

Analisa Harvey

## Freshman First Day

Freshmen gathered in the bleachers, checking phones and glancing around for a familiar face. Confetti cannons, drumline and cheers were just a few of the things that greeted them in the packed fieldhouse. After the pep rally, students went through their schedule and were given a chance to explore the building and meet their peers before the school year officially started.

“I was nervous,” freshman Claire Winston said, “but really excited to come to North.”

The level of involvement during freshman first day differed greatly from years past. The focus was to engage more with freshmen and make sure that upperclassmen were in the stands getting to know them individually.

“The freshmen seemed more involved and engaged which was great,” social worker Emily Dorothy said.

The upperclassmen in the Freshman Mentor Program (FMP), and the administrators, said freshman first day was a success.

“We did good this year,” freshman mentor Junior Hailey Walker said. “It doesn’t feel like last year where a lot of freshmen were afraid. We pushed them out of their comfort zone a little bit, and played games that helped us get to know them. I think it was a good intro to their high school career.”

While the 56 freshmen who were new to SMN were afraid, their experience improved throughout the day as they were involved and provided with a warm introduction with one-on-one through hands-on activities and games.

“The whole school came together as a community,” freshman and transfer student Marion Waltrip said, “and even though a lot of us didn’t know each other – we still worked together to have a good time.”

While freshmen agreed high school seemed daunting at first, they recognized it was a big step up from middle school and had its own perks.

“There’s a lot more people which is stressful,” freshman Claire Winston said, “but that does mean you have more friends. You have more people that you interact with, and more thoughts and different opinions.”

With FMP and Pep Club being more involved with the freshmen left an impression on them, and left them interested in joining.

“They [the FMP] were really nice and helpful,” Winston said, “because it is stressful when you come to a new school and you don’t know where anything is, and they can help you figure out high school. I think it’d be a lot of fun [to be a freshman mentor] and they helped me a lot, so I want to pay it forward.”

Freshmen looked forward to the year, and administrators wanted them to know that they are welcomed into North with open arms.

“We’re really glad you’re here,” Dorothy said. “It is our hope that you quickly feel at home here at North and find something that you get involved with, because Shawnee Mission North is what it is because of its students. The sooner that you can become involved and this can feel like your home, the better.”