

A Huskie at Heart

Saint Mary's University has become a part of me. As I prepare to cross the stage at convocation in just a few short weeks I find myself feeling a mix of excitement, and at the same time, sadness. I have learned so much in and out of the classroom in my four years as a student at Saint Mary's. While I feel that I am taking a lot of memories and lessons learned from my time at Saint Mary's with me, I am leaving a little part of myself on campus.

In high school I never had to wonder where I would go after graduation, I always knew it would be Saint Mary's. In fact, I was so sure SMU was the place for me I didn't even apply to any other schools. First year was a challenge as I struggled to adjust to my new surroundings and the new expectations of higher education. Looking back, it is hard to remember the shy, quiet girl I was, wandering around campus with a lost look on my face trying to find the library. It was not until second year that I really found my place at Saint Mary's, becoming involved with the student newspaper, *The Journal*, where I made many friends. *The Journal* opened my eyes to all the amazing things happening on campus, from society events to individual students making a difference. I met many incredible people and was given the chance to tell their fantastic stories.

The moments that stand out in my memory from my time at Saint Mary's are those that united the SMU community. Moments such as Richard Homburg's generous donation to the Hearts & Minds campaign, the fundraising campaigns for Haiti, Huskies athletic games including the recent Men's CIS Hockey Championship, and Open Mic Night at the Gorsebrook all bring a smile to my face as they remind me I am part of something larger than myself. Being a Huskie

means many things to many people but what it represents is a sense of community and friendship.

On a personal level, my time at SMU has taught me that persistence goes a long way and that believing in yourself can make a difference in how much you can accomplish. I have learned to think and to dream, and what's most valuable, I've learned how to make those dreams come true. I've also learned it is ok to ask for help and luckily for me at SMU help is easy to find. During my time at Saint Mary's I have faced many challenges academically and personally but with the support of the faculty, administration as well as my friends and family, I was able to get through even the toughest days.

Saint Mary's has provided me with many wonderful opportunities that I never thought possible. I was fortunate enough to be able to join my classmates on a 24-hour long bus trip to the 2007 Vanier Cup in Toronto which was an unforgettable experience. I was also fortunate that SMU allowed me to have fun, such as during my days as a member of the "Pit Crew" which pumped up the crowd at Huskies Football home games by sliding down a hill near the field after every SMU touchdown. I also was given the opportunity to travel to Belfast, Northern Ireland with the Conflict Resolution Society. The trip to Belfast influenced my perspective and helped me to realize how lucky I am to have grown up in a safe and peaceful community.

The community feeling of this university is something I will never forget. Meeting a fellow Santamarian for the first time is never awkward because there is that shared experience and passion for Saint Mary's that unites us. Complete strangers become friends based on a shared love of Huskies football and the Gorsebrook and a hatred of the seats in Burke Theatre B. Saint Mary's provides current students and alumni with a common bond, an appreciation for what it

means to be a Huskie. I have friends at many other universities but few display the love for their school that I feel Saint Mary's students and alumni display.

Although I would rather stay at Saint Mary's indefinitely I know it is time to move on. I know the lessons and skills that I have learned during my time at Saint Mary's will help me as I move forward with my life. SMU has provided a great stepping stone for the rest of my life and I know that my successes in the future can be related to my successes as a student. I have loved this school since the first day I stepped on campus and I will always be a Huskie at heart.



Kimberley Dares receives her prize from Pat Crowley, Director of Alumni.