



# CLARION



SERVING THE PEOPLE OF THE NEW COMMUNITY NETWORK SINCE 1968



## NCCTI RETENTION TEAM SUPPORTS STUDENTS TO INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAM COMPLETION



New Community Career & Technical Institute (NCCTI) hosted the Student Appreciation Luncheon on Oct. 27 at the school's Main Campus. It was the first student event as part of the school's new Retention Team initiative.

NCCTI Director Dr. Sylvia McCray welcomes attendees to the Student Appreciation Luncheon on Oct. 27.

Every school aims to have engaged students who graduate with marketable skills to obtain employment. To increase engagement and completion rates, New Community Career & Technical Institute (NCCTI) formed a Retention Team in August to help students overcome any barriers that would prevent them from completing their programs. Team members also organize student events as a way to build school pride.



NCCTI students enjoyed sandwiches, drinks and cupcakes at the Student Appreciation Luncheon on Oct. 27.

The Retention Team, under the direction of NCCTI Director Dr. Sylvia McCray, is currently made up of four members. The team meets each Thursday to discuss attendance and which students have been chronically absent. While students who are absent receive a phone call that day, Andrea Kelly and Odette Phillip, who serve as Student Success Coaches and are members of the Retention Team, dig deeper to find out what is causing the absences and if there is support that they can offer to overcome any obstacles.

When a student communicates a barrier, the Retention Team member refers them to the identified resource that is needed. Referrals can be to the Family Resource Success Center, which provides assistance with food, transportation and housing referrals; Family Service Bureau of Newark (FSB), which offers mental and behavioral health services; the Financial Opportunity Center (FOC), which helps clients improve their financial situations; or Career Services, which helps students obtain employment.

The Retention Team is not just involved with students who are having difficulty making it to class, however. Team members consistently reach out to all students to keep them on track, provide support should any issues arise and cheer them on when they are doing well. Contact is usually by phone and email.

"The Retention Team is a proactive solution-oriented process whose purpose is to involve all parties in the student educational cycle from Admissions to Career Services/planning; in providing an equitable, positive, problem-solving approach to assist students, families and teachers in developing effective solutions, identify instructional strategies, interventions and/or supports that may resolve or alleviate academic, behavioral,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

## AN NCC ARTIST



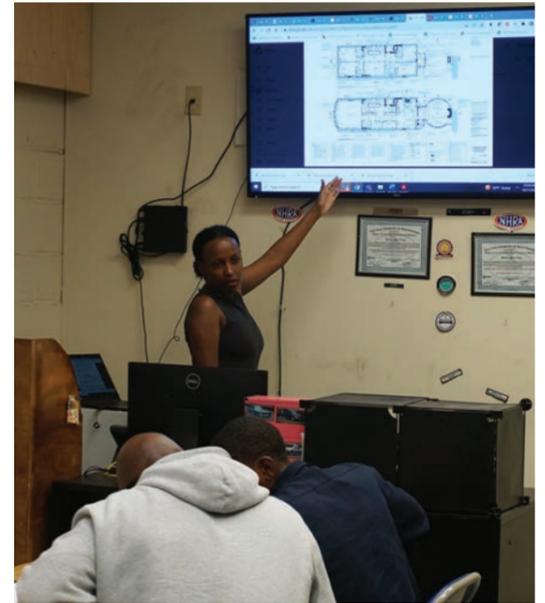
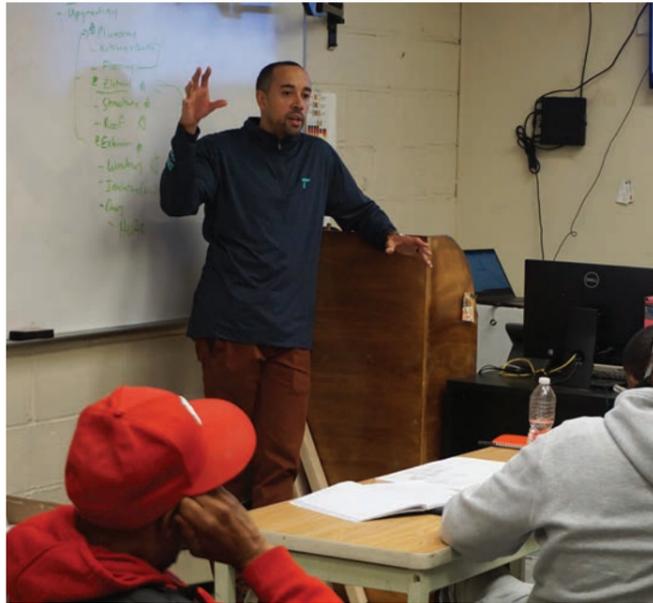
John Aytch has a space set up in his apartment at Gardens Senior where he creates works of art. He is able to recreate images from photographs, newspapers and what he observes. Growing up in North Carolina without a formal education shaped his life. He's hoping to share his artistic ability and experiences with young people to instill a love of art and an understanding of the importance of education in them. **Read more about him in the Senior Spotlight on page 6.**

## AROUND THE NETWORK

### RISING STARS PROGRAM RETURNS FOR NCCTI BUILDING TRADES STUDENTS

Students in the Building Trades Specialist program at New Community Career & Technical Institute (NCCTI) are benefiting once again from the Rising Stars program, which launched last spring. Rising Stars aims to introduce students to a variety of aspects of the construction industry and connect them to job opportunities.

David Hutchinson of Tremco created the program and brings guest speakers to the classroom. On Oct. 11, in addition to Hutchinson, students heard from Junior Architect Mouna Sow who talked about design plans and how to read them.



### THE NEW COMMUNITY CLARION

The New Community Clarion is published as a community service. The editor reserves the right to withhold articles and photographs once they are submitted. Opinions expressed in columns are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of New Community Corporation.

#### PUBLISHER

New Community Corporation  
233 West Market Street, Newark, NJ 07103  
973-623-2800

#### EDITOR, WRITER, PHOTOGRAPHER

Michelle Lang  
NCC Director of Communications  
973-497-4413  
mlang@newcommunity.org

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newcommunity.org



#### OUR MISSION

To help residents of inner cities improve the quality of their lives to reflect individual, God-given dignity and personal achievement.

#### NEW COMMUNITY IS RECOGNIZED AS:

- One of the largest and most comprehensive community development organization in the United States.
- A large-scale deliverer of comprehensive programs and services.
- A leader in affordable housing and economic development.
- A model among nonprofit, social entrepreneurship and CDC communities.
- Having beneficial partnerships on the local, national and global level.

## Want to Support New Community?

You can make a difference in the lives of inner city residents by making an online donation. Visit [newcommunity.org](http://newcommunity.org) and click "Donate" to give today! We appreciate all support.

### WELCOMING FALL

Residents of Hudson Senior, 21-27 Orchard St., Jersey City celebrated the fall season with an event in the Community Room on Oct. 18 that featured arts and crafts and snacks. *Photos courtesy of Vivian Le.*



### FSB HELPS NCC RESIDENTS DISCUSS SUICIDE PREVENTION

Representatives from Family Service Bureau of Newark (FSB) held a suicide prevention workshop at Gardens Senior, 265 Morris Ave., Newark on Oct. 12. Residents learned facts and myths surrounding suicide, potential signs that a person could be considering suicide and steps to take if they need support.



### GOING PINK FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Residents of Associates, 180 South Orange Ave., Newark, wore pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month on Oct. 19. *Photo courtesy of Anne Moran.*



### CELEBRATING PATIENT RECOVERY AT EXTENDED CARE

New Community Extended Care Facility, 266 South Orange Ave., Newark, celebrated Vernal Frison when she was discharged on Oct. 21. She was excited to return home with her family, who are pictured here along with nurse Maria Cruz. Extended Care offers rehabilitation as well as long-term care. For more information, call 973-624-2020 or visit [newarknursinghome.org](http://newarknursinghome.org).

## SHOWING SUPPORT FOR BREAST CANCER FIGHTERS AND SURVIVORS

Community Hills Early Learning Center (CHELC) held its annual Breast Cancer Walk on Oct. 18. Children, staff members and participating parents wore pink for the event, held during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.



## NCCTI HOSTS ORIENTATION FOR BUILDING TRADES AND CULINARY ARTS PROGRAMS

New Community Career & Technical Institute (NCCTI) hosted an orientation for its Building Trades Specialist and Culinary Arts Specialist programs on Oct. 6 ahead of classes beginning on Oct. 11. Students gathered at the Main Campus, 274 South Orange Ave., Newark, to receive information and learn about the policies and procedures of the school, as well as the resources available to them when they're enrolled. Students also met staff members, including Director Dr. Sylvia McCray, Admissions Representative Aziza Johnson, Registrar Ramona Galley, Financial Coach Akeen Downes and Student Success Coaches Andrea Kelly and Odette Phillip.



NCCTI Director Dr. Sylvia McCray welcomes Building Trades Specialist and Culinary Arts Specialist students during their orientation on Oct. 6.



NCCTI Admissions Representative Aziza Johnson talks about resources available to students during their time at the school.



NCCTI Student Success Coach Odette Phillip discusses her role in helping students complete their program.

## LEARNING FACTS ABOUT BREAST CANCER

Gardens Senior, 265 Morris Ave., Newark, hosted a presentation about breast cancer for building residents on Oct. 18 as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Community Cancer Control Specialist Hiral Shukla from the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey spoke with attendees about risk factors, screening practices and treatment options.



## EXTENDED CARE RECOGNIZES BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Residents and staff members of New Community Extended Care Facility, 266 South Orange Ave., Newark, dressed in pink on Oct. 24 in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Director of Nursing Debbie Ogundele spoke with residents about prevention measures, including mammograms, doctor visits and self-examinations. She also provided information about what signs warrant a visit to the doctor.



## NEW COMMUNITY GOSPEL CHOIR PERFORMS 25TH AND FINAL CONCERT

After more than 25 years, the New Community Gospel Choir had its farewell concert on Nov. 12. The choir was originally made up entirely of New Community employees.

The choir was created by chance in 1996. All New Community employees were gathered for an event at St. Rose of Lima School on Gray Street that year. A choir from South Jersey had been hired to open the gathering, but they were involved in a car accident on their way to the event. New Community's Director of Human Resources at the time, Cecilia Faulks, asked employees to step up on stage to open the event. Following the performance, the crowd applauded and requested more singing. It was on that day that the New Community Gospel Choir was born.

Faulks knew that Gloria Benoit, who served as NCC's Director of Social Services at the time, directed her church choir and asked if

she would lead a choir for New Community if enough employees committed to the group. Benoit agreed and has directed the choir ever since.

The New Community Gospel Choir held its first concert in 1997 and sang throughout the NCC network at all the senior residences, Extended Care Facility, NCC Parades and Festivals, Christmas Tree Lightings and Crib Blessings. The group also gained recognition in Newark and surrounding areas and was asked to perform at local churches and other community events. Over the years, the choir performed throughout New Jersey, in Upstate New York and in Pennsylvania. The choir also performed at Symphony Hall in Newark and Madison Square Garden in New York.

Although there have been no active New Community employees in the choir since 2007, the group continued to rehearse weekly at Monsignor William J. Linder Plaza



Members of the New Community Gospel Choir performed their 25th and final concert on Nov. 12. Photo courtesy of Cecilia Faulks.

and retained the name. Faulks and Benoit are the two remaining original members.

The New Community Gospel Choir performed its final concert on Nov. 12 at Monsignor William J. Linder Plaza, 233 West Market St., Newark.

## HARMONY HOUSE PARTICIPATES IN NESF WORLD HOMELESS DAY

Representatives from Harmony House, New Community's transitional housing facility for homeless families, participated in Newark Emergency Services for Families (NESF) World Homeless Day on Oct. 7 at Lincoln Park in Newark.

Harmony House staff members showcased the facility's services to the community of service providers and residents in need. Harmony House staff members interacted with over 150 individuals while giving out information as well as care items.

New Community Harmony House would like to thank Amina Bey, Executive Director of NESF, and the NESF team, as well as Newark Councilwoman LaMonica McIver for including us in this event and for the remarkable work they continue to do for our community.



NESF Executive Director Amina Bey and Harmony House Director Yonette Fredericks at NESF World Homeless Day. Photo courtesy of Yonette Fredericks.



Harmony House Director Yonette Fredericks hands out items during NESF World Homeless Day. Photo courtesy of Yonette Fredericks.



Harmony House was one of the service providers that participated in NESF World Homeless Day. Photo courtesy of Yonette Fredericks.

## CHELC CHILDREN ENJOY TRUNK OR TREAT ON HALLOWEEN

Community Hills Early Learning Center (CHELC), 85 Irvine Turner Boulevard, Newark, held a trunk or treat in the building parking lot on Oct. 31. Each class of children received treats out of the trunk of staff members' and parents' cars. The adults got creative with their trunk decorations.



## FAMILY SERVICE BUREAU OF NEWARK: REDUCING STRESS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



Staff members of Family Service Bureau of Newark (FSB) wore pink on Oct. 3 in honor of Mean Girls Day, which celebrates the 2004 movie. The team-building activity is meant to reduce workplace stress. Photo courtesy of FSB.



Family Service Bureau of Newark (FSB) staff members did a group costume for Halloween dressing as Gru and the Minions from the Despicable Me movie series (plus a dinosaur). The activity aims to build camaraderie and help reduce workplace stress. Photo courtesy of FSB.

This year Thanksgiving is Nov. 24. Holidays can be a joy-filled season, but they can also be stressful and especially challenging for those impacted by mental illness. Nov. 6 is International Stress Awareness Day and one way to reduce stress, especially workplace stress, is through team-building. Here at FSB, we're actively creating an environment of togetherness. In honor of Mean Girls Day on Oct. 3, we all wore pink and on Halloween, we dressed as Gru and the Minions.

There is evidence to suggest that too

much emotional stress can affect your physical well-being. The benefits of stress reduction include better sleep, weight control, less muscle tension, getting along better with friends and family and being in an overall better mood. Doing your best to create a happy environment can naturally increase serotonin levels in your brain, which stabilizes your mood and can release dopamine, which is the "reward chemical" that happens during pleasurable situations. This combination of emotional release will help you feel happier, more motivated and have a feeling of personal fulfillment.

Sometimes to create a happy environment for yourself and reduce stress, you need help. During this season, Family Service Bureau of Newark (FSB) would like to extend its invitation to the community to reach out to us. Even if any symptoms are situational, it helps to talk to someone. FSB provides mental health counseling, parenting skills, anger management, family therapy, couples counseling and substance abuse counseling. In Newark, we are located at 274 South Orange Ave. and can be reached at 973-412-2056. In Kearny, we are located at 379 Kearny Ave. and can be reached at 201-246-8077.

## SOCIAL SECURITY NEWS: SOCIAL SECURITY IS THANKFUL TO SERVE YOU

BY AMMY PLUMMER, SOCIAL SECURITY DISTRICT MANAGER, SPRINGFIELD AVENUE, NEWARK, NJ

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on the blessings we have in our lives and to share memories with our loved ones. We are thankful because we're able to provide you and your family with services, benefits, tools and information to help you

throughout life's journey.

Social Security is more than just a retirement program. We provide services that assist many families across this country. We are there for joyous moments like the birth of your child and issuing their first Social Security card. We are there during times of hardship and tragedy to provide disability, spouses and survivors benefits.

And we're there to help you celebrate your retirement, too.

We're here to serve you online, by phone and in person in our local offices. You can learn more at <https://blog.ssa.gov/we-remain-committed-to-serving-you/>. Please share this information with those who need it. Happy holidays!

### PSE&G DONATION



New Community's Resident Services Department accepted a donation of light bulbs and power strips from PSE&G on Oct. 7. Photo courtesy of Ira Davison.

**vna Health Group**  
Visiting Nurse Association Health & Hospice

Wellness Tip  
November 2022

## Diabetes Prevention Tips

- 1. Get Active!**

Research shows that aerobic exercise and resistance training can help control diabetes. The greatest benefit comes from a fitness program that includes both.
- 2. Get Plenty of Fiber**

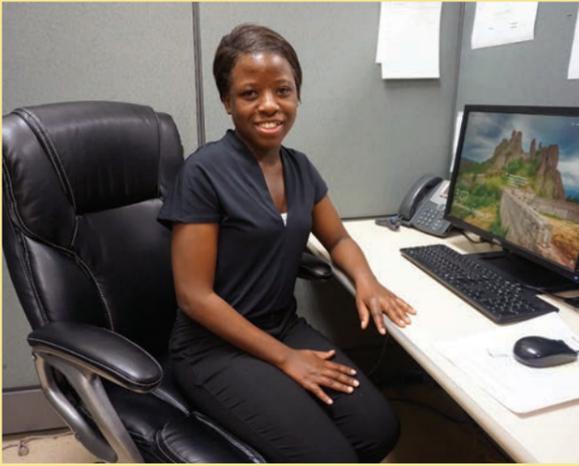
Besides helping reduce your risk of diabetes by improving your blood sugar control, fiber can also lower your risk of heart disease and promote weight loss by helping you feel full. Foods high in fiber include fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains & nuts.
- 3. Make Healthier Diet Decisions**

Eat a variety of healthy meals and portion control part of your healthy-eating plan. Opt for homemade options instead of processed food or eating out.
- 4. Quit Smoking**

Besides the increased risk of cancer & heart disease (among other things), smoking also increases your risk of developing type 2 diabetes. If you're a smoker talk to your doctor about quitting.

For more information about VNA Health Group's services & programs, please call 800.862.3330 or visit [www.vnahg.org](http://www.vnahg.org)

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: AKEEN DOWNES



Akeen Downes joined New Community Career & Technical Institute as its Financial Coach in September.

New Community's Financial Opportunity Center (FOC), which operates out of New Community Career & Technical Institute (NCCTI), provides financial literacy education and resources to students and community members. Akeen Downes began serving as the new Financial Coach in September.

In her role, Downes helps clients learn about topics such as credit, budgeting and saving and helps them come up with a plan to improve their financial situation. She can also provide information about purchasing a home and starting a business.

"Sometimes these topics are a bit scary so you want to shed light on them in a way that's understandable," she said. "Bringing it down to the basics so they know the information and that the resources are here at NCCTI. We want to prepare them for the real world."

Downes has always been interested in accounting and earned a bachelor's degree in that area from New Jersey City University. Before coming to New Community, she was teaching first-graders in Jersey City. While she taught a variety of subjects, she was able to use her accounting knowledge to introduce the topics of money and opening a business to her students.

Over the summer, she was searching for a new opportunity closer to home. She lives near NCCTI and did some research about the school and what it offered. She decided to apply for the Financial Coach position because it combined her accounting skills and experience in a school setting.

NCCTI Director Dr. Sylvia McCray is excited to have Downes on staff.

"Akeen comes with a wealth of knowledge of financial education and how we can move more fully into our current program offering," McCray said. "We want to continue to expand our services, to design them in a way that will engage, educate and empower students and families to build a better future through self-sufficiency. I look forward to Akeen and the FOC team building new programming."

Downes can relate to the students she assists who are working and going to school. She worked four jobs while she was a student to pay for her classes at New Jersey City University. She had two on-campus jobs, working as a peer advisor and in the comptroller's office; prepared taxes at

a tax firm; and worked nights at Taco Bell.

Although it was difficult to juggle such a demanding schedule, Downes is happy she stuck with it and earned her degree.

"I have to be grateful for those situations because those are what made me stronger and the person that I am today," she said.

She will keep her own experiences in mind while helping NCCTI students stay on track with their finances and in school.

"We have to keep encouraging them and cheering them on. We're here to support them," Downes said. "My position as a financial coach is getting them where they need to be."

If Downes doesn't know the answer to a client's question, she will find it.

"I like doing research," she said. "Whatever I don't know, I need to figure it out because I hate being in the dark."

Some clients may be struggling with their finances and with other personal issues, but Downes' advice is to keep moving forward.

"Don't let your current situation determine what your future will be," she said.

Downes was born in Jamaica and came to New Jersey when she was 17 years old. She completed one year of high school here before enrolling in college. She lives in Newark with her older brother, her identical twin sister and her aunt. She enjoys going to the beach, particularly in Jamaica.

## SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: JOHN AYTCH

John Aytch has had artistic talent for as long as he can remember. He calls it his natural ability and he hopes to be able to inspire a younger generation to not only pursue art, but to complete their education.

Education is important to Aytch because he wasn't educated as a child. He grew up in North Carolina in an era where discrimination was blatant.

"You were taught that there's no need for you to educate yourself because your father's a sharecropper and you're going to be raised up to be a farmer. So I missed out," he said.

He was illiterate until he was in his 30s when he worked hard to learn to read.

But the lack of formal education didn't hinder his artistic talents.

"I just knew I always had the ability to draw," he said.

Aytch is completely self-taught. He is able to see a photograph, a scene or a person and recreate the image in detail. He spends much of his time making art. He has lived at Gardens Senior for about 15 years and has set up his apartment to have a workspace to create his art in the bedroom. He displays his works in the living room.

Gardens Senior Resident Services Coordinator Desiree Crespo first met Aytch during a routine wellness visit.

"I was pleasantly surprised and excited to see a home full of art and expression. He mentions not having an education and that is what hinders him to speak for himself and his art. I find him to speak very well and eloquently with sophistication," Crespo said. "He knows who he is in his work and I enjoy being a part of the process to get him seen for the beautiful art he makes. I especially love how he values education since he was denied one so long ago. Inspirational man through and through."

Aytch grew up in North Carolina and joined the Army when he was about 20. He said he had to pass an exam to enlist and since he couldn't read, he just chose answers at random and luckily received a high enough score. When he returned to North Carolina, he found it difficult to find a job because of racial discrimination. So he moved to New Jersey when he was about 26 years old and has been here ever since. He is now 87.

He has embraced his artistic ability and works with a variety of mediums. He can't pick a favorite, saying he can do anything related to art. He has created works that



John Aytch creates a variety of artwork, including landscapes and portraits. Here he poses with scenes from Weequahic Park and portraits, including former President Barack Obama.

depict public figures like former President Barack Obama and Newark Mayor Ras Baraka. He also does landscapes, including scenes from Weequahic Park.

Aytch's goal now is to pass along his knowledge to children. He hopes to join a program where he can demonstrate his artistic process and inspire future artists to pursue their dreams. He also wants to impress upon them the importance of getting an education, no matter how talented they may be artistically.

"I don't want to just die with this ability and not be able to help someone," he said.

## LESLEY LESLIE: HOW'S THAT WORKING OUT FOR YOU?



**D**o you wake up every day and pray you don't have to go to your job? Do you find yourself calling out from your job on a regular

basis? Have you exhausted all your accumulated sick days and the thought of it is making you sick? Does your stomach turn every time you walk through the door of your place of employment? If so, it's probably safe to say... you hate your job.

Thousands of individuals work every day in jobs that they don't like but need, particularly if you consider that housing, food, children, vehicles, schooling and so many other necessities require the money that you earn from your job. Being unhappy with your employment or career can manifest itself in other areas of your life. Such as your personal relationships and even your health and well-being. When you factor in how many hours a week you spend at your job, the remaining hours in your week are greatly impacted by this work time and the residual effects of that time.

The coronavirus pandemic taught us all how very short life can be, as we witnessed the untimely death of countless friends and loved ones. The pandemic caused us to reevaluate what is truly important in life. For many, "the job", at least in the traditional sense, was almost always that one thing that people felt they could do without. For this reason, people opted not to return to their jobs, instead electing to create new streams of income through projects and/or inventions that they always dreamed about pursuing but never felt like they had the time to pursue.

What about you? What would you do *tomorrow* if you didn't have to worry about being able to pay your bills *today*? Is it something that you would do for free? I submit to you, that thing that you would do for free is the start of the pursuit of your passion. You may not know where exactly to begin or how to begin doing that thing. However, that is the sign that you should look for when determining what "that thing" is. So, start asking around, do a Google search, see who's doing something like what you want to do on YouTube or TikTok. There are so many resources available to help you with your journey to your passion. *You can do it and you owe it to yourself.*

## EXTENDED CARE CELEBRATES HALLOWEEN

Residents of Extended Care, 266 South Orange Ave., Newark, enjoyed a Halloween party on Oct. 28.



## NCCTI RETENTION TEAM SUPPORTS STUDENTS

FROM PAGE 1

career planning and/or social-emotional needs," McCray said. "The creation of the Retention Team leads to a continuum of educational programming and services for maximizing student success within the school environment while limiting or eliminating the barriers that prevent them from meeting the goal of completion. Over time, I believe this team will continue to see more positive results from their efforts."

The team is also involved with campus student events. The first such event, the Student Appreciation Luncheon, was held on Oct. 27. Students from all programs gathered at the Main Campus, along with staff members and instructors, to enjoy lunch and each other's company. It was also the first opportunity for some of the students to meet members of the Retention Team in person, particularly those in the Automotive Technician and Building Trades Specialist programs, which are held at the NCCTI Training Center.

The event also included the awarding of a certificate recognizing perfect attendance for the month of September. The hope is that seeing a peer getting recognized will motivate other students to come to class consistently.

Feedback from the event has been positive.

"Students spoke to me and they were really appreciative of it," Phillip said. "They didn't see it as just a sandwich."

The Retention Team also arranged for students to get bags of candy on Halloween and is planning events around Thanksgiving and Christmas that will provide more opportunities for students to mingle with those in other programs.

Building that camaraderie among students in all areas of study will help to keep students engaged and hopefully coming to class.

"They have to feel when they come here, that they belong," Phillip said. "This is not just a classroom to do this and get out. We have to make them want to come here. And that's where we're going."

Holding students accountable for their punctuality and attendance is beneficial to their future as well. When they enter the

workforce, employers will expect them to come to work on time each day and communicate promptly if an unexpected situation arises.

"I'm glad that we now have a Retention Team that works together to ensure that students attend classes each day and on time," said NCCTI Registrar Ramona Galley, who is also a member of the Retention Team. "Most of our students are young and many of them are dealing with all kinds of problems (personal, housing, health, financial), and we point them to many different resources that can help them while in the program here. The team often has one-on-one meetings with students to discuss barriers and a plan for successful completion."

Helping students on their journey to a successful career is rewarding for members of the Retention Team.

"When a student who wasn't coming or was lapsing, that person is there now doing what they're supposed to do. That satisfaction that I touched that student and it's working," Phillip said.

Kelly sends students inspirational quotes to help motivate them. While it might seem small, the messages have resulted in positive interactions.

"I know two people that did respond. One said thank you and the other actually needed help. And we got her the help that she needed," Kelly said.

The efforts of the Retention Team are meant to help students succeed and reach their full potential.

"We always want what's best for them," Kelly said.

*NCCTI is an accredited post-secondary career and technical institution that is currently enrolling for the following programs: Automotive Technician, Building Trades Specialist, Medical Assistant Clinical, Patient Care Technician and Culinary Arts Specialist. NCCTI also operates a comprehensive Financial Opportunity Center and Bridges to Career Opportunities Program sponsored by the local and national Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) offices. For more information, call 973-824-6484, log onto [newcommunitytech.edu](http://newcommunitytech.edu) or visit 274 South Orange Ave., Newark.*

# NEW COMMUNITY



November 2022 | Volume 39 - Issue 10

## NEW COMMUNITY HALLOWEEN PARTY DRAWS HUNDREDS

New Community's Youth Services Department held its Halloween Party at the NCC Neighborhood Center, 56-68 Hayes St., Newark, on Oct. 29. More than 200 children attended the event, which included music, games, a haunted classroom, costume contest, food and prizes. *Photos courtesy of Youth Services.*

