

U. affiliates celebrate day at Eagleton with potluck lunch

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In celebration of the nation's 44th Presidential Inauguration, Eagleton Institute of Politics faculty, staff, alumni and undergraduate students brought President Barack Obama logo adorned cakes, Illinois-shaped chocolates and more to a potluck snack fest held yesterday afternoon at Woodlawn Mansion on Douglass Campus.

Students in attendance said they were disappointed that classes were not cancelled for Inauguration Day, since they considered it a cultural event.

Livingston College senior David Brown said it is a time for Americans to celebrate and enjoy the day.

"I'm [glad] to see that a lot of people are just taking advantage of this opportunity [because this is a] once in a lifetime event to celebrate," Brown said. "[But] there's still a lot of work that needs to be done."

Brown said there was so much hype surrounding the day, with radio stations in particular spreading the word about Inaugural events.

"It's political, but at the same time it's popular," Brown said.

Livingston College junior Anthony Johnson said he hopes Americans will not think the nation's problems will be fixed immediately upon Obama taking office.

"I just hope the enthusiasm just doesn't die down after this," Johnson said. "We didn't overcome [our problems] just yet."

Brown said more work still needs to be done in terms of the country's economy and Americans must face reality that more jobs are going to be lost.

"We just lost 500,000 jobs last month, we already lost more than 100,000 this month, so amidst all the crazy, hectic things going on, we have this one nice day where we can just forget about the bad and celebrate the good," Brown said.

Eagleton Institute of Politics Director Ruth Mandel said she could not remember a day where there was such a sense of celebration and coming together.

"I tear up just watching the crowds on the Mall, to see the millions of people who have traveled from everywhere in the country just to stand there and be part of this moment is so moving," Mandel said.

She said so many of the people in the audience at the Inauguration were young, which will have an impact on them for their entire lives and for the country for decades to come.

She said watching the nation join together on Inauguration Day is moving and exciting because it is a moment of celebration and recognition that the nation can and will be better, Mandel said.

"So I've been crying, I cried when I watched the concert on HBO on Sunday, I cried when Pete Seeger sang and everyone joined him in singing "'This Land is Your Land'," Mandel said.

She said she is always proud of Inaugurations, and the peaceful and celebratory transition of power is an example for the world.

"Sometimes not as many people are happy, but we have peaceful transitions," Mandel said. "It is a testament to the stability of this

country, rooted in the belief that the people can select their leader.”

Eagleton’s Development Specialist Jennifer Bognar said she was excited to see people gathering together who feel so vested in the process.

“This is something that they helped bring about, they came to really embrace the idea of change regardless of their party,” Bognar said.

Bognar said there has been a lot of apathy in the past, but this Inauguration brings people together in a way she has not seen in the political process in some time.

“I think it is evidence here today at Eagleton that everyone really wants to see what’s happening and believes that there really can be change, particularly in these difficult economic times,” Bognar said. “But those parties want to work together and Barack Obama can be a leader who can rise above partisanship.”

Bognar said this Inauguration was on a larger scale since there were a greater number of young people who made their way to Washington, D.C. days before the Inauguration.

“[They were] getting on buses, on trains, finding a way to get there that they feel like this is their election, this is their president, and they want to be a part of it, even if they have to stand miles away from the stage,” she said.