

BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONS
1953-1954

BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONS
1957-1958

BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONS
1962-1963



BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONS
2001-2002

BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONS
2004-2005

NATIONAL
INVITATION
TOURNAMENT
QUARTERFINALS

TECH
BASKETBALL
NCAA
1983-1984

GRA**T**ITUDE | 2021



Dear Tennessee Tech community,

It's no secret that Tennessee Tech students are talented and intelligent, but what stands out most to me is their kindness. Whether it's opening a door for someone, helping a visitor find a building on campus or thanking a professor at the end of a challenging semester, Tech students exhibit kindness in so many ways.

In January 2020, Phil and I established the Wings of Kindness initiative as a way to recognize those who go above and beyond to help others. At the time, we did not realize just how critical kindness was about to become.

Last year tested our strength, our resolve and our patience. It was undoubtedly the most challenging year of our generation. On March 3, an EF-4 tornado devastated Middle Tennessee, and just a few weeks later, COVID-19 changed the world.

The year 2020 is one we'll never forget, but what I'll remember most about last year is the kindness of the Golden Eagle community. Tech closed the day after the tornadoes to allow students and employees to participate in a countywide day of service, and thousands of volunteers helped with the cleanup. When Tech converted all classes to an online format a few weeks later, faculty, staff and students had just two weeks to make it happen, and they did. When Tech was unable to celebrate a traditional homecoming last fall, students hosted a 24-hour campaign instead to raise funds for Tech's Food Pantry and raised \$20,000!

The kindness of Tech alumni and friends touches every part of this campus. Whether it's a gift to name a building or classroom, establish a scholarship or provide food for a student in need, the generosity of the Golden Eagle community is inspiring every year. This was especially evident in 2020. While many faced their own challenges, they still chose to help others.

Maya Angelou once said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people forget what you did, but people never forget how you made them feel."



While 2020 was shocking in many ways, what wasn't surprising was how Golden Eagles supported one another. I've always known this university was special, and 2020 simply reinforced that.

Thank you for being kind — to our students, to our university, to our community and to each other.

#WingsofKindness and Wings Up!

Kari Oldham
Kari Oldham

Tech loves Cookeville: The university's impact on the 1974 and 2020 tornado relief efforts



In the early morning hours of March 3, 2020, an EF-4 tornado ripped through Cookeville and Putnam County, causing 19 fatalities, 88 injuries and damage to 500 buildings. More than 100 families — including Tech faculty, staff and students — lost everything. It was the worst natural disaster the City of Cookeville had ever experienced. But it wasn't the first time the Tennessee Tech community came together after a tornado.

At approximately 8 p.m. on the evening of April 3, 1974, a similar EF-4 tornado nearly destroyed the Putnam County communities of Dry Valley, Mt. Herman, Poplar Grove and Rocky Point. The tornado that hit Putnam County was part of one of the worst tornado outbreaks to ever affect the United States. Dubbed the "Super Outbreak," at least 148 tornadoes struck 13 states over a 16-hour period.

An article in the 1975 edition of *The Eagle* (the Tennessee Tech yearbook) covered the rescue and relief effort.



“Within a matter of hours, Tech students were involved in rescue efforts throughout the county,” The Eagle said. “They helped to clear the way for Sheriff’s patrols, rescue squads and ambulances. Students helped overworked ambulance crews transport the injured to Cookeville General Hospital, and there donated blood for immediate use. Tech students also provided a shuttle service for the victims who received emergency treatment. Radio station WTTU helped keep communications open when other methods failed.”

Almost 46 years later, the university would be called upon again to step forward and help its community.

As the sun rose on the morning of March 3, 2020, just a few hours after the tornado devastated parts of Cookeville and Putnam County, Tech’s response was once again immediate and significant. President Phil Oldham closed Tech the day following the tornadoes so students and employees could participate in a day of service. More than 1,000 students, faculty and staff joined 2,500 volunteers throughout Putnam County to assist with search and rescue, cleanup, unloading supplies at shelter sites and comforting the families affected.

In the days and weeks that followed, Tech found numerous other ways to help as well.

When Michelle Huddleston, assistant director of Service Learning and Community Engagement, woke up on March 3, she knew it was going to be a busy day. She immediately headed to the Cookeville Community Center, a designated drop-off for donations, and fielded phone calls from people and organizations all over the country who wanted to help. Two days later, Huddleston had taken over one of the offices at the center.

“This is my home for now,” she said. “I’ve been here since March 3, and the response has been huge. I’ll be here as long as I’m needed.”

President Oldham, First Lady Kari Oldham and approximately 20 Tech students volunteered at the community center as well.

Students and faculty from the Whitson-Hester School of Nursing helped with blood drives. In the first week following the storm, nearly 2,000 donors gave blood. Students and faculty volunteered with Blood Assurance, Samaritans Purse and the Care Center at Stevens Street Baptist Church. Assistant Professor Matt Langford expanded the hours of his non-profit clinic Hope Springs Urgent Care Mental Health to focus on debriefing groups about the disaster. The clinic assisted faculty, staff, students, healthcare workers and first responders.

Two College of Business faculty lent their expertise in data recovery to the relief effort as well. Stuart “Doc” Wells and Susan Wells own a business called My CFI and teach data recovery in their classes. They helped reunite computers, tablets and notebooks with their owners and recovered files on wet and damaged equipment.

Similarly, University Archivist Megan Atkinson and her staff established a centralized place to reunite found photographs and documents with their owners. Approximately 3,800 photographs, greeting cards, journals, letters, drawings and children’s artwork were

brought to the Archives for digital processing. The Archives cleaned and housed the belongings according to archival best practices and digitized the materials in an online searchable location.

“Many items were reunited with their families,” said Atkinson. “Some of these photographs are perhaps the only physical memories people have of a person or time in their life. These photographs are the evidence and proof that allow them to tell their stories.”

Tech’s ROTC Program saw more than 25 of their cadets assist in cleanup efforts, and several volunteered with Team Rubicon, a veteran-centered service organization established to assist with disaster response.

Amber Spears, assistant professor in the College of Education, and students in her “The Literacy Professional” class, organized a book drive to help rebuild the home libraries of children impacted by the tornadoes. More than 4,000 books were donated through this initiative.

The College of Agriculture helped with cleanup, equipment repairs and tarping roofs.

Tech Athletic teams found ways to provide goods and supplies, clear debris and help those affected by the storms. The Golden Eagle football team unloaded trucks at Double Springs Church of Christ and removed debris at Prosperity Point. The volleyball team donated blood and helped at cleanup sites. The men’s basketball team gathered supplies at the Cookeville Community Center, while the golf, soccer, softball, track and field and cross-country teams helped remove debris from various sites throughout the county.

The Crawford Alumni Center was midway through their second annual “I Heart Tech Students” campaign when the tornado struck. Alumni all over the country reached out to ask, “How can I help?” The CAC immediately changed the campaign to place more emphasis on the areas assisting students and employees affected

by the tornadoes: Tech’s Accessible Education Center, Counseling Center, Eagle Assistance Grant and Food Pantry.

When Tech reopened on March 5, Oldham shared a message of hope and gratitude with students, faculty and staff.

“It’s said that adversity doesn’t develop character, but it does reveal it,” Oldham said. “That was on full display in Cookeville this week. It will take weeks, months, maybe years to fully recover from the property loss alone. The loss of family, friends and loved ones will never be healed, but Tech students and staff have made and will continue to make a huge difference in the recovery efforts. Cookeville really is Tennessee’s College Town, and Tech is blessed to be an integral part of this community.”

On March 3, 2021, on the one-year anniversary of the tornado, Tech hosted a “Tech Strong” day of service for the Cookeville community, and students participated in service projects to help those affected last year. At 1:48 p.m., bells across the county, including the Derryberry



Hall carillon, rang 19 times in memory of the 19 lives lost. The tornado struck at 1:48 a.m. on March 3, 2020.

Golden Eagles will always remember the tornadoes of 1974 and 2020. They will remember the damage and the loss. But they will also remember how Cookeville, Putnam County and Tennessee Tech came together to help one another. Much has changed in 46 years, but the events that took place in 1974 and 2020 were eerily similar. Cookeville was dealt a devastating blow — twice. And twice, the Golden Eagle community came together to help.

The 1975 edition of The Eagle concluded its article about the 1974 tornado with this: “When the storm was over, hundreds of Tech students continued to help. Students spent many hours assisting their community. Again, Tech students had proven themselves to be members of the entire Cookeville community.”

Again, indeed.

Golden Eagles always find ways to help their community. Tech is Cookeville, and Cookeville is Tennessee Tech.

“It’s said that adversity doesn’t develop character, but it does reveal it. That was on full display in Cookeville this week.”



Cookeville community remembers Hattie Jo Collins

While the March 3, 2020, tornado devastated Cookeville and Putnam County, members of the community continue to rebuild, support one another and honor the lives lost.

Hattie Jo Collins was one of 19 people who tragically lost their lives on March 3. She was just four years old. But Hattie's parents, Matt and Macy Collins, established a scholarship in her name to keep her memory alive and share her positive spirit with the world.

"Hattie was special," said Matt Collins. "She was good. She was kind. She was shy. She was silly. She was smart. She loved to read, learn and play. She was so happy to be a big sister. Hattie loved her family."

Collins said he and Macy knew they wanted to honor Hattie, and the idea of a scholarship that would benefit students in Hattie's hometown of Cookeville seemed like the perfect fit.

"We wanted others to have memories of her even if they did not know her," Collins explained. "We also knew that we had been so well taken care of by the doctors, nurses and staff at Cookeville Regional Medical Center and that Hattie's sister, Lainey, had been taken care of well at Vanderbilt. In the darkest moments of our lives,



the members of these hospitals were there for us and with us. We wanted to honor them as well."

The Hattie Jo Collins Scholarship is awarded to upper division undergraduate or graduate students who have been admitted to Tennessee Tech's Whitson-Hester School of Nursing.

"We hope that this scholarship will continue to grow and bless many lives through the work that is done at Tennessee Tech," said Collins.

Sept. 9, 2020, would have been Hattie's fifth birthday. On Sept. 8, Collins posted pictures and memories of

Hattie on his Facebook page.

"It has been six months since the tornado and six months without our girl," Collins wrote on the Facebook post. "To say that we miss her, we love her, we want to be with her — those words don't seem fair to her. Those words are not strong enough to explain the deep emotion that comes with her loss. No words are."

The Collins family asked everyone to wear Hattie's favorite color — pink — on Sept. 9, in honor of Hattie's birthday. They also asked the community to consider making a gift to the Hattie Jo Collins Scholarship.

"There are a lot of things that her birthday should be," Collins said. "Instead, it will be none of those things. But we have chosen to honor Hattie in several ways for her birthday. Would you choose to honor her as well?"

And honor her they did. More than 100 people made a gift to Hattie's scholarship on her birthday and in the days that followed. Sept. 9 was one of the busiest days for online gifts that Tech had ever seen.

"Initially, we didn't know how many people were making gifts," said Collins. "But as the day went on, we assumed the number was significant because I received a message that Hattie's scholarship had moved to the top of the online list on Tech's donation page."

Collins said he is beyond grateful for everyone who has supported his family.

"Thank you for honoring the memory of our daughter," he said. "We have needed this community in big ways, and we will continue to need you. We are thankful to be in Cookeville."

Hundreds of people in Cookeville and beyond wore pink and hung pink balloons outside their homes and businesses on Sept. 9. Colleside Church of Christ, where Collins serves as a youth minister, placed pink balloons on campus as well. Collins said he received

photos from people he had never even met who wore pink for Hattie.

"Our grief is something that we never move on from," said Collins. "But on her birthday, it was comforting to see so many who were right there with us who care and love us and our girls."

The first Hattie Jo Collins Scholarship was awarded to Myesha Goodwin, a senior nursing major from Clarksville, Tennessee.

"This scholarship has helped me further my education," said Goodwin. "As a prospective future nurse, I see myself fighting on the front lines to help others in need. The Hattie Jo Collins Scholarship embodies living on, striving and making a change, and I am honored that Tennessee Tech allowed me to continue her legacy."

To support the Hattie Jo Collins Scholarship, visit tntech.edu/giving, select "other" from the dropdown menu and include the name of the scholarship in the field provided.

"We want to help people who want to help people," said Collins. "In this way, the memory of Hattie lives on, even in the lives of those who didn't know her. Hattie would have loved that."



Giving Tuesday focuses on preserving Tennessee Tech's history for future generations



While 2020 was a struggle for many, University Archives and Special Collections chose to create successes out of challenges. From helping survivors of the March 3, 2020, tornadoes to documenting stories of the COVID-19 pandemic to making more materials digitally accessible than ever before, Archives has gone above and beyond to help the Golden Eagle community. This is why Tennessee Tech chose to make this area the focus of its Dec. 1 Giving Tuesday fundraising efforts.

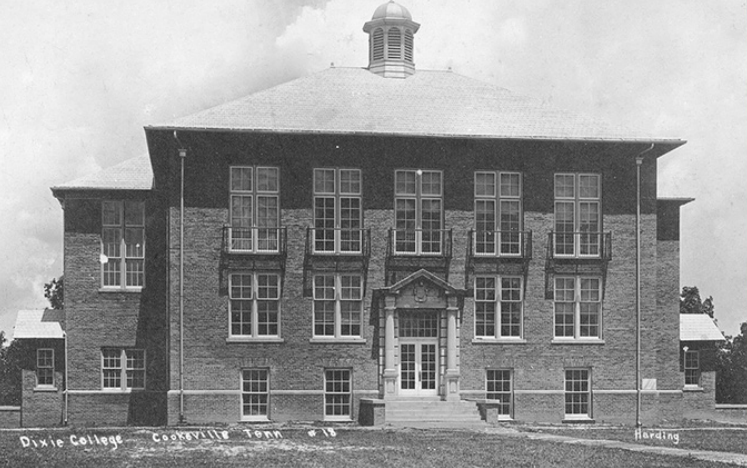
Giving Tuesday is an international day of giving celebrated on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. While donors could make a gift to any area on campus, Tech chose to highlight University Archives on Giving Tuesday through a series of social media posts, videos and emails.

“Archives everywhere tend to be relatively unknown,” said Megan Atkinson, university archivist. “That is one reason it was so important to us to be featured on Giving Tuesday and have our services and mission promoted to so many within our community.”

Walking into University Archives and Special Collections is like stepping back in time. It's a view into the Tennessee Tech of the past. Comprised of more than 3,300 cubic feet of manuscripts, photographs and archives from Tech and the Upper Cumberland, Archives makes materials accessible both digitally and on site, assists researchers, and connects students and alumni with collections, exhibits and classes.

When COVID-19 forced people to stay home, University Archives quickly recognized that they needed better access to online and catalog records, descriptions for digitized materials and the ability to view exhibits online.

“With better online access, we are reaching individuals who may have never found the Archives or used our materials,” said Atkinson. “While we socially distanced and did not see people in person, the use of technology allowed us to collaborate and share more than any year prior — reaching people in new and different ways.”



University Archives curated a number of online exhibits including a series of exhibits on the history of the Leona Lusk Officer Black Cultural Center, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2020. The exhibits traced the philosophy of black cultural centers in the United States and the black student movement of the 1960s and '70s. They also outlined the climate in which Tech students decided to push for their own center in the late 1980s.

Archives' most popular online exhibit has been Big Name Entertainment, an exhibit featuring the many big-name groups that have performed at Tech. The exhibit includes a photo gallery, stories, historical documents and even a playlist.

They also worked with the School of Human Ecology and Women's Center on a suffrage exhibit, the School of Music on storage for recitals and performances and the Department of Chemistry on exhibits for the new Lab Science Commons.

University Archives' work extends beyond the university; they assisted with exhibits for the Cookeville History Museum and City Hall as well. They also documented, preserved and made accessible the COVID-19 experiences of Tech and the Upper Cumberland. Future researchers will value the documentation and experiences during this pandemic, just as researchers today rely on documents from the Spanish influenza

pandemic of 1918.

But what University Archives did for the community following the March 3 tornadoes was nothing short of remarkable. Archives preserved, digitized and stored more than 3,800 photographs, cards, journals, letters, drawings and other personal items and reunited many with owners.

Atkinson says that formats within University Archives are changing, and that requires unprecedented funding that was not historically required for paper records.

"While we are constantly upgrading, there is still plenty of work to be done," she said. "Digitization, preservation and cataloging are costly and time-consuming endeavors that require professionals, software, equipment and hardware. While all of this work creates the need for more funding, it also allows patrons to access our materials anywhere at any time."

Atkinson says efforts like Giving Tuesday and private support of University Archives and Special Collections ensure that Tech's rich history is preserved for future generations of Golden Eagles.

"Look at what we have done, and imagine what more we can do!"



MacIndoes' support of human ecology makes Historic Costume Collection accessible worldwide

Whether studying the construction techniques of a 1940s ballgown, hosting a fashion show with pieces from the 1920s or marveling at how large shoulder pads in the 1980s really were, Tennessee Tech merchandising and design students have access to all of this — and much more — through the School of Human Ecology's Historic Costume Collection.

The Historic Costume Collection houses more than 2,000 pieces dating from the mid-1800s to today. It serves as a resource for all human ecology students, especially those majoring in merchandising and design.

"It is one of the greatest resources I could imagine for any of the design concentrations at a university," said Hannah Upole, assistant professor of Human Ecology. "When students see the collection, they learn it's so much more than just a closet of really cool clothes and accessories. It has a tremendous purpose in their education."

The Historic Costume Collection was established in 1997 under then-director of the School of Human Ecology, Sue Bailey. And it all started through donations. Tech alumni and friends had interesting garments and pieces in their homes and wanted to find a way to share them with others. But the collection is so much more than just garments; it includes shoes, accessories and hats as well.

When South Hall was renovated and became Oakley Hall in 2015, then-dean of the College of Agriculture and Human Ecology, Liz Mullens, designed the room that now houses the collection.

"She worked with the architects of this building to really prioritize that space for the collection to make sure it was going to be adequately temperature controlled," said Melinda Anderson, director of the School of Human Ecology. "She made sure that a cedar closet was installed to protect the furs and other items. I give credit to Dr. Mullens for her vision on the front end of designing the space for this building. She made sure that the collection was a priority."

Anderson and Upole said the number of garment donations they receive each year continues to grow.





"Individuals are donating things that have a really unique story and background," said Upole. "People tell us, 'I have unique pieces and I don't know what to do with them. I have this garment and I don't want to see it lost. I want to see it used in some way. I want it to continue its history and its life.'"

Some may wonder why it's called a costume collection.

"Costume refers to a form of dress," said Upole. "You're dressing the body or dressing the form from top to bottom, from head to toe. Essentially you are putting on a costume every day. You're using it for different activities. Wedding gowns are their own costume just like military garments. They are a form of dress that has a very specific function to it."

The collection is used in exhibits on campus and in the community. Human Ecology recently created an exhibit on World War I dress for the Cookeville History Museum.

They have also hosted exhibits at the craft center and in University Archives.

"When we take garments from the collection and partner them with images from the Archives as well as modern images, we get to really tell a story — a narrative of 'it's not just a dress,'" said Upole. "These exhibits are a fantastic way to showcase to the community what we have on a much larger scale."

The School of Human Ecology also hosts historic fashion shows.

"The one in the fall is completely student-led," said Upole. "They have to pick a theme and choose from all of the items to create a cohesive fashion show that meets their theme. In the spring, we do a fashion show for the Tech Women's Club. We are told what theme they want, and students get to explore. They have to make sure they are historically accurate, but they also



have to choose items you'd want to see in a fashion show."

Upole says the best thing about the collection is that it's located in Oakley Hall, across from where most of the design classes are held.

"We begin using the collection in the first concepts of design class to learn about color over time and how it's evolved," said Upole. "What green looked like in the 1890s versus what green looks like today is very different. Showing students a picture on the screen is one thing. Actually grabbing two dresses out of the collection and saying, 'There's a hundred years of difference between these two, and they are supposed to be the same color,' shows students there is a meaning behind what we are studying."

Upole says the collection is used in history classes as well, where students study the garments to learn more about a specific time period.

"We talk about things like corsetry and hoop skirts, maybe knowing that those are the features we don't want to repeat," she said. "You don't have an appreciation for how small some of those dresses and gowns really are until they are in your hands."

Upole adds that the number of different textiles represented in the collection is a great benefit to classroom instruction.

"There are fabrics in there that haven't been made since the '40s," she said. "If you show students a true 1960s double knit polyester suit, they suddenly realize why people don't like polyester — why it has such a negative connotation to it."

Upole said everyone who sees the collection is amazed, but one couple was so impressed that they decided to include the collection in their philanthropy.

"The Historic Costume Collection is amazing. The ensemble is a unique example of the culmination of culture, creativity and history of a people. Our tour of the collection captivated us through its variety and quality."

Mike MacIndoe, '84 civil engineering, and Lisa (Chambers) MacIndoe, '84 human ecology, have maintained a fondness for the university since graduating 37 years ago.

"It is almost impossible to think of an area of our lives that has not been impacted by our time at Tech," said Mike MacIndoe. "For one, we met on the beautiful grounds on which Tech was built and have enjoyed more than 35 years of marriage. Most of our closest friends to this day are our best friends from Tech. Professionally, our degrees opened doors for us that would have otherwise remained shut. An education from Tech is truly a gateway to not only a solid career, but to enduring relationships as well."

In 2015, the MacIndoes established the MacIndoe Family Scholarship for civil engineering and human ecology majors and in 2019, they established the MacIndoe Historic Costume Collection Endowment. Funds from this endowment are used for maintenance, repairs, equipment, digitization and exhibition costs for the collection. In honor of their gift, the collection's exhibition was formally named the MacIndoe Historic Costume Collection Exhibition.

"The Historic Costume Collection is amazing," said MacIndoe. "The ensemble is a unique example of the culmination of culture, creativity and history of a people. Our tour of the collection captivated us through its variety and quality."

While the MacIndoes believe that Tech opened doors for their future success, Anderson says their support has

opened doors for human ecology majors as well.

"A collection of this size requires upkeep and funding to maintain it," Anderson explained. "So, to have this generosity from Mike and Lisa has made a tremendous difference. And it will be a long-lasting influence on the costume collection. Not only does their gift protect the integrity of the collection, but it also allows us to share it with the world."

Human Ecology is in the process of digitizing the entire collection. They take a professional photo of each garment — showing the detail, how the garment moves and how it fits on a form, and they upload the photos to a website.

Anderson said they always welcome donations of garments, and they want to know the history behind each piece so they can catalog it and share the story. To donate an item to the collection, contact the School of Human Ecology at 931-372-3157.

"Donor support has allowed us to take the collection from being a fantastic resource that we use in this college to a fantastic resource the world can use," said Upole. "We have pieces that don't exist anywhere else. They are one of a kind. They were handmade. We have some designer pieces where there is no record of them existing anywhere else. It was important that we made the collection something that is accessible on a grander scale. And with the MacIndoes' support, we can let that be known. Everyone can see the amazing pieces we have right here at Tennessee Tech."

Homecoming campaign raises nearly \$20,000 for Tennessee Tech Food Pantry



While Homecoming is one of many annual events that looked different this academic year, one thing that remains constant is the giving nature of the Golden Eagle community.

Students voted to include a fundraiser for Tech's food pantry as part of the Homecoming 2020 activities, and on Nov. 10, student organizations, fraternities, sororities and residence halls competed to see who could raise the most money for the pantry. When the 24-hour campaign ended, the Golden Eagle community had raised \$19,763.

"If students grasp the concept of giving back while they're in college, they're much more likely to carry that same mindset once they leave," said Robert Owens, interim vice president of Student Affairs. "They'll be more likely to personally give back in the communities where they work. They'll be more likely to encourage their employers to give back as well."

Tech invited alumni and friends to join in the competition. Alumni could make a gift to help their own fraternity, sorority or former hall of residence, or they could make a gift without a designation. While the Kappa Sigma and Phi Mu team raised the most money in 24 hours, the

true winners are the students who will not have to worry about affording their next meal. The support of the Golden Eagle community continues to help Tech in its mission to eliminate food insecurity on campus.

“Tech has always had a rich tradition of serving others, and I feel like this is something we instill in our students early on,” said Michelle Huddleston, assistant director of Service Learning and Community Engagement. “We want our students to leave here as well-rounded, socially aware and responsible adults. Fostering a sense of civic duty will only benefit them in the long run.”

Competitions among student organizations have long been a popular feature of homecoming, and the Tech Activities Board met last semester to discuss how to have a successful homecoming during COVID-19. Students wanted to help the food pantry and, in order to maintain social distancing, chose to give through an online campaign.

“We set an initial goal of \$10,000,” said Jerry Keeton, coordinator of Student Activities and Campus Life. “As always, our students exceeded expectations, and we nearly doubled the goal!”

Students, alumni and campus organizations shared the crowdfunding website on social media, and the site included a leaderboard so organizations could follow the campaign’s progress throughout the day.

“I didn’t know what to expect, but this was not in the ballpark of what I thought,” said Huddleston. “It’s so much more! I heard congratulations probably 10 times from folks as I walked into work the following morning. It warms my heart so much.”

Tech’s food pantry is set up like a grocery store so clients can have a regular shopping experience. In 2012, the pantry served five people each week. This grew to 12 each week in 2015. Today, approximately 40 people are served each week, and many are returning visitors. The March 3 tornadoes and COVID-19 stretched the food pantry’s capacity this year, with more students than ever relying on the pantry’s services.

The food pantry received a generous gift of a refrigeration unit just a few months before the Homecoming campaign, and the funds raised allowed Huddleston to stock this new refrigerator with fresh produce and other healthy options for students. Donor support will also allow the pantry to remain open through the summer. For more information about Tech’s food pantry, visit www.tntech.edu/volunteer/pantry.php.

“Recognizing and working to meet the needs of other people is selfless,” said Owens. “The more selfless we are as individuals, the better society becomes. When we see this happening at Tech, we’re witnessing some of the best of what humanity has to offer.”

“If students grasp the concept of giving back while they’re in college, they’re much more likely to carry that same mindset once they leave. They’ll be more likely to personally give back in the communities where they work. They’ll be more likely to encourage their employers to give back as well.”

Third annual “I Heart Tech Students” Campaign keeps students enrolled despite COVID challenges



Who could have predicted the challenges Tennessee Tech students would face in 2020? Tornadoes devastated Middle Tennessee on March 3, 2020, and just a few weeks later, COVID-19 changed the world. But Tech students persevered.

The third annual “I Heart Tech Students” campaign focused on five areas that help students during challenging times: Tech’s Accessible Education Center, Counseling Center, Eagle Assistance Grant, Food Pantry and Health Services. Donor support of these areas keeps students safe, healthy and enrolled.

“It’s absolutely incredible what these students are going through,” said Brandon Johnson, vice president of Enrollment Management and Career Placement. “I’m proud of them for overcoming such enormous challenges. They don’t want to ask for help, but they are to a point where they don’t have any other option.”

After the March 2020 tornadoes and due to COVID-19, the Counseling Center saw an increase in requests for counseling and calls to the crisis line. Donor support allowed Tech’s Counseling Center to continue their 24-hour hotline service and introduce a new online wellness program for mental health.

Visits to Tech’s Food Pantry increased as well. When the governor’s order required most university buildings to close last spring, this unfortunately affected the main food pantry as well, which closed from March 13 through May 30. But the Volpe Library was permitted to remain open, meaning the auxiliary pantry located inside the library could stay open as well.

Donor support allowed Michelle Huddleston, assistant director of Service Learning and Community Engagement, to keep both pantries fully stocked.

“Donor support has allowed us to help students with more specific dietary needs,” said Huddleston. “It’s one thing to hand someone a bag of groceries, but it’s even more fulfilling to be able to offer them milk, eggs, cheese and foods with more nutritional value. Since March of 2020, donor funds have allowed us to keep snack packs in Residential Life and Health Services so that quarantined students do not miss a meal. Donors have really gotten us through the tough times COVID-19 caused for our students.”

The transition to remote learning has been especially challenging for students with disabilities, but private support ensures the Accessible Education Center can continue to make Tech’s academic and digital environments accessible.

“COVID-19 increased our need for assistive and adaptive technology-related resources and tools, as we began supporting more students in an online environment,” said Chester Goad, director of the Accessible Education Center. “It’s exciting to know that we have donors interested in students with disabilities.”

Tech’s Health Services has been on the front lines battling COVID-19. They added COVID testing and contact tracing to the services they provide, and staff are constantly researching guidelines and recommendations regarding the virus. Health Services served more than 6,000 students last semester alone.

Leigh Ann Ray, director of Health Services, said gifts to the “I Heart Tech Students” campaign will allow her area to purchase care package supplies for ill students and invest in technology for telehealth.

“Everything we were doing a year ago has changed, from how health services operates to how we provide patient care,” she said. “We have spent the past year researching, trying to find the best practices and the best ways to provide patient care in a safe, effective manner.”

The Eagle Assistance Grant, an emergency need-based grant, has come to the rescue for dozens of students who lost employment due to COVID-19. To date, Tech has awarded more than 30 EAGs.

“The Eagle Assistance Grant is a game changer,” said Johnson. “I am confident there will be stories of students we saved through this effort — students who will pay back what they received tenfold in the years to come because it changed their life.”

While the third annual “I Heart Tech Students” campaign has concluded, it’s never too late to help a student in need. Visit www.tntech.edu/giving to support one of these five areas or any other area on campus.

If 2020 taught us anything, it’s that it’s not a matter of if, but when, students will face unforeseen challenges. While Tech cannot predict the future, the university can ensure that financial and emotional resources are available for students in need.

A lack of food, finances or emotional support should never stand in the way of completing a college degree. The “I Heart Tech Students” campaign keeps students enrolled and on a path to graduation day.



Couple's love for Baxter leads to estate gift for Upperman High students

Nearly 30 years ago, a couple with a love for the Baxter area and Tennessee Tech chose to include the university in their estate plans. Now, a scholarship in their names will help generations of Upperman High School students pursue a college education.

Cleo Nash Dennis was born and raised in Baxter, Tennessee, and married B.J. Dennis of New York, New York, in 1951. For several years, they lived in Baxter and owned and operated the local H&N Campbell grocery store. Although they moved to California many years ago, their love for the Baxter area continued. Cleo passed away in 2011, and B.J. in 2018.



"We are grateful that the Dennis family saw that Upperman High School students could pursue a great education and the full college experience at Tech," Tennessee Tech President Phil Oldham said. "With these scholarships, dozens of UHS students each year will be supported and encouraged to earn a college degree."

Brandon Johnson, Tech's vice president of Enrollment Management and Career Placement, says he is consistently impressed with the character and talent of Upperman High School students.

"UHS graduates are future leaders of our local community and region," said Johnson. "Their impact will be great as they graduate from Tech and go on to lead successful personal and professional lives."

The B.J. and Cleo Dennis Scholarship provides up to \$65,000 annually for Upperman students.

Breeonna Wheeler, assistant principal at Upperman, says the high school was honored to learn that the Dennis family chose to support their students through this scholarship.

"Receiving a scholarship from our community makes this very special," said Wheeler. "We are extremely proud of these students and look forward to watching them take the next step in their educational journey."

The scholarship was awarded for the first time this year to 34 UHS students planning to enroll at Tech this fall.

"I am beyond thankful for this scholarship," said Marc Hardin, an Upperman High senior and recipient of the Dennis Scholarship. "It's truly a humbling experience. Being named a recipient makes me feel accomplished. This scholarship will allow me to double major in history and economics and eventually go to law school, make change in the world and, most importantly, make my dad proud."

Scholarship recipient Kaitlyn Rich explains that the scholarship is particularly beneficial for her because she will be paying for her tuition on her own.

Ethan Conley says the scholarship will help him become a pediatric nurse, while Macy Wheeler plans to become a psychologist for adolescents.

Trenton Bilbrey says he is looking forward to studying business management at Tech.

"Successful people want others to succeed," said Bilbrey. "I'm thankful for the Dennis family for helping me start on my path."

To apply for this or any other scholarship, prospective students should complete the scholarship application by Dec. 15 prior to the year they wish to attend. The application for fall 2022-spring 2023 will open Aug. 1. Visit tntech.edu/scholarships to learn more.

"Upperman High School students come to Tech well-prepared and succeed here," said Oldham. "I encourage every student to explore what Tech has to offer them."

"UHS graduates are future leaders of our local community and region. Their impact will be great as they graduate from Tech and go on to lead successful personal and professional lives."

Tennessee Tech thanks alumni for showing their Tech Pride

What's the easiest way to support Tennessee Tech?
Show your Tech Pride!

Randy Wilmore, '82 business management and chair of the Alumni Association, says he has worn purple every Friday for nearly 20 years.

"There are little things like that we can do to support our university in some form or fashion," said Wilmore.

Tech employees and alumni are encouraged to wear purple every Friday on what the university calls Purple Pride Fridays. Provost Lori Bruce even keeps purple beads in her office for any employee who forgets.



Joe Slater, dean of the College of Engineering, took the idea a step further. In fall 2020, the College of Engineering introduced the Dean Slater Purple Tie Challenge on social media using the hashtags #PurplePrideFriday and #PurpleTieFriday.

"When Dean Slater came to Tech, he told us the colors for the high school his son attended are also purple and gold," explained Cynthia Davis, the social media manager for the College of Engineering. "You will never see the dean in the office wearing anything except a suit and tie. We, his office staff, commented that he must have a lot of purple ties. So, we decided to set up a simple guessing game on social media to show purple pride and have fun interacting with everyone."

Every Friday from Oct. 9, 2020, through Feb. 19, 2021, the College of Engineering posted a picture of Slater wearing a different purple tie and encouraged followers to guess how many purple ties he owned. On Feb. 19, the answer was revealed: 17! To see photos of Slater's purple ties, follow the College of Engineering on social media @tntech_coe.

Brandon Johnson, vice president of Enrollment Management and Career Placement, says that it's important for alumni to show their Tech pride and share their Tech story with prospective students.

"I was in Waffle House in Tullahoma, and a gentleman walked by with a Tennessee Tech sweatshirt on," Johnson recalled, "And I said, 'Thank you. Thank you for supporting us, and thank you for showing your Tech pride.' There was a table of about six kids sitting there. They saw that interaction, and they saw that gentleman walk by me with a Tennessee Tech shirt on, and I know they read Tennessee Tech. That moment right there is a walking billboard. It's your pride that you're showing them."

While the Friday before Labor Day is National College Colors Day, Tech hopes alumni will consider every day college colors day.

"Never hesitate to put on that polo or that pullover or that coat," said Johnson. "Share your pride. Let's paint this town, state and country purple and gold."





#WeAreTNTech





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