



student spotlight

STORY BY KRISTIN E. ETU '91 PHOTOS BY SHAUN M. MACIEJEWSKI

CanisiusCommutes

“I took the Main Street trolley car and got off at Jefferson Avenue,” recalls Anthony J. Colucci '55 about his years as a student at Canisius College. “Classes started at nine bells and by one o’ clock the campus was pretty much empty. Most of the students, except for basketball players, left campus and went to work.”

How times have changed.

Gone are the commuter nicknames, such as “day-hops” or “brown baggers.” Today’s commuters take part in extra-curricular activities, eat lunch (not from a brown bag) in the Old Main Snack Bar or the Economu Dining Hall and keep the college’s parking lots filled with cars well into the evening.

Among them is **Joseph A. Roaldi '08**, who drives in each day from Lancaster, NY.

“I’ll stick around campus if I have a fraternity meeting at night,” says Roaldi, a secondary math education major and president of Sigma Phi Epsilon. “Other times, I may just stay to chat with other students.”

Although for decades Canisius was a commuter college, today 70 percent of freshmen reside on campus. It’s part of a national trend, says Jill A. Conlon, associate vice president for enrollment management.

“The trend is one of student choice,” says Conlon. “Students demand a high quality, on-campus experience. As a result, colleges build residence halls to improve their facilities and accommodate that growing demand.”

Since 1995, Canisius has invested approximately \$63 million in the construction and renovation of its 11 residence halls, including three new facilities: the Village Townhouses (1997) the Delavan Townhouses (2002) and Eastwood Hall (2005).

But while Canisius continues to enhance on-campus life for resident

<< As president of the Commuter Student Association, **Katie L. Jozwiak '07** (left), organizes many of the club's popular commuter student services.

students, Conlon notes that the college works equally hard to provide the best possible experience for commuter students.

When Canisius renovated the Richard E. Winter '42 Student Center in 1995, it added a commuter lounge. Complete with couches, televisions, computers and wireless Internet access, the lounge serves as a home-away-from-home for commuter students, who previously lingered on hallway floors between classes.

"Canisius does a good job of accommodating commuter students," remarks Roaldi. "When I have a break in class, I'll often head down to the commuter lounge to work on homework or just to relax."

In 2003, a group of commuter students formally established the Commuter Student Association (CSA) to provide activities and services specifically for commuters.

One of CSA's most popular services is Breakfast-on-the-Go, a free granola and juice bar where students can grab a bite to eat before class. At Commuter Appreciation Week luncheons, students play bingo for a chance to win gas cards and free oil changes. Recently, a CSA-sponsored defensive driving course was filled to capacity with students eager to reduce their insurance costs. The college also offers commuters a chance to opt out of their winter drive to campus via Operation Snowbound. For a fee, commuters can live in campus housing from November 30 until March 1.

"It's really important for commuters to get involved in extra-curricular activities and feel connected to the campus so that they have a positive overall experience," says **Katie L. Jozwiak '07**, CSA president. Jozwiak joined the club freshman year and like Roaldi, she commutes from Lancaster. "If commuters just take off after class they miss out on a lot."

The college's efforts to enhance the commuter experience have not gone unnoticed by students. A 2005 survey by the Office of Campus Programming and Leadership Development (CPLD) shows that 58 percent of commuters feel connected to the college community. And commuter students are involved now more than ever. In fact, 51 percent report they participate in extra-curricular activities at Canisius.

Jozwiak attributes the increase in activity to the Internet, which she

says is a valuable tool for communicating with commuters, either at home or at school.

"We publicize our commuter events mostly through E-mail," says Jozwiak, "We also publish *Canisius Commutes*, a monthly on-line newsletter."

Similarly, the CPLD solicits commuter questions and concerns via E-mail.

"Last spring, I received many comments from students who thought that cars were parked too close to the parking ramp entrance on Jefferson Avenue and it blocked the view of oncoming traffic," explains Kathleen Martoche, assistant director of CPLD.

"We worked with Public Safety Director Gary Everett and the city of Buffalo to get the stop signs moved so that traffic is more visible."

In recent years, the college's Department of Public Safety has been particularly receptive to the needs of commuter students. New this year is the department's VIN Etch Program, which enables all students to have their federally-registered vehicle identification numbers (VIN) etched on the window of their cars. The program deters professional car thieves and helps recover stolen cars. Public Safety also provides a regular shuttle bus service for students, seven days a week, when classes are in session. The service is especially convenient in the evenings when commuters head home after a day of classes, club meetings, activities and library study groups.

That same shuttle service also drives by the old Main Street trolley car stop, where Anthony Colucci was dropped off for classes each morning at Canisius. A new interdisciplinary science center will be built at the site of the former Sears Roebuck store, where Colucci worked each afternoon. And students no longer vacate campus at the one o'clock bell. Instead, both resident and commuter students occupy all parts of campus late into the evening. As changes continue to evolve on the Canisius College campus, the history and tradition of the commuter student remains strong. ●



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<< **Joseph A. Roaldi '08** (left) commutes to Canisius from Lancaster, NY and often stays on campus long after classes are finished.