Scheduling not as Rocky as it May Feel

SEAN STOTO / KNIGHT LIFE

Sean Stoto
A & E Editor

Walking up the stairs, through the check gates, and into the K-Wing hallway of Loy Norrix High School on its first day back in session, it was hard not to notice the obscurely long line extending from the guidance office. The hall was blisteringly hot, and the dozens of students waiting to make appointments with their counselors were getting increasingly restless. It seemed like madness at the time. In reality, though, it was one of the best starts to the year LN has seen in years.

"The overall perception was that it was horrible," said Kathrine Pennington, Vice Principal of Norrix. "By day three it was busy, but by the end of the day it was just normal traffic."

The misinterpretation that things were horribly wrong was actually one of the biggest problems the school has had to deal with thus far. The administrators have been swamped with calls from parents either concerned or complaining about situations already taken care of or in the midst of being taken care of.

"Dr. Rice has done a good job getting the problems in order," Pennington said. "He really cares about what goes on here."

Dr. Michael Rice, the new superintendent of Kalamazoo Public Schools, has been taking steps to organize and create solutions to the problems faced thus far. Dr. Rice has called for two meetings between the staff of both Loy Norrix and Kalamazoo Central High Schools, and has asked for written proposed plans of action from both so that a happy medium between the separate problems can be found.

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> -Katie Pennington

One problem faced between both schools was the mix up in the parenting programs. At LN there is a parenting program for expectant mothers only. At KC there is another parenting program for anybody who is interested. The problem arose when, because both programs have the same name, a few male students ended up in the roster for the parenting program based out of LN.

While there seem to be minimal problems overall, some teachers would beg to differ. Even up to the third week into school, some classes are gaining and losing students every day.

"My class numbers fluctuate almost daily," stressed teacher Cindy VanLieu of the art department.

The problems with class numbers, though, seem to stem from a lack of teachers, which stems from a seemingly small budget within the district. The art department in specific suffers from this.

"We have a very small budget for general art supplies," VanLieu said. "Recycle and reuse, it's the only way we survive."

VanLieu copes by soliciting donations from the community. She awards students extra credit if they bring in pencils or other supplies, as there is a general lack.

Much of the general budget has gone toward a perceived good cause, though, which seems to be making the school generally run more smoothly. A new ID card machine was bought for this year. With two ID machines running at the same time, the time it takes to assign ID badges to all students was cut in half.

SEAN STOTO / KNIGHT LIFE

Dean of Students Katie Pennington takes strides in correcting situations around the school.

Adventurous Man with a Heart Helps Tsunami Victims

Journalism I Students Write Practice Articles as Pre-Requisite to Participation in Knight Life. Jacquese Steele's Article Wins First Prize.

Jacquese Steele
Guest Writer

Bob Lakey has traveled to many places all around the world seeking adventures and experiences most of us only dream about, but he's not your typical tourist. He does not stay in lavish hotels or eat at four star restaurants, he instead chooses to live like the natives. China, Guatemala, and Ireland are just a few of the places Lakey has traveled to.

Lakey, an honest and certainly decent man, is the proud owner of Sunburst Construction where for twenty five years he has been building and designing homes for many people.

When Lakey took a trip with friends to Southern India, seeking yet another adventure, Bob caught a glimpse of the damage the 2004 Tsunami had done to a small village in Tirumallivasal. It had demolished several homes in the village leaving only six standing.

As Lakey continued to look around, he could not help but notice the state of shock in which the tsunami had left the people in, and he wanted to help.

So instead of having fun, Lakey thought he would put his skills to use by contributing to building new homes in an effort to help reconstruct the lives of those who had been affected by the tsunami. This had not been his original purpose for visiting South India, but it was definitely a kind, and generous thing to do.

Lakey knew that if he wanted to help the tsunami victims he would need to talk with someone. He was told that a man by the name of David Breckman could assist him in doing this, so he set out to find him.

"Oh this will be easy to make this connection," said Lakey to himself.

But after numerous attempts to contact Breckman, he found out that it was not so easy after all. It wasn't until Lakey was having dinner at a restaurant, that a waiter introduced him to a woman who he would soon discover was David Brakeman's wife. The connection that he had been waiting for was finally made!

Bob Lakey stands with women from the village of Tirumallivasal after distributing food to the village residents. Many of the women borrowed Saris from neighboring towns to get dressed up and honor Lakey for helping them after the tsunami on December 26, 2004.

Once everything was off and running, Lakey took a day and a half long train ride back to the village in Tirumallivasal. Upon reaching his destination, he found himself overwhelmed. He hadn't realized the damage was this severe; there was no way he was going to be able to build homes.

He thought to himself, "What am I even doing? What is it that I think I'm going to be able to do for these people?" But Lakey was still determined to help out in some way.

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"What is it that you need right now?" "How are you people living and eating?" asked Lakey, looking around noticing very little sign of food.

Food was exactly what the villagers were in need of. So Lakey and some of the village men and women put together a list. Lakey wanted to go retrieve these items on the list right away, but was let down when he found out that there was no place in the village to actually buy these items.

This news may have set things back a bit, but Lakey being so driven found a place forty miles away with everything they needed, and at bargain prices, for only 3,000 dollars he could buy food to feed the entire village.

On returning to Tirumallivasal, Lakey, with the help of others, got right to work on distributing bags of food. This brought back some joy to the village, a thing that had been missing since the devastation of the tsunami.

Lakey had never seen so much appreciation. All the women in the town dressed up in Saris and prepared him a beautiful feast.

"The food was exquisite," Lakey said.

The people were so thankful and liked him so much that when it was time for him to leave they encouraged him to stay. Bob did not take them up on their offer, however he was happy to have helped.

"It was a meaningful, emotional, and powerful experience," said Lakey, and certainly one he will never forget.

If you ask Bob Lakey how he ended up doing all of this, he'll simply say, "A twist of accidents."

Quick Facts

The tsunami of Dec. 26, 2004 left half a million people without homes.

The death toll was estimated around 275,000, with thousands more gone missing.

The wave caused most destruction in areas close to its epicenter, like Sumatra, Malaysia and Thailand.

LN Graduate Returns from Iraq

SOLDIER continued from page 1

However, in the weeks prior to leaving, he began to feel more and more uneasy about leaving. Yet he did not succumb to the worry and remorse about leaving his friends and family. Shortly before his deployment, he proposed to his fellow 2005 LN grad Barb Minich.

When Larimer came home on leave from the war in January of 2007, the young couple wed in Kalamazoo, surrounded by friends and family. This stability gave Larimer a sense of hope when he returned to Iraq. This stability, however, was disrupted shortly after his arrival in Iraq; he was only in Tikrit for two months before he was transferred.

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>
> -Shaun Larimer

The final six months of his service were spent in Camp Taji, which is about twenty miles from Baghdad; the city that is regarded as one of the most dangerous in the country. Despite this, Larimer experienced little violence while on missions in Baghdad. His low exposure to major destruction played a role in forming his optimistic view of the war.

BRAD AERNIE / US ARMY

LN graduate Shaun Larimer sits outside a US army base in Camp Atterbury, IN while training to go to Iraq.

"There's a lot of jobs over there. I'm pro-war basically, we'll see outcomes. I think," said Larimer.

Now that he's home, Larimer is free to live life as normally as possible. "normal" life for him includes attending Grand Valley State University to study fire science, with the intention of becoming a fire fighter. Additionally, his education at the university is completely paid for by the Department of Defense. Despite his view that soldiers are not paid enough for the job they do, he generally regards his entire experience positively.

Larimer said, "I find myself missing it over there, at times, but then I snap out of it and realize I had little to no rights there, and just being away from everyone was emotionally challenging."