

Court members have long ties to State

Series note: This is the first in a five-part series on the Homecoming Court pairings.

By Alexa Agugliaro
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER



From the moment stepped onto campus as freshmen, Jared McKnight and Marina Johnson tried to give back as much as they could.

The two are similar not only because they were both nominated as 2010 Homecoming Court members, but also because they both learned at a young age to thrive on a busy schedule and always commit to everything they become involved in.

McKnight (senior-architecture and international studies) is actively involved with the Schreyer Honors College, Penn State's architecture department and the American Institute of Architecture Students.

He said these were his steps to truly attaining the "full college experience."

He has also been a Lion Ambassador since 2009 and said it's been the one Penn State organization that has had the most influence on him.

"My favorite aspect of Penn State is its deep history and rich

tradition, and I'm proud to have the opportunity to enlighten future students," he said.

It was during his time as a Lion Ambassador that he met his best friend Robin Beltrani.

Beltrani (senior-finance) described her friend as reliably in any situation — academically or socially.

"From Lion Ambassadors alone, it is easy to see that he is a dedicated person in everything that he does," she said.

Johnson (senior-English and secondary education) is president and founder of One Stage Revolution — a theater group which Penn State officials named the most outstanding student organization of 2009-2010. She's also a Schreyer Honors College student and an active member of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship.

Johnson spent her first two years of college at Penn State Altoona and said she was amazed the second she laid eyes on University Park.

"It's like I knew in that moment

that I wanted to stand for everything this university stands for," she said.

Both students said they have family ties to Penn State and have been coming to Homecoming for as long as they could remember.

Johnson's father, Father Kenneth George Stone, is an alumnus of the Penn State Blue Band. He said he's very excited to "share the field with his daughter" this year.

McKnight also has his own history with the university — his mother graduated Penn State in 1942 and his grandfather graduated in 1918. He said he vividly remembers his first time at Penn State Homecoming and how it was always his favorite time of year.

"People always talk about the pride that Penn State students have, and I was lucky enough to find that pride at a very early time," he said.

McKnight's sister, Kristen McKnight, said that when it comes to Jared, she's never met anyone more determined or focused. She said that ever since they were three or four years old, he has known that he wanted to be an architect.

"Jared is Penn State," Kristen McKnight (junior-elementary and kindergarten education) said. "He is everything the university



Tyler Sizemore/Collegian

Jared McKnight (senior-architecture and international studies) and Marina Johnson (senior-English and secondary education) are both members of the 2010 Homecoming Court.

strives to teach and he is destined for great success in the future," she said.

Jared McKnight said the secret to his success is that he has always believed in himself and his abilities, while always staying positive.

For Marina Johnson, keeping a balanced mind is all in a smile.

"If I were stressed out and cranky, I'd be a mess all year, but doing things with a smile really helps a lot," she said.

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More than 200 participate in Homecoming 5K race

By Vera Greene
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Homecoming week is off and running — literally — after more than 200 Penn State students and community members took part in the second annual Homecoming 5K Race on Sunday afternoon.

Beginning the day with "entertainment hour," different student organizations such as RAM Squad performed from 11 a.m. to noon for a crowd gathered on the lawn next to the Intramural Building.

Devon Saunders, a member of hip-hop dance troupe RAM Squad, said it is a humbling experience to be a part of Homecoming activities and to perform for the runners.

"We really feel a lot more involved with the whole process. It's a cool thing," Saunders (junior-architectural engineering)

said. "And everyone is really enthusiastic."

The energy didn't dwindle either. Right before the runners lined up, a "We are... Penn State" cheer was shouted and a crowd of about 200 responded. Charlie DeFrancesco said he doesn't know much about Homecoming and randomly found out about the 5K race — but he's glad he did.

"This is actually a pretty cool event," DeFrancesco (freshman-biochemistry and molecular biology) said. "A lot of people came out today, so I'm excited to run."

Christen Morelli, a public relations captain for Homecoming, said everything came together perfectly.

Not only did the day start ahead of schedule, Morelli (senior-public relations) said, but committee members couldn't have asked for better weather.

Among the student groups that participated in the entertainment hour, the Penn State track team led stretches and a few members of the Interfraternity Council/Panhellenic Dance Marathon morale committee directed the runners in the 2010 line dance.

Race-goers even got to be in the presence of royalty at Sunday's event when members of the 2010 Homecoming court received their sashes and were officially introduced to the crowd.

Nominee Jessica Pellicciotta (senior-political science) said the experience of being nominated has been surreal.

"I'm still waiting to wake up," she said. Pellicciotta said being on Homecoming court and going to events like the 5K remind her of how much she's going to miss Penn State.

"I started crying the other day when I saw a tour in front of Old Main. I'm going to miss college so much."

Jessica Pellicciotta
senior-political science

"I started crying the other day when I saw a tour in front of Old Main," she said.

"I'm going to miss college so much."

Dan Cartwright, another member of Homecoming court, said his favorite thing about being nominated has been the people he's met throughout the process.

"I get to hang out with the coolest, most involved people... I'd never usually get the chance," Cartwright (senior-energy, business and finance) said.

Caitlin Rush, Homecoming's

public relations director, said she's happy with the 5K race event — and though it was an early wake-up, she had a thermos full of coffee and was ready to go.

"Today has been awesome — this 5K is a growing event," Rush (junior-public relations) said. "And I'm just excited to see where it will go in the future."

Homecoming events such as the East Halls Celebration and the For the Glory Talent Show will take place later this week.

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