It's 4:45pm and the night -clown that has just begun. I'm on my laptop in a nice corner booth at Twelve Eighty -Seven of Keith's White by my side listening to Joel Plasker. I've been feeling relaxed in a long time. At 1 I start here writing this page. I can help but reflect on how quickly time does. Just a couple of days ago, the friends and families' faces burning around me were dressed in my suit and leading cheers all over campus. I've been fixated on thoughts of this past Welcome Week, and how the events that took place displayed the true spirit and drive of which our students hold a capital.

It was the same spirit that enabled McMaster students to raise $51,000 (with a projected total of $61,000) for Shriners. This is the largest amount over raised for the Shriners in any campus Shriners history! We surpassed our goal of $45,000 and it was all because of the incredible generosity and passion demonstrated by the students of McMaster University.

I've never seen so many undergraduates out selling hilltops, glows, and offering to shine shoes. Many Welcome Week reps and planners were auctioned off at maize Night and in residence to help bolster the total.

One of the most notable stories comes from Brandon Hall. Lawrence Luss, Brandon Hall's House Programming Advisor, was auctioned for $160! Not only did he get auctioned off for such a high price, but team of reps and students raised the most money a single building has ever raised in residence history! Wellington Hall deserves a shout out as well, considering the $12,000+ they raised. An average of $21 per student, which is good enough to give them the last place in the Shriners competition for the Welcome Week Cup. Well done everyone!

What's Welcome Week without the PJ Parade? We are all familiar with the PJ Parade. It is a parade in which McMaster students have a chance to meet and greet with the community while wearing their finest flannel. Possibly the best part about the parade this year (apart from getting a bonus kiss of course :D) is that I occasionally stopped and talked to some of the families that were outside along the route. Repeatedly, our neighbours told me how great they thought the students and WW reps were, as well as expressing how much their children loved interacting with everyone. They were all very appreciative of how generous students were to their kids who were sporting handmade costumes.

As far as PJ Parade was, it didn't top the sheer level of enthusiasm displayed at the Home Opener. Possibly my favourite event all week, the football game against Waterloo demonstrated the McMaster spirit in its purest raw forms. The stands were so packed that people were forced to sit on the steps, but chased just as loud. A couple of Maroons told me later that a woman had approached them, appreciative of the overwhelming support the Maroons received at the game. Oh ya, and our boys kicked as too!

What else can I say? There were a lot of big stories of generosity and gratitude, like the ones I mentioned above, but there were also countless personal stories as well, which really makes the experience more memorable. Stories involving the interaction between reps and students. Stories that may have involved a crutch from another building during Mac Connector. Stories of moments getting to know each other for the first time. It's these experiences that I hope you'll remember and take away with you.

I personally want to take this opportunity to thank you all for making this Welcome Week a particularly amazing year. I want to thank all the Welcome Week planners that have been preparing for this single week for months now I want to thank all the Welcome Week reps and Maroons that volunteered their time to come out with extraordinary amounts of energy every morning. I want to thank the first year students who came out and showed overwhelming support for an institution they barely know.

I also want to challenge you to get involved in your city. I love Hamilton as much as I love this University and them are amazing opportunities to really give back to the city in which you live. Get in touch with the director arts community on James St. North, or volunteer with the many charities and outreach programs downtown. Help rally to bring in as $250 millions in legacy facilities to Hamilton for the Pan Am Games in 2015. You only need to pick up a copy of The Spectator, available at various locations around campus (including Union Market) to realize that Hamilton is a hub of possibilities.

Take time to adjust into your schedules and into your routines, but start thinking about what you can do to keep this spirit going all year long. Take up a job, join one of 280 clubs, volunteer or become a Maroon, all of which are offered by your McMaster Students Union. Get involved, other ways through joining the Society of Off Campus Students or joining a faculty society. There are so many opportunities on campus.

Welcome Week may be over, but McMaster spirit is here to stay.