PRESS RELEASE
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NJCH and the Center for Cooperative Media Launch New "South Jersey Community Reporters" Initiative

Selected participants will receive funding and mentorship to strengthen local news and community resilience in Black communities across South Jersey

(Camden, NJ) – The New Jersey Council for the Humanities (NJCH) and the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University announce the launch of "South Jersey Community Reporters," a program which will develop and conduct training and workshops for aspiring community reporters from across South Jersey as part of the Center's South Jersey Information Equity Project (SJIEP).

By fusing community journalism with public humanities practices and knowledge, South Jersey Community Reporters aims to create opportunities for residents of South Jersey to reshape how their communities produce, share, and engage with local news.

Community Reporters will receive funding of up to $5,100 to join a small intergenerational cohort that participates in 8 expert-led journalism and media workshops on topics such as media literacy, finding data, storytelling, and multimedia production skills. The cohort will work alongside SJIEP media partner Tennyson Donyéa, founder of Black in Jersey, and recent SJIEP fellow and Camden-based journalist, Charles Curtis III. The community reporters will produce 1-2 collaboratively reported stories, which will be published by local media partners.

"Robust local journalism, informed by a knowledge of communities' histories and their values, is a cornerstone of democracy, and empowers community members to pursue a more just and responsive society," said Carin Berkowitz, Ph.D., executive director of NJCH. "This partnership between NJCH and SJIEP will help build the capacity of South Jerseyans to shape their news in ways that create a better-represented and more equitable region."

"The South Jersey Community Reporter initiative will incorporate multimedia journalism, the arts and an exploration of how community-centered reporting has historically fostered dialogue, advocacy and healing, particularly in Black communities, in response to acts of hatred and injustice," said Cassandra Etienne, assistant director of programming and membership at the Center for Cooperative Media. "We're excited to partner with the New Jersey Council for the Humanities in this new effort to support local journalists and storytellers."

As part of the program, NJCH and CCM will also co-host two "Telling Our Stories" public community learning events in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 on the history of the Black Press and countering hate-motivated violence with restorative narrative.

The South Jersey Community Reporter initiative is made possible with funding from "United We Stand: Connecting Through Culture," a National Endowment for the Humanities initiative which supports humanities projects that combat hate by fostering cross-cultural understanding, empathy, and community resilience.