

GOOD-BYE MOM AND DAD!

High school and hometowns behind, more than 700 freshmen moved onto campus in August with high hopes, heavy boxes and sometimes-trembling hearts.

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It's 9 a.m. in Glassboro. The morning haze has begun to burn off as the first cars roll into the parking lot at Chestnut Hall on August 31st, "move-in day" for Rowan University's freshmen.

Parents and students trudge back and forth hauling armloads of clothing, stereo speakers and crates packed with snack-size boxes of Fruit Loops, bottles of Lysol and Windex and rolls of paper towels.

Despite countless trips, Heather Clarey of Toms River, dressed in a Rowan Class of 2001 T-shirt, smiles with anticipation as she shoulders duffel bags and bedding. "I feel ants," she says. "My stomach was turning, my heart was racing on the way here. I just wanted to get here. Now that I'm here I feel pretty good. I want to get moved in and settled and get into campus life."



Janet Clarey unloads her jammed Dodge Caravan. She is excited for her daughter Heather, but her thoughts are reflective. "I have mixed feelings about her going. She's been a friend and she's the second one who's going to college. Now instead of having just one empty room at home, I'll have two to look at," she says, pausing. "I keep remembering her when she was younger. She was very small. We used to call her Heather Feather. She has developed into a lovely young woman who is anxious to fly. The hardest part is actually leaving here and knowing I won't be back to pick her up in a couple of

days. It's also hard knowing that once I'm home she won't be bursting through the front door."

At 10:30 a.m. across campus at Evergreen Hall, a white Maxima pulls into the parking lot.

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Freshman T.J. Moss of Denville, clad in shorts, a striped shirt, and a Chicago Bulls baseball cap, steps from the car, along with his parents, Terry and Stephanie, and brother, Brandon.

Within minutes the family has lugged a neat pile of new luggage, bedding and other necessities to the curb, ready for pickup by the tractor-drawn cart that will carry his belongings to the building. Atop the pile is a cardboard fish that reads “We’ll miss you, T.J.” in colored markers and bears the scrawled sentiments and signatures of co-workers from his summer job at a seafood restaurant. Tucked away in the pile are other mementos from home including a stuffed monkey, a model car T.J. made with his father and photos.

In the dorm, Stephanie, cool and unruffled by the August heat, takes charge, snapping a mattress pad onto T.J.’s bottom bunk bed. T.J., Brandon and Terry criss-cross paths, bantering as they fill the closets and unpack other necessities. Quickly, their work is completed and they plan to head for lunch and the supermarket to stock up on food supplies for T.J.’s room to stave off late-night snack attacks.

T.J. is eager to plunge into campus life and will check out the scheduled campus events for the weekend. “I am looking forward to getting into a rou-

Stephanie Moss helped T.J. decide where to put mementos from home, like the souvenir from the seafood restaurant where he worked. “It wasn’t too heartbreaking,” he recalled. “I was ready.”

tine, getting involved and getting a feel for the campus,” T.J. says. “Right now I’m trying to figure out where everything is. I know Jaron, my roommate, so hopefully we’re not going to be like Felix and Oscar.”

“I am happy that he is going to be living on campus,” says Terry, who commuted to classes during his college days. “It’s an opportunity for him to get involved in university life, get involved in activities and really broaden his perspectives and horizons. I’m excited for T.J. It’s definitely the way to be—on campus.”

Despite the upbeat tone, there is an underlying emotional tug for the tight-knit family. “I’m constantly going through photo albums—thinking of all his different milestones,” Stephanie says. “I’ve been reflecting a lot. Watching him go from a kid to a man was like a matter of minutes. There’s going to be a definite

Janet Clarey provided muscle and advice for her daughter, but Heather and her roommate, Christy, made final calls on setting up their room. “We made the decisions,” Heather said. “After waiting so long to be in college, I was finally here. I felt old.”

void in the house.”

Although T.J. is scanning the campus, ready to jump into his new life with both feet, Brandon shares another side. “I know my brother,” he says. “I know he has mixed feelings. We try not to get too deep into it or we might get emotional.”

Stephanie nods, confiding that she is trying to maintain her composure. “I promised T.J. I would.”

At 12:30 p.m. in Chestnut Hall, hours into unpacking, Heather’s face is flushed from the heat, blond wisps falling from the knot of hair behind her head that she hastily arranged shortly after she arrived. She and Christie Azzolini, her roommate and former high school classmate, walk barefoot across the room, continuing to fit their belongings into their own personal space while Pink Floyd throbs from the stereo. As Heather rearranges the pieces to fit her new life, she acknowledges that she will miss her family and friends. On her desk is a laminated collage filled with smiling faces. “Seeing the happy times and the memories in those pictures will make it so much better,” she says. ■



