

# Alumni programs keep graduates connected

Some graduates go back just for the sandwiches. The buffalo chicken wrap is popular, as is The Kevin Special: hot roast beef, melted provolone, barbecue sauce, mayonnaise, onions, lettuce and French fries (yes, French fries) wrapped in a flour tortilla. Both are favorites of students and alumni in the dining hall at Loyola Blakefield, Towson.

"A lot of the students love the food here," said alumni director Jamie Myers, class of 1994.

Lunch isn't the only thing luring Loyola graduates back to their alma mater. Golf and tennis tournaments, reunion weekends, winter socials, wine tastings and sports do the trick, as well as through Loyola's sturdy alumni association.

"Events are ways to get alumni on campus and back to school," said Mr. Myers.

Off campus, an alumnus can stay connected through the school's interactive Web site, which offers news, sports scores, alumni profiles, photo albums, class notes and pages, message boards, and a monthly e-letter, designed to help Dons maintain connections with former classmates. Twice yearly, the school mails a four-color magazine.

What keeps an alumni program strong, believes Mr. Myers, is to keep graduates involved and "make them realize even though they are no longer students, they are still part of our community," he said. "We want them to keep Loyola in their minds. We consider our alumni 'ambassadors' of the school."

Compared to Loyola (established 1852), the alumni program at The John Carroll School, Bel Air, is relatively young. The oldest graduates are from the class of 1968, said Susan Larney Greig, alumni coordinator and class of 1978.

Her biggest challenge to connect the 7,200 alumni to the school through event attendance and volunteerism is that they are a young, busy generation still raising families, paying tuitions and mortgages, and being active with the kids.

"The reunions are popular," said the alumni coordinator, who oversees class committees who plan their reunions. "I probably do more than other schools – pay the caterers and DJs and provide a mailing list. It's a nice benefit to have," said the alumni coordinator.

Employed by John Carroll for 11 years, Mrs. Greig has observed that five-year reunions are the most popular. Graduates tend to break away for a bit and return for their 20th and 25th reunions. "We've had one 35-year reunion," she said.

Both alumni coordinators agree that constant communication is key to involving alumni. Having current students who are children of alumni helps as well, reported Mrs. Greig. Currently John Carroll has 154 children of alumni enrolled in a 980-student base.

"We're proud that uncles and grandfathers went here," said Mr. Myers about Loyola. "They like to come back and hang out with the guys they went to school with. Whatever created that, we like to preserve it."