

ON THE MOVE

Story by
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Photo by
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BK's one-two punch



St. Lawrence parishioners Christina Petrella (left) and Shannon Michaels, both 18, surround themselves with purchases for college.

The lives of Christina Petrella and Shannon Michaels have been intertwined in a variety of ways, and that trend won't stop now that high school has ended.

The 18-year-olds became friends during their early years at Greece's St. Lawrence School. As youngsters they appeared together in television ads for Carmine's Restaurant, which is owned by Christina's father.

"I still have the tape," Shannon said.

Maybe that experience in the public eye helped prepare Christina and Shannon for the spotlight they shared more recently — as class valedictorian and salutatorian at Irondequoit's Bishop Kearney High School.

Their common links will continue this fall when Christina and Shannon not only attend the same college, Cornell University, but also room together.

Christina plans to pursue a career in law and Shannon will study atmospheric science in the hope of becoming a meteorologist. Their more immediate goals, however, are to get their dorm room up to snuff. Already, they said, they've invested considerable time on the shopping circuit this summer. Shannon was recently looking to purchase a rug, and Christina was checking out microwave ovens and televisions.

"I've already got a fridge, so we're all set there," Shannon said. Decorative items "will come after we see how much money we have left to spend," Christina remarked.

Christina and Shannon both received notification of acceptance from Cornell last December. One day over lunch, Christina recalled, the idea surfaced

that they should room together.

During that same time frame, they were also embroiled in a race to finish No. 1 academically in their senior class. Though Christina came out on top, she and Shannon said they didn't make a big deal about it.

"I'm not really competitive with her. We just do our own things," Shannon said.

"It was more like, I was just doing the best I could," Christina added.

As the top two students in Kearney's class of 2001, Christina and Shannon were designated to give speeches at their June 24 commencement at Rochester's Theater on the Ridge. Shannon spoke to her fellow graduates about decision-making — "how we use our family values, faith and what we learned in high school to make good decisions." Meanwhile, Christina's speech was more on the sentimental side: "I looked at the past and what we accomplished together and as individuals, and how we could use that in the future."

Now high school is in Christina and Shannon's rear-view mirror as they move on to the Ivy League. Shannon doesn't anticipate any roommate spats, saying, "I think we're both flexible people." Rather, she is looking forward to their mutual support system because, as she puts it, "We're both going to have the same stress" at Cornell.

Indeed, Christina sums up the routine at this renowned institute in Ithaca as "Go to bed, wake up

early, study all day."

"Our first priority is to study hard, then relax," Shannon said.

How rigorous is Cornell? Christina and Shannon have already been assigned a large chunk of summer reading, and will be expected to discuss the material with other freshmen during orientation in late August.

"If you're a 'C' student at Cornell, you're still at the top 3 percent of all college students in the country," Christina said.

"We were at the top of our high school class, and now we're competing against everyone else who were at the top of their class," Shannon observed.

Despite these academic challenges, and the fact they will be separated from family and close friends, Shannon said she can't wait to embrace "all the opportunity to do things we want to do at Cornell and beyond Cornell. All these schools we've gone to have been so small and this is huge, so we'll meet so many different kinds of people."

"It's kind of scary thinking about it, but I know I'm ready. We're going to this fantastic institution with so much opportunity," Christina agreed. "There is so much I could do with law, it's kind of motivating."

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