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'We're pioneers'

Glenwood School in St. Charles welcomes first female students

BY LISA SMITH

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Ten-year-old Jasnia could be an ambassador for Glenwood School.

Midway through her first day of orientation, the fifth-grader from DeKalb rattled off the school's rules, schedule and activities list. She had visited the St. Charles campus many times with her older brother, who attended the school, but Monday was the first day in the school's 10-year history that she and other girls could enroll as students.

"We're pioneers," she said.

Eight girls are spending the week at the school for orientation and will return Aug. 24, the day before the 2004-05 school year begins. Girls were welcomed at the institution's original 117-year-old campus in South suburban Glenwood a year ago.

Although the classrooms are coed, the girls have their own dormitory on campus. Like Jasnia, many of the girls have brothers attending Glenwood.

"We certainly have prepared ourselves," said John Irwin, president of Glenwood School. "We know a coed population can present challenges, but we have experienced some of them already at our south campus."

Irwin said school staff are "extra vigilant" when it comes to supervising the students. Parents who have inquired about enrolling their daughters at Glenwood often want to do so because they are concerned about the girls' safety at public schools, Irwin said.

"The experience with the girls has been very positive," Irwin said. "We have an equal number of boys and girls on our drill team. We started a new drum line this year that's one-third

girls. They're very competitive and very accomplished."

Glenwood serves "at risk" students ages 7 to 18 from low-income families typically headed by one parent. The school is funded entirely by private donations, which subsidize roughly 95 percent of each student's tuition. Parents pay the remaining 5 percent, between \$90 to \$100 monthly.

A combined 275 students live on both campuses, with additional students attending the day program at Glenwood's south campus. Forty female students are expected to enroll at Glenwood's south campus this fall.

Many of the students on the St. Charles campus are from Aurora and Elgin.

Class sizes at Glenwood are small, ranging from 12 to 15 students, and all students participate in the school's military program, where they learn



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Glenwood School teacher and houseparent Tanya Egler teaches voice skills to some of the first girls to attend the school Monday afternoon during a full week of orientation. Sasha, left, and Kim, along with some male students, work on articulating words.

leadership and teamwork skills.

"It's fun," Jasnia said. "The boys have really been helping out the girls in the military program."

gram."

She likes Glenwood better than the public school she attended because there's "spe-

cial attention when you need it."

"It seems real nice here," she said.