

“It’s nice to know that the staff loves being here and helping us.”

Cold to Warm By Julianne D’Andrea

It was a rigid, plastic-looking, royal blue mattress. It was a vacant café, with food that appeared to have sat out for hours. It was a shuttle so uncomfortable and bumpy that I hit my head while going over the numerous speed bumps. It was my school, not my home. It was not the warm, hand-knit blanket that draped over the corner of my bed in which I rolled myself up in on cold nights. It was not the home-cooked meal my dad made and placed in front of my brother and me before chatting about a day’s adventures. It was not my car that I learned to drive in, passed my driving test in, and spent numerous summers in with friends and family. It was my school, not my home.

Not to say that the mission of Loyola is not excellent, because it truly sounds wonderful: “As a Jesuit institution committed to the value of community, Loyola strives to define its goals and values clearly so as to ensure unity of purpose and to encourage shared ownership for the University’s mission and vision. Loyola also seeks to foster a spirit of trust, hopefulness, collegiality, and dialogue by providing members of its community with structures that encourage open sharing of ideas and values, and which encourage collaboration within and across institutional divisions and constituencies.” But the Loyola community did not feel encouraging nor hopeful.

Until the day. The day that flipped my view completely.

It’s extraordinarily tough to be away from home for months on end, or even days at first. Many students, including myself, walk into Loyola never having been without their family for more than a week or so. Yet, Loyola’s staff, the workers at Boulder and in the dorms and on the buses, are so watchful over the students and make the environment a warm, friendly place to be. They’ve made it their job to turn Loyola into a safe and homey environment for every single student. I, myself, am greeted with a kind “good-mornin’ baby” from the woman who cleans our floor in our dorm almost every morning. It’s like a mother’s hug before school or a dad’s kind “knock ‘em dead” before a sports game. The woman has no idea, but her gentle greeting every morning starts my day off with a bright note, rather than a dreary cold-shoulder.

In asking around campus how other students feel about the staff, almost every student agreed; every single worker treats us with respect and kindness. Elisabeth, a class of 2020 student, states, “They’re always friendly and real pleasant... they help you when you need it and they ask about your day.” It’s a common thread to hear that everyone that works at Loyola is friendly; it’s a concept that you hear in all the



“Don’t worry baby, you are home.”

that Loyola offers. But the help you receive when you need it and the love that the staff gives is something that you cannot describe until you experience it. When my friend was sick, she remembers the woman who was cleaning her room asking “What’s wrong baby?” When she told her, she said, “Oh no sweetheart. I’m so sorry that happened. I’m going to clean your room up really good for you, okay, and then you’re going to feel better don’t worry.” “It was like having my mom be there, it was comforting,” Elisabeth explains. It takes courage to accept the change of college, but knowing there are people here who make you feel welcome and cared for is especially important.

Leaving home is difficult. Leaving the familiarity of being surrounded by childhood memories and family is a task so difficult that many cannot even bear it. A study by UCLA High Education Institute showed 69% of all college freshmen report feeling homesickness (Wong). This is because it’s a brand new place that at first glance seems like hollow buildings meant for mass amounts of people you don’t know. For me, Hammerman Hall was not only made from brick but felt like one, too—cold and heavy. But I took the time to notice the smiles and brightness that came towards me, and my whole college experience changed.

Many colleges claim to be a community, but Loyola University Maryland is

one. Community is not made from the buildings or the academics or sports. Community is made from the people and the people who work at this school are the most caring individuals you could meet. Whether they’re calling you sweetie, or honey, or baby, whether they’re letting you grab an extra cookie during lunch or they’re asking you about your day while riding the shuttle, they have the biggest hearts.

Until the day, my view on Loyola was cold and uncomfortable. It was not a home, or even remotely comfortable. But it all changed when one woman stepped in the elevator. I recognized her—she was someone who worked in our dorm, cleaning. She commented on my flip flops, saying they were cute. I told her they were the shoes that I wore in the shower but I wore them today because I didn’t feel like dressing up. She turned to me and looked me in the eye. With a gentle tone, she said to me, “Don’t worry baby, you are home.”

Moffitt, Elisabeth. Personal Interview, 6 Oct. 2016.
Wong, Kristin. “Freshman Homesickness: What You Can Do to Combat This Common Malady.” *Freshman Homesickness: What You Can Do to Combat This Common Malady*. NBC News, 23 Oct. 2015. Web. 8 Oct. 2016. <<http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/freshman-year/freshman-homesickness-what-you-can-do-combat-common-malady-n450266>>.

