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UNHs Chemical Free Residence Hall is the Top Place To Live

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UNH's Chemical-Free Residence Hall is the Top Place To Live

Engelhardt Hall is One of Several Popular Themed Halls on Campus

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Aug. 25, 2003

DURHAM, N.H. – When University of New Hampshire students move back into their residence halls beginning Saturday, Aug. 30, 130 undergraduates who want to live a chemical-free life – no alcohol, tobacco or drugs – will move into Engelhardt Hall as part of a themed living community on campus.

The chemical-free themed living community is the most popular of UNH's 16 themed living communities at its residence halls. Engelhardt Hall has had student return rate of 60 to 75 percent in recent years, and last year had a waiting list of students wanting to live in the community. This fall, 44 of the 45 first-year students who will live in Engelhardt Hall specifically requested the chemical-free environment.

“Engelhardt is a great place to live. It develops a good sense of community and friendship,” says Mark Santos, a sophomore from Chester, who spent his first year in Engelhardt Hall.

Created by the UNH Department of Residential Life, themed living communities in residence halls allow students with common interests to live together and establish friendships. Often, providing these niche communities for students helps smooth the college transition process.

According to Engelhardt Hall Director Patrick Wade, students enjoy living in Engelhardt because it is chemical free, traditionally quieter than most halls, and fosters an environment in which everyone feels accepted. “As a result, the sense of community in Engelhardt is very strong, with lots of well-attended programs sponsored by resident assistants and the hall council. Most importantly, students find Engelhardt very academic friendly, as proven by the community’s consistently strong grade point average,” Wade says.

Student interest in the chemical-free theme is indicative of the increasing demand for themed living communities. In just three years, the number of themed communities has doubled, from eight in 2000 to 16 this fall.

“Experts agree that first-year students face transition issues that can impede or enhance their college experience,” says Kristin Carpenter, assistant director of Residential Life. “One transition issue common to most students is the developmental need to feel connected. With a supporting structure in place, a student is more likely to feel connected to UNH, their classes and their new life away from home.”

Results from the annual Residential Life Survey indicate the themed living communities are a success with students. At Eaton House, home to the Creative and Performing Arts themed community, 94 percent of residents reported experiencing a meaningful individual connection with a faculty member. The campus average is 41 percent. At the Science and Engineering community at Sackett House, 67 percent of residents said they participated in an informal study group in the fall 2002 semester. The campus average is 47 percent.

Several themed living communities unite students based on major. New this fall is The Clubhouse in Gibbs Hall, designed for students interested in sports or recreation. Living in Harmony in Devine Hall had a successful first year bringing together UNH's undergraduate music majors and students interested in music. "It's fun to live near people who love and appreciate music in every aspect just as much as you do; it's truly a unique and dynamic floor," says Anne Pella, a sophomore from Pelham, who spent her first year in Living in Harmony.

Other halls bring together students with common interest and life experiences.

International students enjoy the International Living themed community in Smith Hall, which is home to 92 students.

Approximately one third of residents are international students while the rest have lived/studied abroad, or are interested in international living. "I have loved living in Smith this year because I have never before met so many interesting and admirable people," says Kayla Warren, a sophomore from Falmouth, Maine, who spent her first year in Smith Hall.

For students interested in community service, Richardson House offers the Community Service and Involvement themed community that allows residents to develop connections with the local community through service projects. Christensen and Williamson halls provide first-year students their own themed communities. These freshman residence halls provide additional resources, such as WildCat Mentors and an Academic Help Desk. For a complete listing of UNH's Themed Living Communities, visit www.unh.edu/residential-life/sih.html.