

YOUTH FEATURE

Frosh experience frantic first day of school

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

GENEVA — "I have a headache," Heidi Utter complained.

"I feel so out of it," remarked Jessica Sanchez-Dopaso.

And the first high-school homeroom period of their lives hadn't even ended yet.

Several Geneva DeSales freshmen shared Heidi's and Jessica's feelings as they embarked on their initial day of school last Wednesday, Sept. 7.

Attempting to locate classrooms, making schedule changes and claiming lockers were all part of the early-morning madness among the 13 students in Room 28.

Kathleen Theimer, Room 28's homeroom teacher, could identify with the confusion. Returning to DeSales for the first time since she taught there from 1986-91, she admitted that she was going through somewhat of a reacquaintance process with the school building.

"(The students) were all asking me where different rooms were, and I didn't even know," she laughed.

Theimer spent the homeroom period going over the school's parent-student handbook, discussing such issues as the dress code, academic policies and attendance stipulations.

"If you don't like the rules, you should become part of student council," she advised the freshmen, pointing out that it's easier to facilitate change in that manner rather than simply complain.

At lunch time, 14-year-old Michelle Riviello recalled that earlier that morning, "all of us were standing in the hallway wondering where the heck we were going."

She acknowledged that this inexperience was a drastic change from when she attended St. Michael's School in Newark last year.

"Now I'm the youngest, and at St. Michael's I was the oldest," remarked Michelle, a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church in Clyde.

Debbie DeRaddo, the main-office secretary at DeSales, observed that freshmen are a fairly detectable group during that frenetic first week.

"You can just see it in their faces. They don't know if they're in the right place," said DeRaddo. "I always try to think back and take their feelings into account."

DeRaddo added that two students had missed the bus that morning. Not surprisingly, both were freshmen.

She pointed out that freshmen are the group most easily embarrassed by mishaps such as these, since they're trying so hard to make a quick favorable impression on other students.

However, Michelle pointed out that most of a typical freshman's problems are of the short-term variety.

"I had to change a couple of classes, but everything went fine," she said as she ate lunch with new friends she has already met through participating in the DeSales cheerleading program.

Nick Vassello, 14, has also made a quick adjustment, although he has an edge over most of his fellow DeSales freshmen. He already took a math class at the high school last year while he was



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Geneva DeSales students briskly move to fourth-period classes during the first day of school last Wednesday, Sept. 7.



Freshman Nick Vassello focuses on his still-life drawing during first-period art class with instructor Patricia Hezel. Nick, a Geneva resident, attended St. Stephen's School last year and is a St. Stephen's parishioner.

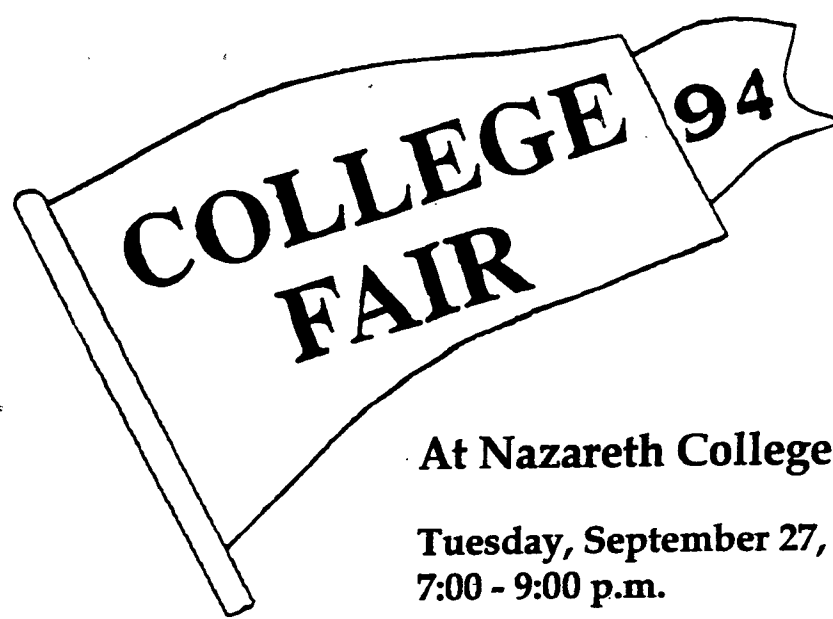
attending nearby St. Stephen's School. Being a high-school student, he said, is "kind of a new experience. You get a lot more freedom and stuff."

He agreed with Michelle that the worst was behind the freshmen by noon-time last Wednesday.

"I think everybody's doing OK. They're not really that confused," reported Vassello, a parishioner at St. Stephen's Church. "I thought it was going to be a lot harder than it has been."



Freshman Michelle Riviello listens to instructions from global-studies teacher Victor Harris. Michelle is a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church in Clyde.



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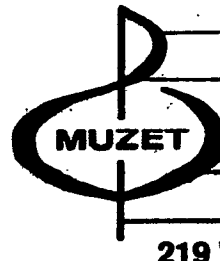
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