

JCP: New Milligan students take day to play, get acquainted before classes begin

By Jessica Fuller, JCP Staff Writer

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HAMPTON — Students may be packing up for classes at Milligan College later in the week, but that doesn't mean they can't have a little fun before class is back in session for the semester.

Doe River Gorge was teeming with new Buffs Sunday afternoon for a daylong retreat that kicks off Milligan's Welcome Week. From corn hole to ultimate Frisbee to ziplining into the water, upcoming freshmen and transfer students took the day to play and relax before looming classes begin.

Campus Activities Director Jason Onks said Milligan has been treating its new students to the retreat for more than 10 years now. In addition to soothing some nerves before a big change in the students' lives, Onks said the retreat serves as an opportunity for new students to find fellowship within Milligan's community.

"The objective is about building community and giving them a focus time," Onks said. "They can develop those relationships themselves because they're having this experience in going into this new phase in their life."

And it works, according to incoming freshmen and new friends Katy Priest and Katie Bourne.

Bourne is a Kingsport native and Priest is from Bluefield, Virginia, and both said they didn't have any acquaintances going into Milligan, which was a little unnerving for them.

"Personally for me it's kind of scary because I normally keep to myself, but this makes it easier because we're all having fun," Priest said.

"I didn't know anybody going into this so this is really a good thing to get to know people," Bourne added.

Sporting 'Be a Buff' T-shirts, both Katies said they felt their choice to attend Milligan College was the right one because officials put so much effort into making sure the new students feel comfortable in their new environment.

Not only the school officials, they said, but upperclassmen already have a knack for helping new students feel welcome in the Milligan community. With new friendships, a sense of community and a new dorm room, new students were all set to begin classes on Wednesday.

"They really care about the students," Bourne said. "They want you to feel involved and comfortable."

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