

MEDIA Coverage



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'Important for future historians': Centenary students collecting archives of COVID pandemic

By Priscilla Liguori



HACKETTSTOWN, NJ - A group of college students in New Jersey is working to preserve history from not too long ago. What began as an assignment has grown into something bigger.

A gold key turns back time and unlocks the Colleen Bain Archive at Centenary University.

While some may want to forget it, a group of students is chronicling the COVID-19 pandemic. They've been scouring the school health center and facility closets for signs, cleaning supplies, and even testing kits.

The collection of archives started as a project in a public history class last semester, but the students found the effort so important, they've kept working.

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"We're trying to show the stories of everybody," said Nickolas Gorav, a Centenary University student. "Faculty, professors, students, student athletes, coaches."

"It's something we've never seen before, so it's just important to see how each person was affected differently and what they did to overcome," said Michael Danza, who also goes to Centenary University.

"The goal of a good display is to try to tell as many of those stories as possible, and the goal for the students was to teach them how to research, how to find stuff in the archives," said Dr. Noah Haiduc-Dale, the archivist and an associate professor of history at Centenary University.

"One of the most impactful photos for me is this one," said Cecilia Smith, a Centenary University student. "They had to come pick up their caps and gowns and diplomas from their cars."

The collection features face shields students made with a 3D printer, as well as a bag all faculty and staff got with #CyclonesSafe masks and hand sanitizer.

"Nick and I were dealt a hand of comparing COVID-19 to the Spanish influenza," said Danza.

They couldn't find any local history recorded about that, giving more meaning to this mission.

Sometimes, it's about ensuring history doesn't repeat itself.

"Hopefully it doesn't, but if something like this happens, another pandemic, especially in this area, they can go down and look at what we did and how we handled this situation," said Gorav.

"This is really important for future historians and even future students to see," said Smith.

"I would love to have it in a permanent display, so I'm definitely working on that," said Haiduc-Dale.

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