

TCEC Times

AUGUST 2020

304 Hancock St | Tutwiler, MS 38963 | 662-345-8393

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TCEC

One year ago, when I took on the leadership role at the Tutwiler Community Education Center (TCEC), I was excited about leading an organization that helps children and families in the Mississippi Delta. I was eager to share with my family, my colleagues, and my college professors that I had landed "the Executive Director position." One year later, in addition to overseeing a dynamic organization, I am also addressing many challenges, some of them unforeseen. At nearly the same time as my arrival two major events were bubbling just beneath the surface. The coronavirus pandemic hit and the movement for racial equity was reignited globally, including the internal fighting here in the State of Mississippi for a new flag.



As a leader, I was asking myself questions just like other nonprofit and corporate leaders, "How do I lead during all of this? Do I keep the building open? How do I address the issue of systemic racism? If so, how do I be inclusive? What if there are no children in the after-school program? Are TCEC senior citizens alright? How does the coronavirus affect them? How will the board meet to conduct TCEC business? How can TCEC feed children every day? How can TCEC prevent the spread of COVID-19? How can I keep staff safe as well as myself?"

While pondering how to address all of these questions, I thought about a book that I read by Brené Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*. Brown shares 10 guideposts for authentic and deep leadership. I rely on the lessons from that book often, but especially during this time. I realize that I have many roles, and that these varying intersections—a woman/mother/African American/Mississippian/Executive Director/Deltan—help make me who I am. During this time, I felt, perhaps as many, that I was being challenged to lead with one identity. At my very core, I lead with humanity. I see my role being to serve and to help others and I knew that I could not do that from home or a fear-based perspective. It takes bold leadership to lead during turmoil.

Continued on page 2



MISSION:

The Tutwiler Community Education Center strengthens children and families by developing programs that address the needs of the community.

VISION:

We envision a community working together that helps to enrich the lives of children and families.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

- The Impact of COVID-19
- Teen Helpers
- Tutwiler Quilters
- Quilting Lessons
- TCEC News
- Summer at the Center
- Fall at TCEC
- Ways You Can Help

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Tutwiler Quilters

Tutwiler Community Education Center



Continued from page 1

While drafting a plan, I told my biological family I needed money to provide meals for my TCEC families because the center's budget could not support providing meals every day. My grandmother always said that "charity begins at home and spreads abroad," so my family went into action by donating and encouraging their friends to do the same. They raised \$2,000 for food.

I knew that as the pandemic became more widespread, TCEC was in for a long and difficult time. Also, as more protests swept this nation, there were larger questions that needed to be addressed. In response to what was happening, especially as the pandemic hit Mississippi, TCEC shifted how it traditionally operated, but stayed true to its mission to develop programs that address the needs of the community. Lunches to children were given five days a week and a meals-on-wheels program was implemented for our senior citizens. Every Wednesday, TCEC staff delivered lunches and fresh fruits and vegetables to our senior citizens. Other organizations joined us to help provide food for the community. The Tutwiler Quilters started making masks. TCEC also received funding and donated items to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The Tutwiler Community Education Center is invested in supporting education and food equalities for our children and community. We know that these are extremely difficult times, but together, through authentic relationships, personal growth and development, and a collective mind toward helping our neighbors, TCEC can tackle these challenges with vigor. I envision a community working together that helps to enrich the lives of children and families. This is the vision from which I guide the organization toward the future.

Our community, the Tutwiler Community, appreciates your kindness and support.

Melanie Powell, Executive Director



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 situation certainly has made an impact on the Tutwiler Community Education Center and area residents. Our After School Program ended during spring break in the middle of March and then did not return! School was delayed several times and then finally canceled. Due to government regulations and the recommendation of health officials, the center stopped all programs, too—and not just our After School Program for children ages 7-13. Our vans were not able to travel throughout the county and bring Senior Citizens to the center for information, fun, fellowship, singing, and lunch each Wednesday. Teens, ages 13-18, could no longer gather at TCEC for a safe place to meet, exercise, talk, discuss, play, and have a snack together. Our Teen Helpers were suddenly unemployed! This is a reality of holding a job that we had not "trained" our Teen Helpers to anticipate. Adults in the community missed the spirited basketball games in our gym. Board members can't meet in person each month and had to adjust to conference calls. None of us could have imagined this happening.

However, we at TCEC continue to serve the children and families in the Tutwiler area and TCEC staff has continued to work. Since mid-March, the staff has made "grab and go" lunches for Tutwiler children. To date, more than 3,000 sandwiches have been made! Several groups partnered with us to make the program a success, including the West Tallahatchie School District, the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, Extra Table, the Maddox Foundation, Save the Children, and the Mississippi Food Network. And, many of you, our wonderful donors, realized our need and made contributions during this time. We thank each and every one of you! Preparing lunches daily was not in our budget. The children really appreciate the noon meal.

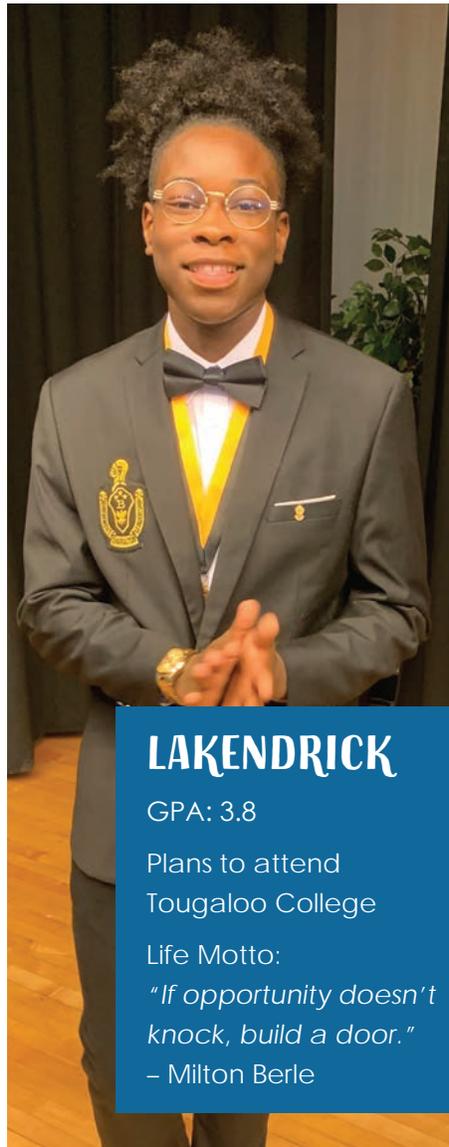


AALYIA

GPA: 3.9

Plans to attend the University of Pennsylvania

Life Motto:
Vision without action is just a daydream.

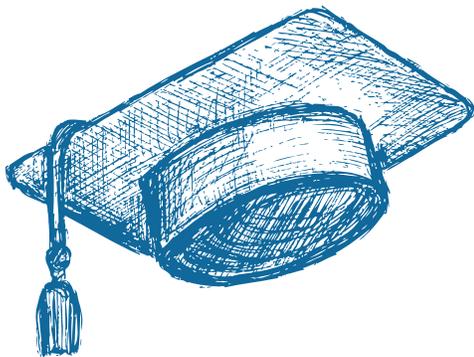


LAKENDRICK

GPA: 3.8

Plans to attend Tougaloo College

Life Motto:
"If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door."
– Milton Berle



PATRICK

GPA: 3.4

Plans to attend Mississippi Valley State University

Life Motto:
The only person you should strive to be better than, is the person you were yesterday.

TEEN HELPERS

The West Tallahatchie School District held high school graduation in June. It was just a few weeks later than originally scheduled in order to make the ceremony safe for the students, teachers, and families.

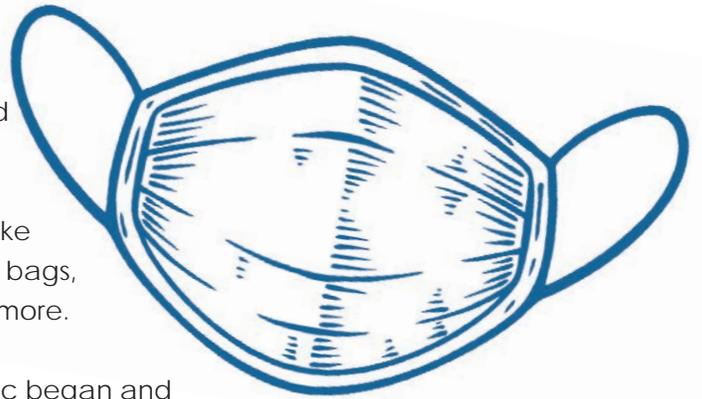
Graduating this spring were TCEC teen helpers Lakendrick Fultz, Aalyia Jenkins, Patrick Jenkins, and Makayla Thomas.

TCEC provided a Chromebook to each graduate as all have chosen to continue their education at the collegiate level. This was the second year to serve as a Teen Helper for three of helpers – Aalyia, Lakendrick, and Patrick. We are so proud of their work, their educational accomplishments, and their college choices. We wish them the very best in their future endeavors. We hope their work experience at TCEC has been beneficial to them and they learned valuable “work lessons” that will serve them in their future work endeavors.

Another group of Teen Helpers will be hired once school starts and although we do not know how that will look with the COVID-19 challenges, we are committed to continuing the program. For 30 years, being a TCEC Teen Helper has been the “first job” for many area teens. Our premier job training program has provided the foundation for work successes for hundreds of program participants.

TUTWILER QUILTERS

During this unique time, the Tutwiler Quilters have continued to work. Each week, quilters check in—one at a time for social distancing—to turn in the beautiful pieces they have made and to pick up materials to create additional items like quilts, potholders, tote bags, lanyards, cell phone and iPad bags, table runners, placemats, bowl cozies, scissor holders, and more.

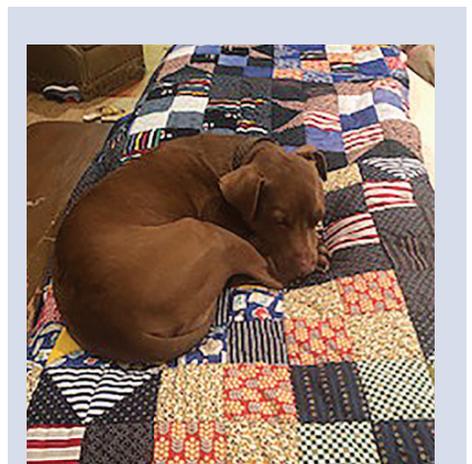


New for the quilters was making masks! When the pandemic began and masks were in short supply, Tutwiler Quilters stepped up to fill that need. They have since made hundreds of masks. We have mailed masks across the country to fill orders made by friends. We made sure senior citizens received masks to protect them from the coronavirus. Masks were donated to area hospitals, too. Greenwood Leflore Hospital, Tallahatchie General Hospital in Charleston, MS, and the Tutwiler Clinic appreciated the beautiful and functional masks. Currently, masks are being made for children with a grant from the Women's Foundation of Mississippi.

Quilters also continued to fill special orders that we received online, by mail, and by phone. They are currently completing an order for 19 quilts!

Due to the pandemic, the Juke Joint Festival in Clarksdale and the Leadership Conference for Women Religious in Dallas were canceled. These are good shows where we sell many of our beautiful hand quilted items. The quilters missed having a vendor booth at these events, but we are hoping we can see our friends in Oxford, MS at the Episcopal Church annual show and sale this fall. We are also hopeful the Mississippi Craftsman's Guild Chimneyville show will take place in December.

The Tutwiler Quilters were featured on the popular "Mississippi Roads" show by Mississippi Public Broadcasting (MPB). You can see the story on Fiber Arts (Season 18, Episode 1803) at www.pbs.org/show/mississippi-roads/. We are pleased to be publicly recognized for our project. Thank you MPB!



For more information, contact Mary Ann Willis-Mackey, 662-345-8393.

From our Facebook page: Janice says: "I saw the segment on Mississippi Public Broadcast and just wanted to tell you ladies that you're doing a beautiful thing and keeping the arts alive. I see your work and I see you as an artist. I myself am not a quilter ... but I appreciate the hard work I see whenever I look at the beautiful quilts for sale at festivals and flea markets stores and online. God bless you and thank you for everything you do."

One special order quilt was delivered to a young couple in New Orleans in March. The recipient told us, "We love our quilt. Thank you!" and included this picture. All THREE household members love the quilt.



QUILTING LESSONS

The Women's Foundation of Mississippi awarded a grant to the Tutwiler Center to teach quilting to two generations of participants. Quilting has a rich tradition in the Mississippi Delta and classes will be taught in the African-American tradition using vibrant colors and creating unique patterns. All material, thread, batting, and sewing machines will be provided for participants to use.

Lessons will be offered to a parent or guardian and one child, 12-16 years of age, starting the month of September. It will be a great time to learn to quilt. COVID-19 safety precautions are in place. Participants will wear a mask and have their temperature taken upon arrival for each class. Additional cleaning has been established daily and quilters will have hand sanitizer to use throughout the class. We have been blessed with a donation of wipes, soap, and hand sanitizer from Save the Children.

Historically, quilting skills and techniques have been passed down from one generation to the next. The Tutwiler Center wants to encourage and continue this tradition with these free lessons.

Tutwiler Quilters began in 1984 with Sister Maureen Delaney. Hundreds of Tutwiler Quilts and thousands of potholders have been sold to people all across the United States and around the world. The rich tradition of the Tutwiler Quilters hand quilted items is appreciated by people from places near and far.

QUILTED ITEMS PRICE LIST

Item	Approx. size (in inches)	Price	Postage
Cell Phone Bag	4 ½ x 6 ½	\$15	\$10
Tablet Bag	6 x 8	\$18	\$10
iPad Bag	7 ½ x 10	\$20	\$10
Tote Bag	12 x 12	\$25	\$10
Mini Wall Hanging	12 x 18	\$10	\$10
Wall Hanging	20 x 40	\$45	\$10
Wall Hanging	36 x 48	\$80	\$10
Baby Quilt	36 x 48	\$80	\$10
Twin Quilt	66 x 96	\$325	\$35
Full Quilt	81 x 96	\$350	\$35
Queen Quilt	90 x 102	\$375	\$40
King Quilt	108 x 102	\$400	\$40

Additional Items	Price	Postage
Card	\$1.75	\$.50
Cards (5)	\$8	\$2
Pot Holder	\$7	\$5
Blues Pot Holder	\$10	\$5
Masks	\$7	\$3
Pot Holder Mitt	\$15	\$5
Placemats (set of 4)	\$40	\$10
Table Runner	\$45	\$10



From our Face book page posted under a beautiful red, white and blue quilt: Lorrie says, "That is STUNNING!"

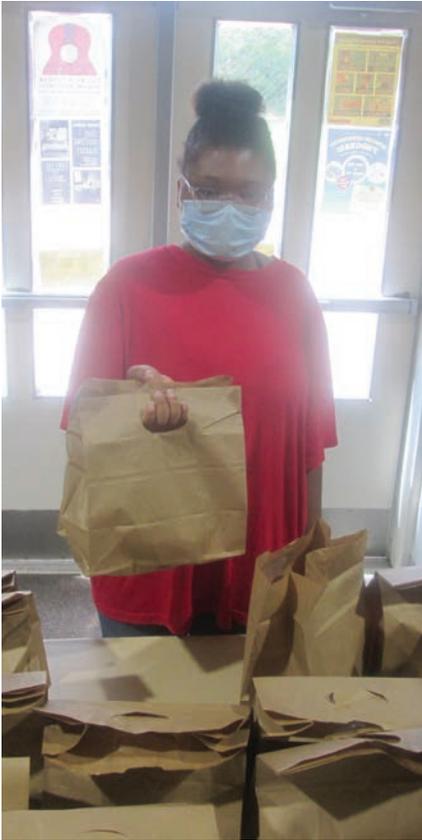
QUILTING NEEDS

- ♦ Cotton fabrics, including music, holiday, and juvenile print designs
- ♦ Solid color cotton flat sheets for backing
- ♦ Quilting thread in all colors



Postage includes insurance and tracking

TCEC NEWS



As soon as the West Tallahatchie Schools closed because of COVID-19, TCEC stepped up and began making “grab and go” lunches for the children. We recognize that school meals are extremely important for children's health. With partnerships and collaborations we have formed, we were blessed with donations to help with this project from the beginning. The Women's Foundation of Mississippi, Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, Maddox Foundation, Community Foundation of NW Mississippi, Extra Table of Hattiesburg, Mississippi Food Network, Jessie Smith Noyes, and Save the Children all made contributions to help keep us going during these uncertain times. Additionally, many of you, our friends and donors, helped beyond our wildest imagination! Thank you. You are the reason that together we have been making a difference in the lives of children and families in the Tutwiler area for 30 years. As this pandemic goes on without an end in sight, we will need your continued support as we work to serve our community.

Partnering with the Mississippi Food Network to distribute fresh food boxes each week has been a big help. With no grocery store in our community, fresh fruits and vegetables are often lacking in the diets of local residents. The nearest grocery store is 17 miles away and transportation is a major obstacle for many in our community to getting to a market with fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats. This program will end in August.

Along with distributing food, we provided residents with soap, antibacterial wipes, and hand sanitizer, along with masks made by the Tutwiler Quilters. We were able to help residents stay safe and take proper precautions to avoid getting coronavirus. In addition to the Tutwiler Quilters masks, staff made 50 hospital gowns for the Tallahatchie General Hospital in Charleston, MS due to the shortages the hospital is experiencing.

The TCEC staff has continued to work during this time. They have stepped up to help those most vulnerable in our community by making deliveries, preparing lunches, distributing donated items, and by working diligently to keep TCEC clean and sanitary.

SUMMER AT TCEC

Summer activities for children took place at TCEC with a new set of rules. Safety first! All State of Mississippi and CDC regulations were followed with those who came to the Tutwiler Community Education Center this summer. We implemented stringent cleaning practices for the facility. Children who attended our program wore masks and had their temperature taken prior to entering the building. Social distancing was practiced and there was a limit on the number of participants in each class. Even with those guidelines to follow, we still offered fun summer activities. Two days a week, the children received music instruction. This included learning to play various instruments like guitar, drums, keyboards, and percussion. Singing was a part of the lesson plan, as well as the blues and music history that is such an important part of the Tutwiler history. Two days included STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) learning and projects. The children had so much fun with many of the projects that they didn't realize they were learning important lessons and concepts. The Shifting Rhythms instructors completed each project with an in-depth discussion so our students would recognize what they learned. Students had the opportunity to learn, explore, grow, and have fun this summer at the Tutwiler Center.



FALL AT TCEC

Traditional school in the fall will not take place. Students will have a virtual learning schedule. TCEC will work with the local school district and follow guidelines set forth by the district and the Mississippi Department of Education. We will assist the children throughout the day with their virtual learning. Our 30 year after school program will look different in September, but we do know that learning still requires supplies. With the help of friends like you, we will provide new backpacks and supplies for back to school. You can help make this happen with your contributions to TCEC. We do know that we want to expand the knowledge of computers for our children and we would love to raise funds to provide a computer for each of our students. If you would like to be a part of making that happen, please call the center at 662-345-8393.

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WAYS TO HELP THE TUTWILER COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER

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- ◆ PayPal – visit www.tutwilercommunityeducationcenter.org to make a donation via PayPal by clicking the PayPal button at the bottom of the cover page. We will be sure to receive your gift when you donate this way. Have you considered making a monthly donation? You can set that up the same way.
- ◆ Bequest – leave TCEC in your will. Contact Melanie Powell for additional information.
- ◆ If you are leaving the Tutwiler Community Education Center in your will, please let us know so we can say “Thank you!”
- ◆ Gifts of Stock – we welcome gifts of stock. We are happy to work with you to make this process easy!

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www.tutwilercommunityeducationcenter.org