4-1-2002

'Real World,' Furman style

Jim Stewart '76

Furman University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol45/iss1/17

This Regular Feature is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines. For more information, please contact scholarexchange@furman.edu.
This is the true story of six strangers:

- Picked to attend Furman;
- Go to classes;
- Live on campus;
- Record their lives;
- And inform prospective students about what happens when people stop being high schoolers and start being collegians.

Yes, it’s “Real World,” Furman style, only without the excessive self-absorption, silly squabbles and juxtaposed editing you see on the MTV show.

Where can you find it? Just go to engagefurman.com, the Admissions Web site launched this year with the help of Stamats Communications of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Click on the First-Year Journals link and you’ll meet the six students chosen from 40 applicants to be Furman’s initial class of on-line “journalists.”

Their task: to describe what life is like for a new Paladin. Their tools: a digital camera and a keyboard. Their reward: the opportunity to tell the truth about life at Furman (which explains the title of this section of the Furman Web). During the last week in March, for example, engagefurman.com received 7,200 visitors, and the on-line journals were the most visited area of the site. From September 1, 2001, when it debuted, to March 1, engagefurman.com handled 151,425 user sessions, an average of over 25,000 a month. Approximately 30 percent of those visitors stopped by more than once a week.

Not surprisingly, given their prominence on the Web, the journalists have become somewhat famous. Shunta struck up a correspondence with one prospective student who contacted her because she enjoyed the journals so much. The student eventually visited Shunta for a weekend and wound up being featured on-line. (She’s coming to Furman.)

Shortly after Emily wrote about spraining her ankle, a parent visiting campus for Parents Weekend introduced herself and inquired how she was feeling. And then there was the conversation she had with another freshman who described the following exchange with his father:

Student: “Dad, I got a 3.0 first term.”
Dad: “Why didn’t you do better?”
Student: “Dad, it’s Furman. It’s hard. A 3.0 is good.”
Dad: “I read Emily’s journal. She got a 3.9.”

Clearly, prospective students aren’t the only people checking in on a regular basis. The journalists say they hear from friends, relatives and even former teachers back home. As Mike points out, “My family enjoys keeping tabs on me and seeing what’s going on. They’ll miss it when the year ends, especially the photographs.”

Indeed, the time has come for our on-line diarists to say goodbye to their faithful readers and move on to the sophomore phase of their Furman lives. They’ll still be around, though, to advise the new, yet-to-be-determined crop of six freshmen who will assume on-line duties in the fall. Shunta says, “I’m looking forward to seeing what those who are chosen for next year can do with the site.”

They’ll have a hard act to follow.

— Jim Stewart

Each journalist’s entries for the 2001-2002 year are archived on the First-Year Journal’s section of engagefurman.com.

From left, Emily, David, Shunta, Matt and Laura Beth, live and in person. Mike (without the cap!), apparently busy with a journal entry, forgot the photo shoot but stopped by later.