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Exclusive Interview With The President

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*The Vanguard's Mission Statement: From a Scholar's View,
Sharing Stories, Research and Resources that Shape the
Community College of Philadelphia and its Community.
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Urban Gardening in Philadelphia

Angie Bacha

Urban gardeners spring to action with renewed energy after 2020's long hibernation.

All around the country, springtime is bringing with it a sense of new hope and growth. The classic shaking off of the winter stagnation seems even more refreshing this year as an end to an era is in sight. Many are being vaccinated; restrictions are easing; long-distance loved ones are reuniting.

For all growers in Philadelphia, the time has come to sew new seeds for a new season.

Philly has been a hub of innovative urban gardening initiatives for decades. Nationally recognized [Greensgrow Farms](#)—“an educational urban farm and demonstration garden that provides an essential connection to food and nature in an urban community”—stuck its roots into Kensington soil in 1997. [Soil Generation](#)—“a Black & Brown-led coalition of gardeners, farmers, individuals, and community-based organi-

zations working to ensure people of color regain community control of land”—has been alive and well since 2012.

And these are just two names. According to a 2019 Public Meeting of Philadelphia's urban agriculture plan, [Growing From the Root](#), there are over 400 active gardens and farms operating in the county.

[Sankofa Community Garden](#) in Southwest has been a great place to start for many new gardeners. Hajjah Glover, Youth Supervisor and supervisor of the B.I.G. Garden Beds program, said that learning to garden is about “helping to create sovereign communities.” The B.I.G. Garden Bed program does just that. “We provide the soil, we provide the seeds, we provide the garden beds. And we install it for you for twenty-five bucks,” said Glover.

Glover believes that the supermarkets are a great way to tell if a neighborhood has access to healthy foods. Every year, Sankofa runs a Food Justice Walk through the food markets of West Philadelphia to help young people understand the urgency of growing their own food.

“When you go into these markets in Southwest closer to black and brown communities, it is full of rotten fruits and vegetables. They have meat mixed with fruits and vegetables—anybody know that's cross contamination!” said Glover.

“And we don't want this in our community,” Glover explained. “But the way you start is by growing your own food.”

Over in North Philadelphia, another group is also focusing on empowering young people through gardening.

[The Urban Gardening Initiative \(TUGI\)](#) is “a brand new club” at Temple that “can't wait to finally start.” TUGI is a non-profit with chapters worldwide that create year-long programming for youth in schools. According to TUGI Philadelphia's Social Media Manager, Christine, the COVID-19 pandemic put their plans on hold in 2020.

2021 means new beginnings, however.

“Sometime in the fall 2021 semester, we'll finally be able to meet in-person for the first time, recruit members, hold meetings, and most importantly, start gardening and connecting to the Philadelphia community,” said Christine.

Said Glover: “You start that by [saying], ‘I wanna take ownership of what I eat. And I'ma do that by growing my own food.’”

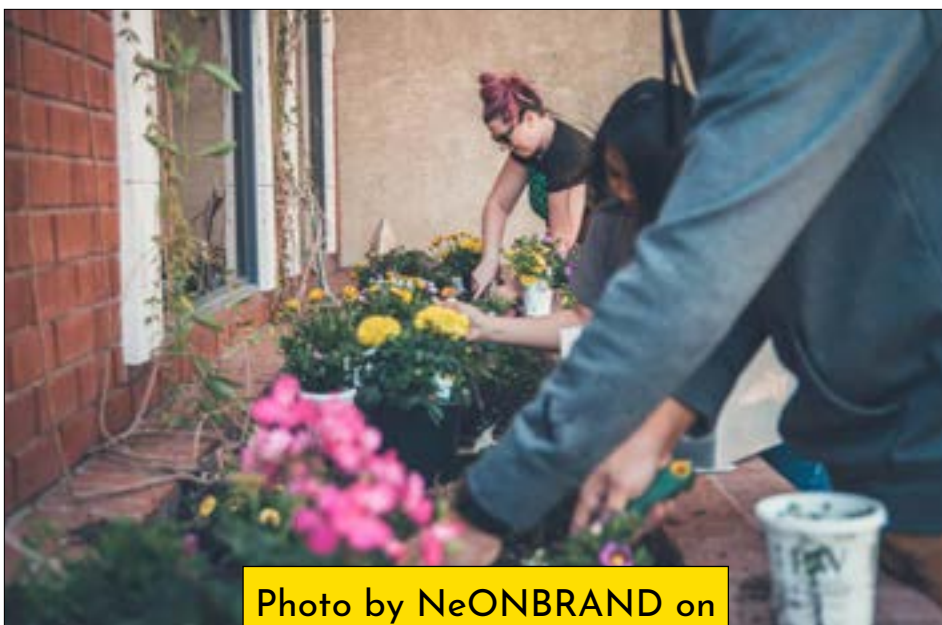


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Uplifting the Homeless Community one Haircut at a Time

Angela Reyes

Local barber offers to help people experiencing homelessness in the way he knows best.

Photo by Dan Gold on Unsplash



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Hard times have come to virtually everyone across the city, but none more so than the homeless population and those who suffer already from food and housing insecurity. To people currently living on the street or wondering where their next meal will come from, Philadelphians have demonstrated that they are ready and willing to help.

Philadelphia-based barber, Brennon Jones, has taken it upon himself to give back to the homeless community the only way he knows how: with haircuts. As the founder of "Haircuts 4 Homeless," Brennon can be found hard at work most days of the week tending to clients usually on Broad & Walnut or on varying street corners in the city.

When asked why he chose to offer haircuts in particular, Jones offered a simple answer.

"As a professional barber for over 10 years, I thought it would make sense to combine my passion for people with my skills of barbering. I knew it would be a good way to spark the conversation of homelessness," said Jones. "Plus, when you look good, you feel good!"

According to a study of Philadelphia college students, it has been found that more than half at two-year campuses reported difficulty retaining adequate food and secure housing. And due to the pandemic, it is assumed that this number has and continues to rise. Also included in this new report by the Temple-based Hope Center for

College, Community and Justice, housing insecurity was reported at 55 percent at the Community College of Philadelphia.

In Jones' unique line of work, he is all too familiar with the many stigmas attached to the homeless population and approaches this subject with a simple response.

"Never judge a book by its cover. Also, don't rule out the fact that at any given time you could be stripped of everything," said Jones. "For that reason we must all be humble."

Although the Community College of Philadelphia has seen some help with the Cares Act Student Emergency Fund, which allowed the college to receive \$8 million to assist disadvantaged students, there is still a need—and a

desire—for residents in the city to continue to help.

When asked about those who wish to help struggling communities but are unsure of where to start, Jones offers words of advice.

"For those who want to help the homeless but don't know where to start, I suggest first to ask yourself 'Why?'" said Jones. "You have to do a lot of soul searching to prepare you for this line of work. It's not as easy as it seems. I would also suggest doing your research on homelessness and how to approach those who are suffering from it...I chose haircuts, but there's plenty of ways to give back. Making bagged lunches, collecting clothing. As long as it's from the heart, they'll appreciate it!"

The College's President Wins National Award

Angie Bacha

Dr. Generals, President of CCP, is interviewed on his recent win of the Pacesetter Award

Dr. Donald Guy Generals, President of Community College of Philadelphia, recently became the 2021 National Winner of the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations' Pacesetter Award. The award was largely given for his use of leveraging marketing and public relations practices with his "Enough is Enough" teach-in series. Here, he speaks about the award and his thoughts about CCP's mission to the community.

Angie: What a fantastic honor to be talking to you about [the Pacesetter Award] today. And that was mostly through your work this past year with your "Enough is Enough" series, is that correct?

Dr. Generals: That's correct.

AB: Can you speak a little bit about what the "Enough is Enough" series is, where it came from, where it all started?

DG: Yeah, sure. Coming on the heels of the social unrest that took place last year in conjunction with the pandemic, I think there was a need for the college to reach out to the community and to offer opportunities to speak their minds relative to the social unrest: the related racism, and gender, and homophobia that was going on in the country,



Latinx Fireside Chat courtesy of ccp.edu

and that continues to go on in the country...We decided that it was important...to engage with college professionals, with community professionals. We had police officers; we had faculty there. We had Dr. Ala Sanford there from the Black Doctors Consortium who, at that point, was one of the few people out there testing people. And...we felt that if anyone offers this forum, for these types of community voices to be heard, it should be the community college.

AB: Mhm, definitely.

DG: So this was an opportunity for us to show the true value of a community college, and that is...an expression of how we value the community. How we prioritize those things that are important in our community, and how we can come together to seek solutions to those types of intractable problems that

we were up against. So the "Enough is Enough" series wasn't my idea singularly. We have a marketing department that looked to find ways to...get our voices out there; ...to make sure that we had a good forum with some honest talk about the things that needed to be done relative to community safety, violence in the community, gun violence....The last one, I don't know if you saw it-

AB: I did, actually.

DG: The disparities amongst minority women. I mean it was a—you know—it was a phenomenal work. Dr. Nwakanma exceeded my expectations in terms of her professionalism and the kinds of simple language that she was able to use to express and articulate very complicated issues as it relates to healthcare.

AB: Yes, absolutely.

DG: So we'll continue to do it...Education has an end goal. And the end goal is equality, social justice, and opportunities, fairness, and pathways into a more prosperous future.

AB: Absolutely. So you're saying that the community college is specifically well-positioned for that role. I'm wondering why specifically the community college? And why specifically CCP?

DG: Well I'll tell you a little secret: There's a lot of great universities all around us, but Community College of Philadelphia is the largest and the only purely public institution of higher ed in the city of Philadelphia...90% of the students that graduate and go onto work stay in the city of Philadelphia. They're from the public schools. So, you know, it really puts meaning to the name "community college." ...But of course I have my bias and I think the community college- if not us, then who? We have to elevate our voices in the community to encourage the community and to ensure them that we are about the community...

AB: Mhm. Do you think the ["Enough is Enough"] series is going to continue in a virtual sense for the time being?

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DG: I think we will. I think the technology is such that we could have it hybrid, where some people can be in a room, in a theater, in an auditorium, or classroom, while others [can] log in online. You know, the beauty of this is that it's not limited to the college audience, to the college population. We've had people from around the city log in....So I imagine it will only continue and expand. That's what I envision.

AB: Very cool. So speaking a little bit on the [virtual aspect]- You had an interview back in October [where] you were part of a panel for Graduate Philadelphia Advancing Learning Pathways and Economic Opportunity, and you talked a little bit about how...we've gone all virtual this year- how that

changes our landscape for the future. And I remember you also said, "I'm jokingly saying that there's gonna be no more snow days!"

DG: (chuckling) There hasn't been! This winter, there hasn't been any snow days, even though we had a couple snow events. No need to stop classes.

AB: (laughs) I know! So I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how this virtual landscape might move forward. If anyone has had discussions around what that might change for the college?

DG: Yeah sure. So you know it's the ubiquitous new normal- What's the new normal entail for colleges and businesses and workplace. And

I'm of the mindset that it should augment what we do.... So I think what we have demonstrated by becoming 100% virtual—we did it overnight. [It] was 10 days and...every class, student services, "Enough is Enough": everything went online. I think we've demonstrated that we can become a virtual college, but I think the best world scenario would be a hybrid, where we're doing things face to face, but to the extent that we need to extend beyond the walls of the campus, we can do that....Students can meet with their teachers via Zoom. They can meet with their counselors, their advisors. I don't think online instruction can take the place of face-to-face ultimately, 100%. I don't think it supplants what we've done for 400 years as institutions of higher

education. It augments, it makes it stronger, it makes it better...I think there's something of value in the human face-to-face contact and the life experience on a college campus....I'm convinced that enough people will be vaccinated by mid summer, where we should be able to safely...slowly get back to a sense of normalcy.

AB: Yeah. Yeah, well, this "new normal," normalcy, who knows.

DG: Right.

AB: So beyond the logistics of the pandemic next fall and more so along the lines of the social justice aspect of this conversation, do you have thoughts on how this

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Club Spotlight: Christian Women's and Men's Alliance

Leila Franklin

A new series conceptualized and brought to you by Leila Franklin. A space offered for students looking for connection.

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, students have been barred from interacting and socializing with their peers.

According to a research study in the Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 80% of participants aged 18-35 reported "significant depressive symptoms" during the pandemic. Most participants cited loneliness, isolation, and anxiety during the pandemic.

However, students like Heather Heron are refusing to keep the pandemic from allowing them to engage with their peers regarding their interests. Heron is the president of The Community College of Philadelphia's Christian Women's and Men's Alliance.

The Christian Women's and Men's Alliance is one of the oldest clubs available at CCP. The club allows students, faculty members, and other Christian believers to come together in fellowship and discuss their faith.

"With the Christian Women's and Men's Alliance, it is my hope that I am able to bring different people together from different backgrounds," said Heron.

The club is open to people from all Christian denominations and other faiths. The club aims to share its perspective on Christian living using testimonies from The Bible with participants. The club addresses common topics and themes that come up in everyday life like anger,

integrity, and faith.

Club members come together to investigate how those themes are addressed in the Bible and how those teachings can be applied to their lives. "

"I hope and pray for all kinds of people to come to this club. It's been especially hard with the pandemic to find fellowship," said Heron.

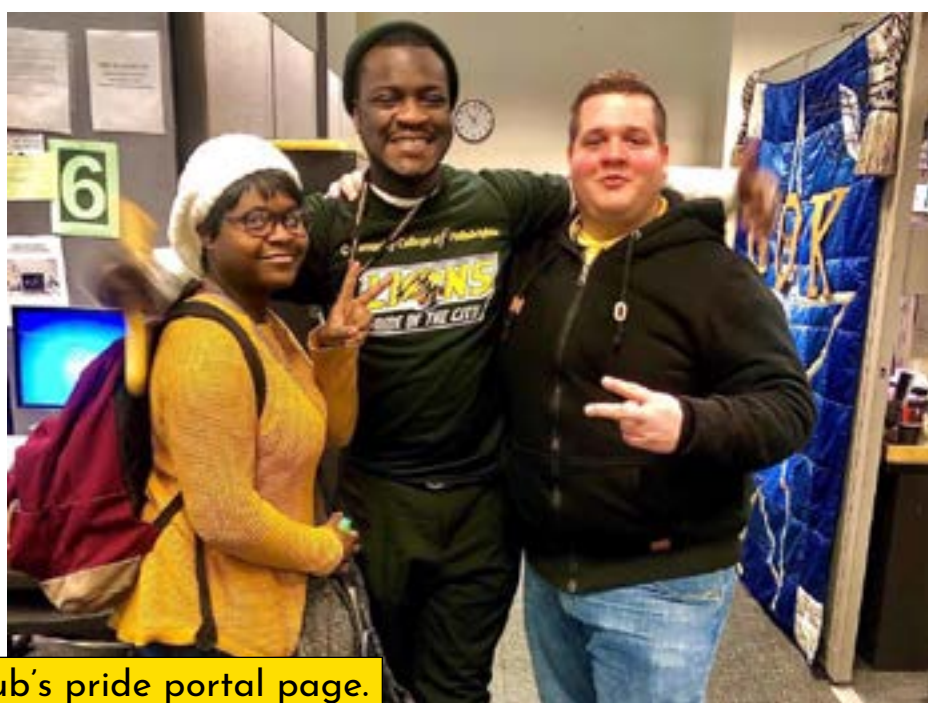
Gabriel Serrano has been with the club for several weeks and participated in many bible talks and studies.

"I believe it's a great way to gather those in college who share the same faith and want to benefit through fellowship with Christ," Serrano stated. "Also, the club allows everyone to develop new friendships,

get support, and commit to a time to study the bible, as well as staying focused throughout the pandemic".

The Christian Women's and Men's Alliance is not the only club where students can collaborate and engage with one another. The variety of Clubs available at CCP can be discovered using the Pride Portal or by reaching out to Piseitta Arrington.

Parties interested in visiting the Christian Women's and Men's Alliance can do so by visiting the Pride Portal every Wednesday at 5:00pm. Heather Heron can also be contacted via email at Hheron1@student.ccp.edu for more information.

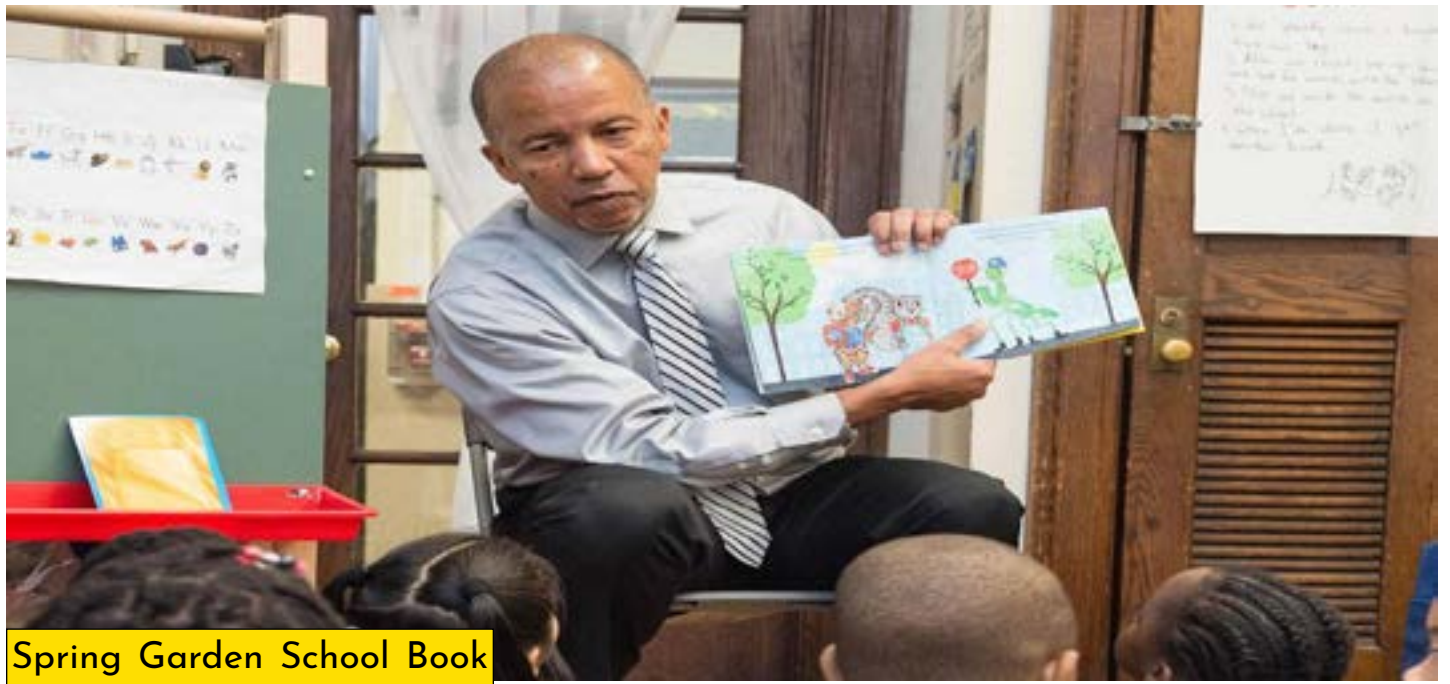


Photos courtesy of the club's pride portal page. Check them out [here!](#)

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pandemic will affect the... CCP community for the next couple years? Because we know this is going to have a ripple effect economically, socially, in many different ways.

DG: Yeah I think what the pandemic did was expose the inequities that existed...I think it has placed before our eyes the reality of the circumstances. We just can no longer hide the facts. And as a result of that, we now have the opportunity to begin changing some of those facts...You know, it's a challenge in America. America's got a long history of racism and so-forth, but at some point, it's got to slowly begin to change...Maybe the turning point could be as we speak.



Spring Garden School Book Reading courtesy of ccp.edu



2020 MLK Day of Service courtesy of ccp.edu

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National Poetry Month

April is National Poetry Month in the United States and Canada so in honor of poetic literature, here are twenty-six of some of the more well-known poets.

How many of these names are you familiar with?

E D R U D Y A R D K I P L I N G
 D T V L E N C B M Y N E T L J T
 L G K C E M Z N P V A N N O O K
 I S J M C X N B G J M N O U H G
 W N N M U A W B W M T O R I N P
 R R Z U M V I S J R I D Y S K D
 A U L A M O L I T J H N B A E P
 C B E E I T L R K E W H D M A K
 S T W R N A I W W M T O R A T E
 O R I O G M A A I I L J O Y S R
 W E S H S H M L L L A S L A E A
 P B C T G K W T L Y W E Y L O E
 H O A D M A O E I D X H R C P P
 I R R I A A R R A I V G O O N S
 L S R V Y N D R M C Y U B T A E
 L A O A A N S A B K D H E T L K
 I R L D A A W L L I R N R K L A
 S A L Y N K O E A N A O T G A H
 W T C R G B R I K S H T F F R S
 H E T N E Y T G E O S S R B A M
 E A T E L R H H N N A G O F G A
 A S T H O E X R Y Y M N S P D I
 T D G P U M N K F C O A T J E L
 L A M G J O Y V L M H L M K R L
 E L W T L H N I A W T K R A M I
 Y E R W M M Y H X T J P P B M W

ANNA AKHMATOVA
 E E CUMMINGS
 EDGAR ALLAN POE
 EMILY DICKINSON
 HENRY DAVID THOREAU
 HOMER
 JOHN DONNE
 JOHN KEATS
 LANGSTON HUGHES
 LEWIS CARROLL
 LORD BYRON
 LOUISA MAY ALCOTT
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 OSCAR WILDE
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 ROBERT BURNS
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— Salvatore Quasimodo

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