

Published August 29th, 2012

Back to School, Saint Mary's College Style

Cathy Dausman



Cars line up in front of Augustine Hall to unload freshmen and possessions Photo Cathy Dausman

Students came from across the globe. "Our new international freshmen are citizens of Australia, Austria, Canada, China, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, Taiwan, the U.K. and Japan," said Michael McAlpin, Director of Media Relations. "We're also seeing more enrollments of students from Hawaii and more from the Pacific Northwest."

Of the 2,800 Saint Mary's students, only freshmen and sophomores were guaranteed on-campus housing. Freshmen generally live in the central campus area. Sophomores live in "the Canyon Area," which includes several suite-style residence halls located at the back of the campus. Juniors and seniors populate unfilled residence space by participating in a housing lottery.

Lamorindans in nearby apartment complexes like those on Ascot Drive, in Miramonte Gardens or at Park Lafayette noticed a surge in residents as students sought off campus housing, but they were not the only ones who detected a shift in the town's dynamic.

When asked if he knew it was back to school time for the college, Moraga Police Chief Robert Priebe remarked, "Clearly, we do." Priebe explained that is mostly because it is back-to-school time for nearly everyone else as well, and is always accompanied by a notable drop in vacation watch requests. Saint Mary's is "very proactive" when it comes to safety issues, said Priebe, although until new students get the hang of dialing "9" before calling off-campus, there might be a few mistaken 911 calls placed.

Welcome, class of 2016. This was not your typical college experience. Many of the approximately 600 freshmen checking into Saint Mary's College residence halls were met by upperclass student volunteers and treated to valet move-in service from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. last Thursday, August 23.

"Welcome to Saint Mary's," the group cheered before they descended on the next car in line, unloading an entire dorm room full of possessions in mere minutes.

Senior Molly Allen was ground-traffic controller. Stop the car. Pop the trunk. Unload belongings into the arms of waiting Resident Assistants, Mission and Ministry or Week of Welcome volunteers. Tag the belongings with room number. Dispatch the belongings.

"Once we got the routine down it went pretty smoothly," she said. Those working the Augustine move-in felt lucky; only it and the Aquinas residences have elevators. Behind Allen, Brother Dominic Berardelli worked the line of cars, introducing himself and chatting with incoming freshmen. He met parents sending their only child to college, as well as those with both college age and kindergarten age students. "This is my favorite day of the year," he said. Returning students said everyone gets to meet "Brother Dom" on the first day.

Reach the reporter at: cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA