



Shawn Robinett, cafeteria worker

"I love St. Mark's. That's my family. I like it over there. They got good food, the St. Mark's family. They help me out."

Addendum, 1B-4B

ALUMNI NETWORK | INSIDE Care packages for alums, perks associated with graduation ■ pages 12, 13

After years of focused work and a complete cultural change in the community, the school's alumni network has become among the strongest in the country.



HOMELAND (From left to right) Communications Coordinator David Carden goes through his photographs on his computer, decides which will appear on outlets such as the main website and *Pride* magazine. Alumni Coordinator Lexie Parker watches as senior Sam Khoshbin and others participate in the Student Alumni Association, which organizes care packages and messages for graduated Marksmen, allowing them to stay better connected to their alma mater. Director of Alumni Relations Jim Bob Wornack leads the office in developing connections with past Marksmen. Assistant Headmaster David Dini reconnects with members of the community at a recent alumni event.

The place they call home

Senior Bradley Mankoff has been at 10600 Preston Road for 11 years, 21 weeks and five days. In just 105 days, he will walk across that 30-foot stage at the 2014 commencement ceremony and begin a new chapter of his life.

However, if you ask him about leaving St. Mark's, Mankoff's face turns serious and he becomes contemplative. "I'm going to miss the community because it will take so long to find another community of the same strength in my life," he said. "I may find it in college and I may not find it until I have a family of my own."

That wasn't always the case for seniors about to end their journey here.

Veteran teachers recall a time when, after graduating, Marksmen rarely came back to their alma mater. Alumni events, so well-attended today, were non-existent. Homecoming failed to lure even those from honored classes.

But today, events as singular as an alumni lunch bring overflow crowds of more than 200 hungry alumni who fill room 114 of Nearburg Hall, feast on a fajita lunch, reconnect and hear from old friends, classmates and faculty.

This cultural shift didn't just happen. It was the intended purpose of many years of work, connections and reunions all designed to ensure that Marksmen from five, 15 and 50 years back don't forget the place they came from — the place hundreds of them still call home.

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► by **Dylan Clark**, editor-in-chief, and **Will Clark**, staff writer | photos by **Andrew Gatherer**, head photographer, and courtesy Development Office

Committee on Academic Programs ponders course additions, scheduling changes

By **Noah Koecher**
staff writer

New options of course selection, including the addition of "Shakespeare's Plays" and "Contemporary Drama" are being added alongside possible changes to time scheduling after Scott Gonzalez, chair of the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP), met with department chairs and division heads Jan. 13 to talk about school policy, set educational standards and find the optimal system of school scheduling.

Meeting on the second Monday of each month, the CAP looks at trends in education and seeks to refine the school and its future

of growth — beginning with the daily schedule of a student and building upwards.

"The major topics that we are looking at, of course," said Gonzalez, who is also the school's dean of campus and provost, "is going to be the schedule, which will not be determined until later this spring, and how we are going to be augmenting the daily schedule. We also are going to be talking



Scott Gonzalez
Chair of
Committee on
Academic
Programs

about electronic texts and in what courses might we want to go towards electronic textbooks. Those are really the major issues."

Among other options, Gonzalez believes that cross-curricular lessons — the combination of multiple subjects into one class — the addition of technology and computer skills classes and major class time changes have the potential to greatly enhance the effectiveness of the schedule.

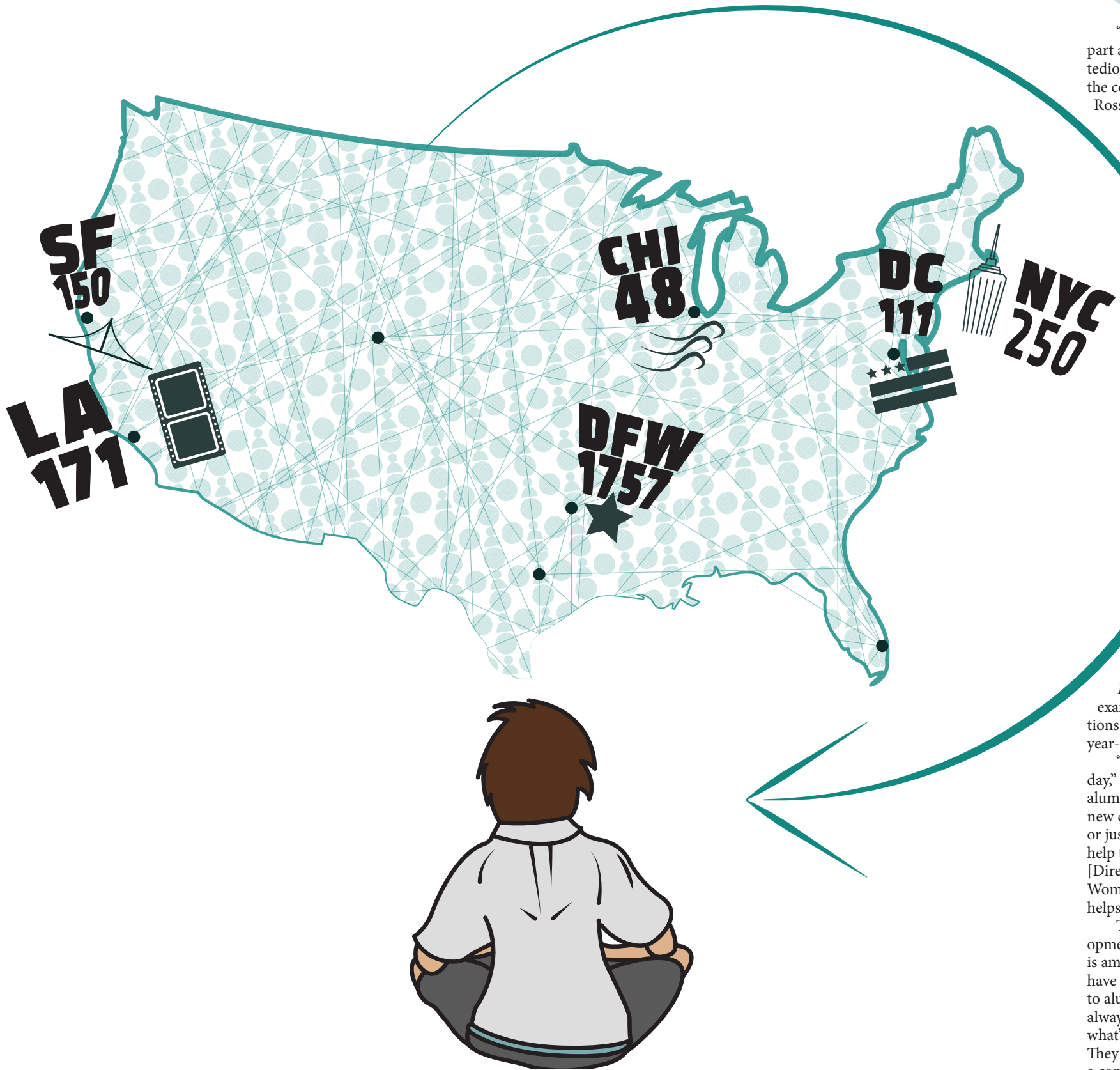
"Instead of meeting five days, maybe we meet four days out of a five day cycle, or maybe nine days out of a ten day cycle," Gonzalez said. "And one of those days would be a longer day, and the other days would

be normal. And then you just drop a day, so that another discipline has the opportunity to take those longer periods as well."

In addition to time alterations, the CAP focuses on new possibilities for course selection and placement, specifically in the realm of AP courses.

"If you decide not to take the AP course junior year in English," Gonzalez said, "or if you're not strong enough in our estimation to take that course, you have to take a standard 11th grade English course, and then you have to select what we call complimentary courses — but they're not really electives."

COVER STORY | Continued from page one



As Assistant Headmaster David Dini sat at his desk reading the 2012 *ReMarker* special section about spending a day at Hockaday, he started to laugh.

"Listen to this," he said, reading a part about a Hockaday junior re-doing a tedious lab, unprompted, and laughing at the commentary by Max Marshall '12 and Ross Crawford '12.

Dini was reading the piece to send to Michael Levy '68, founder of *Texas Monthly*, on behalf of Marshall, who was looking to work in Austin this summer. He had contacted the Development Office in an effort to get in touch with someone in journalism there. Dini got in contact with Levy, who was happy to schedule a face-to-face meeting with Marshall.

"I walk in [to the meeting] and he [Michael Levy] has all these awards and the award you see front and center is the Distinguished Alumnus Award," Marshall said. "He's a very proud Marksman."

Levy had agreed to give Marshall 15 minutes of his time, but the two ended up speaking for two hours, and Levy wanted to read some of what Marshall had written as a member of the *ReMarker* from 2010-2012 — just one example of the many types of connections the Development Office facilitates year-round.

"This kind of thing happens every day," Dini explained. "We get calls from alums looking to meet a Marksman in a new city for an internship or career advice or just a friendly face, and we're able to help them out. This is the type of work that [Director of Alumni Relations] Jim Bob Womack '98 and everyone in this office helps out with all the time."

Thanks to Dini and the entire Development team, the school's alumni network is among the strongest in the country. They have made a concerted effort to reach out to alumni, to let them know that they're always welcome back and to let them know what's going on when they aren't here. They don't just ask for money. They ask for a connection to St. Mark's.

Twenty years ago, that wasn't the case. In 1994, Dini, then director of External Affairs, was presenting the Distinguished Alumnus Award to Levy and was

met with silence from the audience. He was faced with an alumni base that loved the school and a school that hadn't done a great job of cultivating that love.

"One of the things that I found when I came to St. Mark's was just tremendous latent potential and affinity for the school," Dini said. "I met so many alumni that just said 'I had the best experience at St. Mark's, I loved my experience at St. Mark's, but I don't really feel connected.'"

To combat that apathy, Dini felt he needed to change the culture of the Alumni Program, which primarily contacted alumni to ask for money. Still, he acknowledges the importance of a strong financial backing from alumni.

"It's about promoting meaningful connections between our school and our graduates as well as facilitating connections among our graduates," Dini said. "There ought to be this wide range of experiences and opportunities and connections. Financial support is one of them, and it's a very important one that we don't apologize for because that's part of the engine behind the success of the school."

Roby Mize, Jr. '83, father of sophomore Roby Mize III, was chairman of the Alumni Fund in 2005 and 2006 and served on the Alumni Board from 2005 until 2011. He can relate to the relative lack of involvement by former alumni.

"When I graduated from St. Mark's... the first real contact I had with the [Development Office] was probably well after I graduated from college," he said. "They probably sent correspondence to my house, but that was back in the days of snail mail. But now they make a much bigger effort to connect immediately and sort of win the hearts and minds of the alums right out of the gate. They've gotten very proactive."

He explains how at the time, the school did not foster relationships throughout the entire alumni network. "Back then, you connected with your buddies when you got back in town, you connected with them on the telephone from time to time," Mize said. "Your universe of folks you stayed connected with might have been a handful."

Dini, hired in 1994, worked hard with Headmaster Arnie Holtberg throughout the '90s and into the new millennium to



PAST CONNECTIONS Alumni Relations Director Jim Bob Womack '98 speaks with Sam Yonack '13 and Matt Genevov '13 at a barbecue dinner in Austin in the fall.

start down the path that lead to unprecedented alumni involvement.

"It's been a long-term goal and objective that both Mr. Holtberg and I share and others before us shared," Dini said. "I think that maybe one of the differences was that the school was in a position and we were ready to focus on investing the time and energy and resources to engage our graduates, our alumni, in meaningful ways — which meant really investing in them and really investing in building those relationships with them."

When Womack was hired in 2006, he made an effort to continue that success. "My goal was to build upon the success we were already having," he said. "The program was moving in an amazing direction. When I got here, to be fair, the direction of the program was really strong. I came in and the sense was, 'OK, let's ramp this thing up.' And since I've been here it's been really great in that we've built the team."

According to Dini, an important factor in that process — one that has led to the youngest 15 classes contributing the majority of alumni giving — is the involvement of students and young alumni in the effort. "Of the metaphors we've used to describe the transition between student and alumnus, which used to be a very stark one, the illustration that I've always found most apt is a dissolution of the line between student and alum," Dini said. "So it's just a slow transition. It's almost the kind of experience where you go from student to alumnus without knowing it. It's almost a blurred line."

Two of the ways that line is blurred are through the interns at the Development Office and the Marksmen in the Student Alumni Association. Before Marshall made his connection with Levy, he got a taste of the alumni world when he worked as an intern for three months.

"The fact that I interned at the Development Office has allowed me to meet a lot more cool alumni," Marshall said. "The St. Mark's alumni network is not just networking, it's helping family. It's not an idea of social climbing or some hollow favor. It's a deeper sense of gratitude."

Stephen Rambin '13 also worked in the Development Office over the summer and found that the connections made there are deeper than just donations.

"Before I worked there, my impression of the Development Office was people trying to get back together, relive their high school days, go back and see their old friends, but I didn't know how much people cared about St. Mark's once they graduated," Rambin said. "It is a really unique community, and it is really just special to a lot of people because it made them the men they are today."

The bond among alumni is both professional and personal, a critical advantage in the business world, says Roby Mize.

"If you bump into somebody someday and they went to St. Mark's, you immedi-

ately have a connection, a shared experience," Mize said. "Rightly or wrongly you're going to attach some value to that person. They went to St. Mark's, they experienced what I experienced. He's got to be pretty smart and hardworking because that's what it takes to get through St. Mark's. It's a brand. It's a crème de la crème brand."

The success of past Marksmen has opened countless doors for young alumni hoping to realize their dreams.

"St. Mark's alums are everywhere," Marshall said. "I can't think of a world they are not on the top of. Every industry. When you get out of school, you have all these people that are going to open doors for you, and not just in a networking sense but in a mentorship sense."

Michael Merrill '72 is a leader in the San Francisco alumni group who has directly benefitted from his days as a Marksman. He runs Michael Merrill Design Studio, an interior design firm and one day received a call from Dylan Parker '88, who works at BSA Architects. Parker had a contract for Merrill — to lead the conceptual design of 400 houses being built for the 2018 Olympics in South Korea.

"This 100 percent would not have happened if we were not both Marksmen," Merrill said. "I get a significant amount of business each year straight from working with the alumni group in San Francisco."

Another beneficiary of the St. Mark's brand, Marshall used his connection with the famed rock musician Steve Miller, who attended the school from 1950 until 1960, to help accelerate his music career. The legend continues to mentor the young alum.

"Steve [Miller], I talk to him all the time," Marshall said. "That is 100 percent because of St. Mark's. It really doesn't have that much to do with me and it has everything to do with 10600 Preston Road."

Miller performed with Marshall at the 2006 Centennial Celebration, and since then there has been a determined effort to have quality alumni events year round. It's no coincidence that the huge increase in alumni events corresponds to the development of one of the best alumni participation percentages, 56 percent last year, in the country.

The remarkable alumni participation percentage is only one of the noticeable areas of improvement in the last couple decades. "These alumni are helping young alumni because they got helped when they were young," Marshall said. "It's really one of the coolest things St. Mark's does and the Development Office really needs to be applauded for it because they've really grown that network."

Not only are the alumni being connected, but frequently, older alums will also take younger alums under their wing.

"It's pretty spectacular both how broad the network is as far as all the different industries and how deep people are willing to

go to help you," Marshall said. "They want to mentor you and grow you."

The interns in the Development Office form many of these connections over the summer. One of their main jobs is to call alumni who have not donated in a long time and to convince them that their donation is meaningful and helpful.

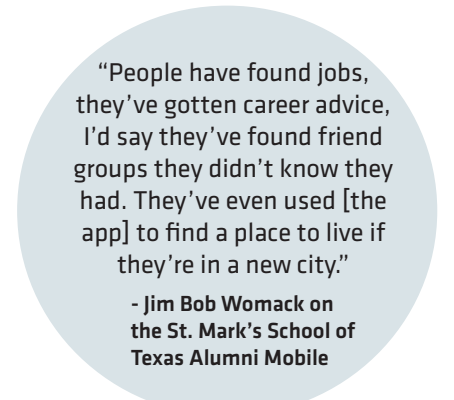
"I think people on the other line like to hear a person instead of stats or some sort of argument," Marshall said. "I just talked about how much St. Mark's had changed my life and why I was spending my last summer in Dallas before college working at St. Mark's. Like who would decide to stay at their school an extra summer? That sounds ridiculous."

Rambin can also relate to the impact that he and other interns have had on the expanding alumni network.

"You really explain to them how you've benefited from their money and that you've taken advantage of it as a student through all the opportunities St. Mark's offers," Rambin said. "The most important thing is to show them that the money is well-spent, and that their donations are appreciated."

After leaving St. Mark's, Marshall has found that one of the most special things about the alumni world is the desire of the older alums to pass on the St. Mark's tradition.

"The word brotherhood gets thrown around a lot," Marshall said. "That's a real thing. In a lot of the business world, there's a definite difference between connec-



"People have found jobs, they've gotten career advice, I'd say they've found friend groups they didn't know they had. They've even used [the app] to find a place to live if they're in a new city."

- Jim Bob Womack on the St. Mark's School of Texas Alumni Mobile

tions and friendships. But I think there's an inherent friendship between any two Marksmen when they see each other."

The brotherhood has certainly been real for Marshall, who has experienced firsthand the wisdom alumni have to offer. "That's what Steve Miller did for me and Michael Levy's doing the same thing," Marshall said. "They realize that they were handed a lot of opportunities while they were at St. Mark's and now that they're at this place of influence, of success, they can share that success with young alumni. It's something they're really willing to do."

Thanks to the dedication of the older alumni, the opportunities for young alumni are boundless.

"It goes so far beyond money," Marshall said. "It's an all-in investment of the self."

'Before I worked there, my impression of the Development Office was people trying to get back together, relive their high school days, go back and see their old friends, but I didn't know how much people cared about St. Mark's once they graduated.'

- STEPHEN RAMBIN '13, DEVELOPMENT OFFICE INTERN, SUMMER 2013

THE PLACE THEY CALL home

In 2002-2003, 30 percent of alumni participated in the St. Mark's fund. Last year, that number was 56 percent — an increase of 86 percent from the previous year. So how did that happen? Editor-in-chief Dylan Clark and staff writer Will Clark explore.

THE PLACE THEY CALL HOME graphic by Zuyva Sevilla, graphics director | photo courtesy Development Office

Graduation perks

> **St. Mark's School of Texas Alumni Mobile**
An app connected to LinkedIn that allows alumni to "securely network and connect with St. Mark's alumni around the world."

> **Alumni cafeteria lunches**
Alumni are always welcome to the Great Hall for a lunch to reconnect with teachers and friends.

> **The magazine**
Get mailed the alumni magazine to stay up to date with all that is happening on and off campus.

> **Alumni Weekend and Homecoming**
Come back on campus in the spring of each year for a weekend with alumni of all ages, participate in alumni panels and visit with favorite teachers.

> **Connections and networking**
Call the Development Office if you're looking to move to a new city and need career advice or are just visiting and want a friendly face to meet for lunch.

> **Alumni clubs**
St. Mark's clubs are already functioning in New York and the Bay Area and are formalizing across the country in major metroplexes like Austin, Los Angeles and Washington D.C.

CARE PACKAGES Alumni in college get goodies, snacks during exams

An assortment of bags is flipped over and emptied, spilling their contents across the table. Pencils, highlighters, erasers, gum packets and teabags all appear.

Even T-shirts and baseball caps drop in front of the assembled students. A stack of nine-by-twelve manila envelopes are set in the center of the pile. Sheets of address labels are set out nearby.

Everyday objects and commodities fill the room in Nearburg Hall. Then, as the clock strikes 3:10 p.m., Student Alumni Association Co-presidents Yima Asom and Aidan Dewar set more than 75 pairs of hands to work bagging packages with ordered supplies.

And as college exams in spring approach, hundreds of care packages will be shipped out across the country, landing on the doorsteps of alumni when they need the support and care most.

"I hope it puts a smile to their faces," Asom said. "We try to send

one right before exam time, which can be and usually is a strenuous time for most college students. We want them to know that we haven't forgotten about them and that we wish them the best."

As they prepare to take exams near the end of the academic year, alumni in college graciously accept the supplementary items from 10600 Preston Road and often express their gratitude through letters and emails that find their way back onto campus.

"We have received many notes from college-age alumni," Alumni Coordinator Lexie Parker said, "expressing their appreciation for the gifts and for the reminder of how special St. Mark's is to them. It is a great way to show our college-age alumni that they are a part of the St. Mark's community and missed back home."

And while care packages are a big part of what the Student Alumni Association seeks to do, Asom

feels that its greatest goal is to strengthen the growing network of alumni through whatever projects and means available.

"Our main goal is bridging the gap in communication between alumni and current students," Asom said. "We've taken steps in order to do so. For example, earlier in the year, we held a panel discussion during which current college alumni came to speak to us about their respective experiences."

Furthermore, by being a member of the club or simply by listening in on panels during Alumni Weekend, students of the present can interact with students of the past to develop stronger ties to St. Mark's and its influence even after they, too, leave for college.

"Students have the unique opportunity to interact with alumni and develop important leadership and networking skills that will serve them throughout their lives," Parker said. "By hearing from young

alumni and seeing a glimpse of life beyond 10600, students can then set goals for their current Marksman experience as they prepare for college, internships and career paths."

And through care packages, personal letters and other anecdotes of student-alumni connections, Marksmen can be certain that, as they too leave campus and head into the world, they will join the thousands of alumni who will never forget their roots.

"We hope that we develop awareness among students on the importance of staying connected to St. Mark's after graduation," Parker said. "As a member of one of the strongest alumni associations in the country, you are part of a special group of 4,000 men who continue to distinguish themselves as extraordinary professionals and leaders in their communities."

- Noah Koecher, staff writer