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# Students abroad volunteer at refugee camp

🕒 November 14, 2016 👤 Ashton Leber 📁 Features 💬 0



**By Ashton Leber**  
*Correspondent*

A group of 16 students in the College's study abroad program in Heidelberg, Germany, banded together to address the growing refugee crisis in Europe.

In their spare time, these students have taken to volunteering at a nearby village abound with refugee children from the Middle East and Africa.

Countless child refugees between the ages of 4 and 13 have taken shelter at the Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg.

## POLL

**Do you feel safe on campus?**

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Most of the time
- ☐ Most of the time, but not at night
- ☐ Some times
- ☐ Never

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Students of the College are helping these children learn math and German, as well as how to read and write, in a structured and organized classroom setting.



**The Patrick Henry Village in Heidelberg, Germany, provides shelter for refugees. (AP Photo)**

major Jack Purcell.

“(The program) includes TCNJ students that have a passion for teaching poverty-stricken kids, and providing them with an education that they have never had the chance to pursue,” DiNola said.

The students volunteer at the refugee center three days a week from 8 a.m. to noon. They travel an hour each way, and their commute begins by tram, followed by bus and ends with a 20-minute walk to the Patrick Henry Village.

The program is overseen by marketing Professor and Heidelberg program adviser Karen Becker. According to DiNola, nearly 30 children at the refugee center show up for the lessons each day.

“The reason why we wanted to get involved was due to the influx of refugees that have entered Germany due to the crisis in Syria,” DiNola said.

In a short time, the College volunteers have already connected on a personal level with the children. They said volunteering at the Patrick Henry Village has left a lasting impression on them.

“Prior to our experience, the word ‘refugee’ had a very negative connotation to us,” Purcell said. “But after our experiences volunteering, we have gained a lot of sympathy and respect for these people and their courageous journey.”

The volunteer opportunity known as TCNJ Kids at Play (KAP) was started this semester by junior finance major Julian DiNola and junior marketing

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In addition to teaching, the student volunteers have started a GoFundMe account for the KAP program, which has raised 2,100

Euros or \$2,232 dollars. The money raised through GoFundMe has allowed the students to supply materials and other resources to the village.

Through KAP, students have learned more about the day-to-day hardships that the refugees struggle with.

Many of the volunteers call the experience life changing. They plan to continue volunteering when they return home and hope that the KAP program continues for years to come.

“We hope our work here is inspirational enough that it continues into future semesters and becomes a permanent part of the Heidelberg experience,” Purcell said.



Children play at the refugee camp. (AP Photo)



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