

[JMU Parents]

Connection starts here

Milbert family builds JMU-parent relationships with First-Year Send Offs

BY JAN GILLIS ('07)

Going off to college — one of the most exciting times for students and their families — can also be challenging and downright anxiety-ridden.

Will my child's college experience be positive? Will college be too much of a financial burden for our family? What dining package will my student need? What if my student has problems with a roommate? The questions seem never ending, and the problems that might present loom large.

It would be nice to have the advice and reassurance from experienced parents and

students who have made the transition.

That's where JMU's First-Year Send Off picnics come in. Held at various locations around the country, the events give new Dukes and their families a chance to get to know others from their locale, and pose any and all questions to current JMU parents and students, and staff members.

Hosting send off picnics is a way of life for Fred ('76, '11P) and Lerita Milbert ('11P). Even though their daughter Kallie ('11, '12M) is now officially a JMU alum, the Milberts are five-time hosts for the summer send



off event in Prince William County, Va. "We feel we get parents out of the dark and calm their fears, especially if they are sending off their first child," says Lerita. That's what makes their role so enjoyable. "The best experience is seeing parents come into a picnic really nervous as to what they are getting into and seeing them leave with a look of relief. They say, 'I feel like I'm connected now, like I belong,'" explains Fred.

Connection, it turns out, is just as important for parents as it is for students. "Parents leave the picnics knowing that JMU is connecting to them," says Fred. "And where we see the biggest connection is student-to-student. Kallie met students at the picnic, then saw them on campus, and they stayed in touch."

And the Milberts have found that JMU's Parents Council is another vital resource for forging relationships.

"A co-worker of mine, Debbie Barnard ('77), encouraged us to join the Parents Council," says Fred. "Once we got involved, we were able to meet people and see the connections we could make with the university that were not just directly related to Kallie. We were able to meet good people and create our own network with them. Being engaged with

the university and the Parents Council helped us, even providing a social outlet. Kallie was our youngest, and we weren't empty-nested."

JMU Parents Council membership was the Milbert's counterpart to Kallie's well-rounded Madison education. "Being a member of the Parents Council broadens you personally, gives you an insight as to what is going on at the university, makes you feel involved," says Lerita. "It kept us well-rounded."

The Milberts agree that Kallie's Madison Experience was more than they hoped for. "Whenever we visited, even at 'off-times,' we always saw the same enthusiasm that we saw participating in Choices [the JMU Admissions program for admitted freshmen and their families]," says Lerita. "The most impressive thing about JMU is that there is something for everyone to be involved in, clubs, organizations, all kinds of resources," says Fred.

The family proves over and over that connection is at the heart of all things Madison. Kallie began her teaching career at Yorkshire Elementary in Manassas in August. And she is one of three JMU graduates hired by the school — one more link in the chain of JMU connection.

* www.jmu.edu/parents

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"Among Poets: Maryland's Poet Laureate Lucille Clifton" opened at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture on June 15 and features more photographs by Koolish. The opening for this event again featured readings and reflections by select authors and Clifton's friends.

Both exhibits were curated by JMU English Professor Joanne Gabbin, who worked in partnership with Michelle J. Wilkinson, director of collections and exhibitions at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum, and Judy Cooper, chief of programs and publications at the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

In September 2010, Gabbin and University Distinguished English Professor at Virginia Tech Nikki Giovanni hosted "73 Poems for 73 Years: Celebrating the Life of Lucille Clifton" at JMU. The program included readings by 73 of Clifton's colleagues, many who are esteemed writers and scholars, as well as those whom she inspired. Clifton's newest book of poetry, *The Collected Poems of Lucille Clifton 1965-2010*, edited by Kevin Young and Michael S. Glaser with a foreword by Toni Morrison, was published by BOA Editions.

"Among Poets: Maryland's Poet Laureate Lucille Clifton" will be on display until Dec. 30, 2012, at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture. "Won't You Celebrate With Me? Honoring the Life and Poetic Legacy of Lucille Clifton" can be viewed through Jan. 6, 2013, at the Enoch Pratt Free Library Central Branch.

* Learn more at www.jmu.edu/furiousflower