

ASPIRATION ACHIEVED



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Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College freshman Annika Hannigan makes a phone call Tuesday to a potential donor during the Woods' Giving Day on the SMWC campus.

Woods Giving Day surpasses 2023 fundraising total

BY SUE LOUGHLIN
TRIBUNE-STAR

By 10:45 a.m. Tuesday, Woods Giving Day had already surpassed last year's one-day fundraising total, owing to a generous challenge match from alumna/trustee Mary Kay Campbell Watson and husband Al, also a trustee.

The Watsons pledged \$40,000 to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College if 500 unique donors contributed by Monday, the day before the big event.

The college had 516 donors in response to the challenge.

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Artist Bob East draws the caricatures of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College students Peyton Rush and Claire Donald on Tuesday during the Woods' Giving Day. East was on hand to provide caricatures for anyone during the college's day of giving.

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Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College senior Polet Horton talks to a potential donor during the Woods' Giving Day on Tuesday in the Rooney Center on the SMWC campus.

Woods

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Last year, the entire event raised nearly \$300,000 and by 10:45 a.m. Tuesday, it had surpassed that at \$365,000 involving 585 donors.

The goal this year was 1,000 unique donors in 24 hours.

"It's the single largest fundraising day of the year for Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College," said Jessica Crawford, college advancement officer.

Dollars generated go to the Woods Fund, the college's general, unrestricted operating fund, and money raised will go toward student scholarships, renovation of historic buildings, academic programs and athletic teams.

Woods Giving Day "is very important to the college and helps us raise about one-third of our total budgeted Woods Fund goal of \$1.1 million," Crawford said.

More than 100 volunteers assisted making calls on Tuesday, including trustees, students, alumni, faculty and staff.

Among the volunteers was Polet Horton, a senior from Terre Haute who will

graduate in May. She has participated in Woods Giving Day all four years and enjoys the sense of community and the connections she makes with Woods graduates from years past.

Woods Giving Day is also important because it helps with scholarships that enable students to attend The Woods, she said.

Horton is double majoring in nursing and kinesiology. She works at Union Hospital as a patient care tech and hopes to transition to a registered nurse position there after graduation.

"Being a first generation student, I wasn't really sure what to expect of the college experience. But The Woods has a special legacy," she said.

She's received much support from her peers and faculty. "They love their students" and encourage them to meet their professional goals and to maintain connections to the college, Horton said.

Also reaching out to donors was Annika Hannigan, a freshman from Chicago, who is majoring in kinesiology and also plays on the softball team.

She benefits from scholarship support, she said.

The college is special, Hannigan said. "Everyone here is so kind. I've met so many friends from so many different groups and ages. It really is a community."

The donations help "with everything we have going on as well as academics and athletics," she said. "Having these donations come in really does mean a lot, for me and the school."

As of 7 p.m. Tuesday, there were more than 1,000 donors and more than \$400,000 was raised.

Those wanting to give can go to: Giving.smwc.edu.

Or, they can call 888-769-0013.

Fundraising extended through 11:59 p.m. Tuesday.

Many donors issued challenges for matching donations.

Community partners participating include ISU Federal Credit Union, Azzip Pizza, Chick-fil-A, Littler Bear Coffee Company, Culver's, and The Cottage, which have specials and offerings to help SMWC raise money.

Sue Loughlin can be reached at 812-231-4235 or at sue.loughlin@tribstar.com. Follow Sue on Twitter @ TribStarSue