

# NEWS

## Tech loves Cookeville

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Tennessee Tech loves Cookeville. That statement was never more evident than on Wednesday when hundreds of students, faculty and staff turned out to assist tornado victims in the community.

Even though Tennessee Tech did not have any injuries reported or structural damage to any buildings on campus from the F-4 twister that ravaged homes and business and killed 18 people a few miles away, President Phil Oldham canceled classes and closed campus on Tuesday.

He urged the Tech community to show its love for Cookeville and Putnam County by canceling classes and closing campus again and designating Wednesday a Tech Loves Cookeville day of service for those willing and able to volunteer and help the victims.

The Tech community responded in fine fashion. Hundreds of students, faculty and staff used chainsaws to cut trees, moved debris, carried supplies, and cared for the people affected by devastating loss.

"I know hundreds of you put your hearts and energy into cleaning up and helping people heal today," President Oldham said in an email to campus late Wednesday night. "I read the posts, emails, and tweets and saw the photos. I am proud and amazed, but not surprised."

Community officials asked for volunteers to stay away from the heavily damaged area on Thursday, prompting Oldham and university officials to resume classes and activities on campus.

"This will be a long physical and emotional recovery. There will be work days, weeks and months from now. Tech students, faculty and staff will be there," Oldham said. "We will continue to organize and keep campus informed about ways to donate and volunteer. We will follow the guidance of our community leaders who have been working day and night to do the right thing. We will also make sure everyone on campus has the opportunity for the emotional support they need."

Information for those who still want to donate and serve is located on the Tech website at [https://www.tntech.edu/volunteer/donate.php \(/volunteer/donate.php\)](https://www.tntech.edu/volunteer/donate.php (/volunteer/donate.php)).

"I have respect and gratitude for your work," said Oldham. "You have poignantly demonstrated what it really means to be a Tennessee Tech student and live Wings Up with heart and passion!"

Oldham also asked that anyone on campus who needs someone to listen to their needs for absences, food, shelter, clothing or emotional support should let someone on campus know.

"Faculty and staff will listen and help you," he said. "If you don't feel comfortable doing it in person, email [ttunews@tntech.edu](mailto:ttunews@tntech.edu) (<mailto:ttunews@tntech.edu>) and we will get you to the right person."

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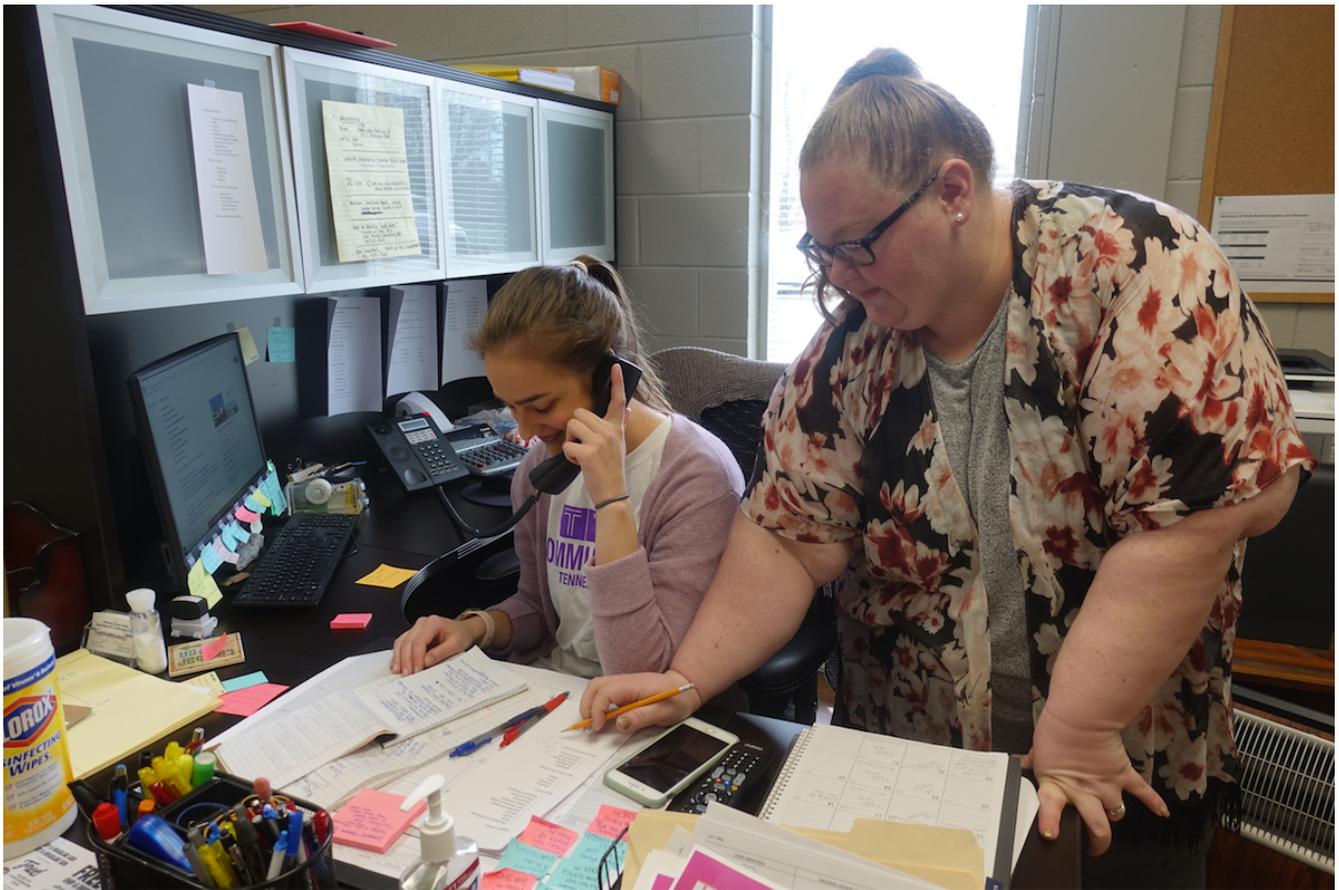


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# NEWS

## Tech volunteer spirit alive and well

Published Thursday Mar 5, 2020 | Laura Militana | [MEDIA RESOURCES \(/NEWS/\)](#)



When Michelle Huddleston woke up the morning of Tuesday, March 3, she knew it was going to be a busy day.

As the sun came up, the sheer devastation of an F-4 tornado that hit west Cookeville became evident. And since news broke of the devastation and tragedy, Huddleston, who is the assistant director of Tech's Service Learning Center, has been in volunteer mode.

Huddleston has been helping at the Cookeville Community Center, a designated drop-off for donations in the event of disasters such as the tornado that struck early Tuesday morning. She has not stopped answering the phones from people and organizations all over the country who are wanting to help.

"This is my new home for now," said Huddleston about the community center where the phones continued to ring Thursday morning in the office she has taken over. "I've been here since Tuesday and the response has been huge."

Several Tech students and organizations have also answered the call to volunteer. Hannah Phillips, a junior nursing major from Franklin, has been a big part of that movement.

"I came in Tuesday right after classes were cancelled," she said. "I started asking for help then."

Phillips has been the food pantry manager for a year and was ready to help when it came time.

"We met over at the food pantry early that afternoon and brought some supplies, such as bottled water, toiletries and other basic kitchen items," Phillips said. "The response I got was amazing."

Around 20 Tech students showed up to help and stayed at the community center to help organize.

Tech President and First Lady Phil and Kari Oldham also spent time at the community center Wednesday, along with various staff from different departments, helping shop for affected families.

Members of Tech's athletics programs have also been out in full force, helping at the community center, area churches and out in the disaster zone.

A private school in Monterey also came in and took over sorting donations and supplies. Heritage Academy students and faculty arrived Tuesday and are still on hand with Huddleston helping sort donations.

"I'll be here as long as I'm needed," Huddleston said.

Anyone wishing to donate supplies or volunteer can visit <https://www.tntech.edu/volunteer/donate.php> ([/volunteer/donate.php](https://www.tntech.edu/volunteer/donate.php)) for information or visit the Cookeville Strong Facebook group.

# NEWS

## Campus turns out to support Tech Strong: Day of Service

Buddy Pearson | [MEDIA RESOURCES \(/NEWS/\)](#)



One year after an F4 tornado violently swept through parts of Baxter, along Highway 70 and into Cookeville, killing 19 people and damaging hundreds of homes, Tennessee Tech University paid tribute to the lives lost and the impact the tornado had on the community by designating March 3, 2021 as Tech Strong: Day of Service.

A ceremony was held Wednesday morning on Centennial Plaza where students, faculty and staff gathered to listen to various speakers recant that fateful day, give thanks and discuss the reaction and response campus had to the tornado.



The ceremony was emceed by Buddy Pearson, Tech communications and news director, and included speakers Rob Owens, interim vice president for student affairs; Lauren Neal, manager for the center for innovation in teaching and learning; Jessica Davis, internal auditor; Terri McWilliams, director of budgets; Aaron Lay, SGA president; Kim Hanna, dean of the Whitson-Hester School of Nursing; Dewayne Alexander, head football coach; Doc Wells, a professor in the department of decisions sciences and management; Susan Wells, a lecturer in the department of decision sciences and management; and Megan Atkinson, Tech archivist.

Students were also encouraged to sign up for service projects as an alternative spring break.

Later in the afternoon, several students, faculty and staff gathered in front of Derryberry Hall where Tech president Phil Oldham and Owens said a few words before the chimes in Derryberry carillon rang 19 times at 1:48 p.m., to honor each person who died in the tornado in Putnam County. Those 19 victims were also honored with a star placed alongside Centennial Plaza.





