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The victim's three children were inside during the theft. **Page B2**

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Thursday, July 29, 2010

Burlington County Times

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Section B

## Students, professors doing time to offset budget cuts

**They volunteered to teach college-level courses to inmates.**

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**BORDENTOWN TOWNSHIP —**  
Students and professors from The College of New Jersey have been doing

time at the Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility on Ward Avenue.

But it's OK, they volunteered for a program that turns select inmates into classmates, at least for a while.

The volunteers and students are providing college-level instruction to inmates and helping fill a void left by budget cuts that came about as the state mandated increased educational offerings to the New Jersey prison population in January.

An educational program that began about three years ago with Princeton University undergraduates volunteering to tutor prisoners has evolved to include full college-level courses taught at Wagner to classes consisting of 15 TCNJ students and 10 prisoners who audit the course and participate.

Dr. Celia Chazelle, who chairs the history department at TCNJ and is the director of the educational program at Wagner, credited prison director Al

Kandall with bringing her the idea after she volunteered as a teacher at the facility in early 2009.

Chazelle then brought the idea to the college administration, which was receptive to the idea.

"They were very supportive and we did develop that course and it actually has become something we do every single semester," she said.

After the state requirements and

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## Inmates

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budget cuts came down this year, Kandell worked with Chazelle to bring volunteers from the TCNJ community to tutor and teach at the prison as well, while simultaneously fulfilling their community service requirements.

The classes offered in the prison are elective, seminar-style courses that focus on topics the prisoners and students can relate to, albeit in different ways. For example, one course focused on the history and culture of prisons and looked at literature regarding the topic from antiquity to the present.

Chazelle, who designed the courses taught at Wagner so far, said the mix of backgrounds among the students and prisoners leads to some great conversations and exposes both groups to different perspectives.

"We try to make the courses that are taught there kind of make sense in that environment. The inmates, for the most part, have high school degrees, but most are GEDs they got behind bars and they have much less experience with a classroom and how to read a syllabus — the sort of basic skills of how to study, how to structure an essay," Chazelle said.

Kandell lauded the program and said the state Department of

Corrections is working with TCNJ to look for grants or other funding to expand it.

"I think it's a great rehabilitative tool. Education is everything. Our inmates are mostly young, gang affiliated individuals from your inner cities and their worlds are very small," Kandell said. "These credentialed professionals who come in here and teach, they expose them to a lot and I think they provide them with some tools and some confidence, so when they do hopefully get out, they may have the confidence to further their education on their own."

Antonia Alfeo, 21, is a senior psychology major at the college and has been working as Chazelle's

teaching assistant since May.

"I took her class a year ago in the fall semester, so this is my second time at Wagner. The class was great. I didn't feel intimidated by the facility or by any of the guys that were in our classroom and I thought it was really admirable of Dr. Chazelle to be doing something like this," said Alfeo, who added she learned much from her prisoner classmates, whose ages ranged from 18 to 35.

"They talk about things I will never be able to experience and their experiences give them a different way of looking at the same exact situation," Alfeo said. "Right now we're reading a war novel and they draw a lot of parallels to life on the streets and how that's a war and that's something I could never even dream about, so they tend to bring a whole different perspective to the class."

Alfeo said her experience with

the program has helped her define a career path.

"I've always been interested in crime and criminals and working with the program has definitely shown me that this is exactly what I want to do," Alfeo said. "I also think that working with the guys kind of teaches you to have an open mind and not to judge people and that people are not defined by one action or mistake they have made."