leo

Jul. 23 - Aug. 22

You used to think you knew everything but life has made you humble. That humility will actually make you an excellent mentor to someone else. Take the chance if it comes.



Virgo

Aug. 23 - Sept. 22

No one is going to give you dragon eggs, but you have the power of a dragon within you waiting to do as you wish. Just call it when you need it.



Libra

Sept. 23 - Oct. 22

Sit next to someone and strike up a conversation this week. You'd be surprised how nice it is to meet new people. You don't have to do much to make a new friend, just ask and listen.



Scorpio

Oct. 23 - Nov. 21

Yes, you should put on that crazy outfit you think everyone will judge you for wearing. You didn't get that punk jacket so it could sit in the closet. Live a little!



Sagittarius

Nov. 22 - Dec. 21

Music will play a big part of your life this winter. Certain songs will bring you peace and keep you safe. Leave them on repeat!

FLASH GORDON



CLASSIC PEANUTS x2

