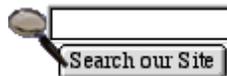


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**Today's
Front page**

Living room orientation

Silver Lake College makes new students feel at home

By Kristopher Wenn

Herald Times Reporter

MANITOWOC — In his new apartment, Anthony Zirfas can unpack his clothes, stretch his legs, and set up his keyboard and amp.

Such roominess is a dreamed-of luxury for most college freshmen, who usually are crammed into small-roomed dormitories.

"Who wouldn't want to live in an apartment like this?" he said while his parents were helping him unpack last week at Custer Village apartments.

Zirfas, 18, from Cary, Ill., a suburb of Chicago, starts his first year at Silver Lake College today.

After looking at sizable campuses at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Zirfas said a smaller school was the best fit for him. Zirfas said that his move from a major metro area to Manitowoc was not the culture shock some teens might think.

"They were really open-minded," he said of administrators and students. "There is a sense that everyone is together and no one is left out."

Silver Lake College administrators hope a tight-knit community approach will encourage students to stay in Manitowoc after graduation.

"We want students to get involved and experience Manitowoc and the surrounding area," said Jan Algozine, vice president of



student development and dean of students.

The new student orientation program attempts to help students immerse themselves in campus life and the city of Manitowoc. Orientation activities include a walk-about through local restaurants and business, a campfire in the campus courtyard, a day at the beach, and a rope course event to demonstrate how students can build trust. Students will participate in Ethnic Fest in Two Rivers later this month.

"Education outside the classroom is important," Algozine said.



On Thursday, Zirfas went to the orientation, an audition for a music scholarship, a birthday dinner and the courtyard campfire. He wasn't too impressed with the ropes course, but he said that the orientation was helpful for getting around town and now he knows where to use his college identification card.

"We went on a scavenger hunt through school to find all of the buildings around campus," he said. "I thought that it was useful."

Algozine said the orientation attempts to be comprehensive so that a student from Detroit would be as acclimated as a student from Chilton. The college aims to match students with compatible personalities and place them in apartments through the Myers-Briggs Inventory test and careful discussion among school administrators.

"We help new students understand their strengths," she said.

Those efforts along with a one-hour question-and-answer meetings with new students and internship programs with local business for graduates, she said, could be a factor in explaining why more than 96 percent of Silver Lake College graduates decided to remain in Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, Zirfas is still waiting for the results of his music audition that could help pay for some of his tuition costs. Despite the nervousness about the audition, he said he is optimistic about his new life in college.

"I just feel like I'm on a long vacation and I'll be back home in a week," he said.

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