

West Virginia University
Parent Electronic News
November 15, 2007

Though the snowflakes have really not yet begun to fly in Morgantown, the lighted versions do now line High Street, reminding us it is just a matter of time before the cool air whips into town with the real thing. As many Mountaineers take to the roads over the next week we hope that the weather continues to cooperate-and it appears at this point that it will-perhaps something small to be thankful for in the season of thanksgiving.

As students head home please remind them to be cognizant of safety (especially our off-campus students). Read on for more tips to pass along. As a reminder, residence halls do close, and all students must be out by 7:00 p.m. this Friday, November 16. The halls will not reopen until Sunday, November 25, despite the football game on Saturday, so be sure that your students have made alternate arrangements if they plan to return early for the game.

You may be hearing from your students as they begin to make arrangements for housing during the 2008-2009 school year. This Parent E-News edition contains information on both the off-campus and on-campus processes so you can prepare for discussions with your student over break. We have also included a "Tips from the Trenches" article that comes from an upperclassman who has been through the off-campus process first-hand. So with no further ado, enjoy this edition of the Parent E-News as well as some quality time with your students over break!

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GETTING OUT OF TOWN - RESIDENCE HALL INFO

The residence halls will close at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, November 16, and reopen at noon on Sunday, November 25. All students must be out of their rooms by 7:00 p.m. This affects students in University-owned residence halls and in University-supervised areas of leased buildings. Leased housing includes Pierpont, International House, and parts of College Park - The Ridge. Students are welcome to leave their belongings in their room over break.

However, we encourage students to take any valuables home with them, along with items they will need over the break. During Thanksgiving Recess, students will not be permitted in their rooms nor have access to their mailboxes.

Please note: there is a home football game on Saturday, November 24, but the residence halls WILL NOT be open until the following day (Sunday) at noon. This allows student residence hall staff to enjoy their full Thanksgiving Break as well. Please help your students think ahead to make other arrangements if they plan to return to Morgantown for the game.

BATTENING THE HATCHES - OFF-CAMPUS PREPARATION FOR BREAKS

If your students live off campus, remind them to prepare their apartments for being away. Unfortunately crime tends to increase around the holidays. Tips to pass along include putting lights on a timer, having their mail temporarily held by the US Post Office to give their place the "someone's-home" look, or if they subscribe to a newspaper, contact their carrier to stop the delivery temporarily. It's a good idea to take out their trash and clean up before leaving. They should also take valuable items with them when they leave town and because of the cold weather, they should not turn off their heat because their pipes might freeze. Of course the obvious reminder is to close and lock all windows and doors as they leave town. Here's to a safe and restful break!

2008-2009 OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING - STARTING THE CONVERSATIONS

You should know that Off-Campus Housing Awareness Week is this week, November 12-16. WVU has not only attorneys for students but also a coordinator for off-campus housing, and they have been busy visiting the residence halls to do presentations on off-campus housing and to address student questions about the process. The goal is two-fold: 1) to help students become educated consumers as they explore their options, and 2) to convey the message that it is not quite the time to begin signing leases yet!

We know, we know: peer pressure is strong. But I assure you a lease they may need to break if they get into a bad living situation (bad roommates, a roommate who simply decides not to return and your student is now liable for their rent, etc.) is much stronger. Remember-your students are adults, and these are legally binding contracts. As students go through this process for the first time, it is important that they make smart decisions. Not jumping in too early can be one of the smartest decisions. We strongly suggest that students not sign leases until they return for the spring term. Our Off-Campus Housing Fair is scheduled for January 16, 2008, from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. in the Mountainlair Ballrooms.

You may wish discuss with your student their plans for next year. If these plans involve moving off campus, you might want to chat about budgets, your expectations for housing, and a general timeline, and share some tips. One of these can be to encourage them to use the services and resources available to them at WVU, including lease review prior to signing by the attorneys for students or visiting the Off-Campus Housing Fair. For more on off-campus housing, please visit <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=809>. (Also be sure to see the "Tips from the Trenches" article on this subject below!)

2008-2009 ON-CAMPUS HOUSING RETURNERS PROCESS

Although many students choose to move off campus after their freshman year, we do offer on-campus housing options for those wishing to return to the residence halls. Both you and your student will receive information shortly after Thanksgiving Break about on-campus housing options available.

The process starts November 26, with a cutoff date toward the end of January 2008. A designated number of rooms for current WVU students will be allotted on a first-come, first-served basis. Students can choose to “homestead”-keep their current room-or choose another room. For more info, go to <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=810>.

ALCOHOL PREVENTION CONTEST

Looking for something to entertain your students while they are home over break? Encourage them to create an entry for WVU's alcohol safety poster contest. Entries are due by noon on November 30, and winners will be announced during finals week. Students can not only work to communicate a message of safe, responsible behavior but also win some great prizes, including a \$1,000 US savings bond. For more on this contest, go to <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=811>.

HOW TO GET TO MEDICAL SCHOOL - CAREER CORNER

Do you know anyone who is interested in going to medical school but doesn't know where to begin? WVU's Career Services Center wants to help. On November 29 at 6:00 p.m. in E. Moore Hall, Keith Garbutt (Dean of the Honors College, former Chair of the Biology Department, and Eberly Family Outstanding Teacher) explains how to get in to medical school and why you should (or should not) go. This program is designed to help students at every level (freshman to graduate) find out what they can do to best prepare themselves to be a doctor. Encourage your student to join in. University 101 students can get extra credit for attending. (Please note that this program has been rescheduled from November 27.)

DECEMBER CONVOCATION RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

We encourage those with seniors graduating in December to visit the December Convocation website at <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=812> for the most up-to-date information.

I have had some questions from those of your checking the University calendar and seeing two dates, Convocation and the Degree Conferring date. December Convocation on December 9 is the graduation ceremony where students and faculty will wear regalia and walk across the stage. This is not a commencement ceremony, because students' final grades are not yet tabulated at this time, with finals week still ahead of them. However, with the holidays just around the corner, we have for years held this event earlier to accommodate those who must travel. Once the grades are finalized, degrees are conferred on December 27, and then

diplomas are printed and mailed. December graduates are also invited back in May, if they so wish, to participate in the May Commencement ceremony.

DECEMBER GRADS ENCOURAGED TO DOCUMENT THEIR MEMORIES AND SHARE THEIR STORIES

Graduation is an exciting time in a student's life. As our students embark on new journeys we encourage them to share their thoughts, goals, and aspirations with us. We are asking “What Will You Start” as you begin life after graduation ... as you embark on a career ... as you build new relationships and you pursue your dreams? Also, what does “Coming Home” mean to you? Is home a place you can always go back to or is it a special feeling you have? Does the thought of home bring back fond memories?

December graduates of West Virginia University are invited to leave behind their stories, share their thoughts, and reflect on experiences in answer to these two thought-provoking questions. Students can share those messages on one or both websites: whatwillyoustart.wvu.edu or cominghome.wvu.edu . Online directions will guide students through the process.

LIGHT UP WOODBURN - NOVEMBER 28

We hope you have a safe, relaxing, and enjoyable break with your students. When they return, encourage them to drop by as we kick off the holiday season with the annual lighting of Woodburn Hall on November 28, at 6:30 p.m.

TIPS FROM THE TRENCHES - OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

By Erica Rogers, Board of Governors, Student Government Association

The saying goes that hindsight is 20/20. While I consider myself to be a very thorough and resourceful decision-maker, I fully bought in to some of the most prevalent myths out there concerning off-campus housing when I was a freshman. I didn't know when or where to start on my search, I had no idea what the market was like, and while I thought I did my homework, I later learned that I was turning to the wrong sources for information. Being older and wiser, I can see now why some of these myths were so believable, and know a whole lot more about where to go to get accurate information. When I was elected to the Student Government Association (SGA) Board of Governors last February by the student body, I was determined to focus on improving the process of finding off- campus housing because I knew from experience that it can be overwhelming and unfortunately, somewhat deceiving.

One of the events SGA recently sponsored was a Discussion on Off-Campus Housing. A panel of knowledgeable guests answered questions collected by students. Panelists included Brian Walker, the WVU Coordinator of Off-Campus Housing; Dave Kelly, head of the Landlord Association in Morgantown; Ron Justice, Mayor of Morgantown; and myself, a student who fell for some of the oldest tricks in the book.

A host of valuable information was shared during this forum. Mayor Justice pointed out that students should be aware if their housing choice falls within or outside of city limits. This is important because with ongoing development occurring in the Morgantown area, many new units are outside of city limits, which means they are not subject to city codes or services provided by the city including city police, fire services, code inspectors, etc. Dave Kelly of the Landlord Association suggested to students that they shop around and also remember to ask questions and especially ask existing tenants for feedback. WVU also offers a host of services. Below is a list of some of these great resources and information you can pass along to your students so that they don't find themselves in an unpleasant situation.

OFFICE OF OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING - Located in Elizabeth Moore Hall on the Downtown campus, the Office of Off-Campus Housing maintains a useful website and offers services to help students locate safe and affordable off-campus housing in the Morgantown area. Brian Walker is the coordinator. He is a great resource to students embarking on this journey. Other helpful resources include apartment hunter's checklists, off-campus housing guides, and budget worksheets.

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING WEBSITE - This is a great place to start your search. You can search listings for currently available housing, discover roommate search resources, get information on leases, parking, renter's insurance, fire safety, and subleasing, as well as a general guide for off-campus living. See <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=809>.

ELITE LANDLORD SURVEY - Sponsored annually by SGA, this survey appears on the MIX. Results for the 2007-2008 survey will be released in January, and will include the top ten landlords based on ratings by student tenants. This can give students a chance to see how the actual consumers, the student tenants, have evaluated their landlord based on their personal experiences.

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING FAIR - A lot of students get the impression that if they wait to start their search, there won't be any "good places" left. This is false. It's actually beneficial to wait until first semester grades are in so that students can get an idea of how serious a commitment their potential roommates will be willing to make. Held every January in the Mountainlair, the Off-Campus Housing Fair gathers Morgantown landlords so that students can "shop around" for properties and landlords that best suit them and make appointments to see rental units. This year the fair will take place on Wednesday, January 16 from 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. in the Mountainlair Ballrooms.

STUDENT LEGAL SERVICES - Student attorneys are available to educate students about their legal rights and responsibilities and to provide services to all undergraduate students and eligible graduate students with regards to legal matters, including leases and landlord/tenant issues. Students are welcome to make an appointment with an attorney to go over sample leases, have their actual lease reviewed, and get advice about certain legal phrases and terminology that are common in leases. Check out the website at: <http://www.wvu.edu/Redirect/?id=813>.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION - Student Government plays a larger role in Off-Campus Housing than you may think! I have pledged as a student representative to be the voice of the students in areas of off-campus housing. If you or your student have any questions, concerns, or suggestions that you would like heard about a current off-campus housing situation, you can contact me at Erica.Rogers@mail.wvu.edu.

Parent Advocate Office
West Virginia University

WVU Parents Club Helpline
1-800-WVU-0096