

# 'SMASHING THROUGH'



Tribune-Star/Joseph C. Garza

Christina Haymaker, Saint Mary-of-the-Wood College human resources coordinator and assistant softball coach, fills in another portion of a thermometer graphic during the Woods Giving Day on Tuesday in the college's Rooney Library.

## Donors respond generously for Woods Giving Day No. 10

BY SUE LOUGHLIN  
TRIBUNE-STAR

Before Woods Giving Day had even begun Tuesday, the annual fundraising event had already generated more than \$826,000 in donations and pledges toward the ambitious \$1 million goal.

Monday night, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College officials also announced nearly 800 individuals had donated, with the goal being 1,200 donors.

"It's a lofty goal this year," said Catherine Saunders, the college's vice president for advancement. "We've shifted a little bit. We're going to start asking for what we need."

Woods Giving Day is the college's single largest fundraising event and has raised more than \$1.7 million in the past nine years.

This year, "We're raising the bar, and in doing that, people are responding very positively," Saunders said. "We've shifted the way we've approached it"



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Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College junior Griffin Olson of Sullivan talks to a potential donor on the phone during the Woods Giving Day on Tuesday in the college's Rooney Library.

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# Woods

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Dollars raised in advance were made possible by early giving challenge matches from several donors; gifts made by Jan. 31 counted toward WGD-X (Woods Giving Day No. 10) and helped SMWC unlock \$325,000 in challenge gifts.

“We really smashed through where we needed to be,” Saunders said. “It was wonderful.”

In addition, members of the college’s 16 athletic teams “all jumped at the opportunity to be part of it,” she said. More than 240 student athletes donated by Jan. 31.

Dollars generated go to the Woods Fund, the college’s general, unrestricted operating fund, and money raised will go toward student scholarships, facility needs, technology, academic programs, athletic programs and more.

Saunders spoke from Woods Student Center in Rooney Center, the hub of fundraising efforts, where students, faculty, staff and others sat at tables calling potential donors. The college also used social media to get the word out.

“I fully anticipate we’ll be celebrating \$1 million” Tuesday, Saunders said mid-morning. She told those volunteering she expected to finish in time to attend Pomeroy men’s and women’s basketball games later that evening.

Among those gathered at Rooney Center was Carol Bicknell, the college’s digital marketing manager. She wore a long, sky-blue wig and drank a similarly-colored beverage, a Blue Moon from Little Bear Coffee Co.



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Carol Bicknell, digital marketing manager for Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, updates fundraising figures on Tuesday during the Woods Giving Day in the college’s Rooney Library.

Bicknell runs the college’s website and was updating the donor giving page, among other duties.

“This is my favorite day of the year,” and it also happened to be her birthday, she said. “I was so excited to come spend my birthday working here at the Woods.”

For SMWC junior Griffin Olson, a sport management major from Sullivan, it was his third year to be part of the fundraising effort.

He contacted people from Massachusetts to West Terre Haute. “It’s very eye-opening to see where each alum is from and to start to realize how big this network of such a small college is,” he said.

Olson shared his experience as a student and listened as alums shared their memories. He told prospective donors how important



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Nolan Allen, a Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College sophomore from Crawfordsville, dials the number of a potential donor during the Woods Giving Day on Tuesday in the college’s Rooney Library.

the fundraising was for him and other students.

“It gives me the opportunity to afford college”

through scholarships, he said. “That’s something I greatly appreciate.”

The fundraising also

benefits athletic programs; Olson helps coach the sprint football team and is director of football operations.

“The support system this place has provided me, it’s a whole other family,” he said.

Also joining the fundraising effort was Tonya Sawyer, Woods assistant professor, who had two classes assisting throughout the day.

The students are taking classes in sport communication and sport finance.

“This is a great opportunity for them to gain real world experience in what it is they are going to be doing in their careers,” she said.

Students are working on communication and fundraising skills, and they’re also networking with alumni, Sawyer said.

To donate, go to: *giving.smwc.edu*.