

Call to service is strong for John Carroll grad

Growing up with two grandfathers and two uncles who served in the U.S. Army, Kyle Hanratty, valedictorian for the 2007 graduating class at The John Carroll School, Bel Air, hopes to carry on the tradition. The 18-year-old applied and was accepted to the United States Military Academy at West Point, the United States Naval Academy and the United States Air Force Academy.

Mr. Hanratty had chosen to attend West Point when, a few months ago, he was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre Syndrome. Guillain-Barre is a disorder where the body's immune system attacks part of the nervous system. He has since recovered, but his admission to West Point has been deferred until the fall of 2008.

"The feeling I got up at West Point, I couldn't put my finger on what it was, but there was an aura that sealed the deal for me," said Mr. Hanratty, who will attend the University of Notre Dame in the fall of 2007.

Mr. Hanratty was given a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship to Notre Dame and he said this time next year he will have to decide whether he wants to stay at Notre Dame or transfer to West Point.

"The opportunity to serve is very appealing," said Mr. Hanratty. "I really value service to our country because the freedoms our country allows us are truly spectacular."

When applying to colleges, Mr Hanratty said he was looking for three things, smaller class sizes, a Catholic environment and great spirit and pride from the students that go there. He said these three things are what he has gotten from John Carroll along with many leadership skills.

"Leadership isn't so much about you but who you are leading," said Mr. Hanratty. "Beyond leadership is the academic side of John Carroll which has really set me up for any college or academy."

Mr. Hanratty said whatever decision he makes he could see himself making a career out of serving in the Army. When asked about his opinion on the war he said, "freedom isn't free" and "you can either be proactive or reactive." He continued to say that being reactive sometimes puts countries or people in a bad situation.

"We are defending our freedom before the threat comes to us. Battles are going to need to be fought with bullets or words, in America or overseas," said Mr. Hanratty. "I support the troops and I encourage all Americans even if they don't support the war to always support the troops."