

# Landmark teachers spruce up for opening

By SUSAN ELLS

PUTNEY — The guidance counselor mowed the lawn; nearby an English teacher pruned a young sugar maple, and across campus the college president swabbed the stairs to the cafeteria.

Landmark College, the nation's first college for dyslexics, is getting ready to welcome its inaugural class of students late this month. On Thursday, faculty and staff decided to help the maintenance crews put finishing touches on the renovated campus.

The college — an extension of Landmark School in Prides Crossing, Mass. — purchased most of the former Windham College buildings in 1983 for \$621,000. This past year Landmark spent more than \$2.5 million to renovate, rehabilitate and refurnish five campus buildings, abandoned in 1978 when Windham College went bankrupt, according to Landmark's dean, Robert Skeeel.

Crews have now fixed leaky roofs, installed new heating, sewage and electrical systems, and scraped every last inch of peeling

white paint off the college's four main buildings and walkway — all made of brick. According to one school official, the old Windham College buildings were modeled after a college campus in New Mexico where the white paint helped cool the brick buildings by deflecting the sun's heat.

In order to comply with current state fire and safety regulations, the college also had to replace each existing dormitory window with a double hung variety at a cost of \$500 per window, Landmark President James Olivier explained Thursday as he continued to swab the stairway.

Thursday's clean-up campaign was a relaxing break in an intensive two-week schedule of teacher training and orientation for the college's 25 faculty members and counselors who arrived on campus Tuesday. Dr. Charles Drake, the founder of Landmark School, and other seasoned Landmark instructors led the new college faculty through the first three days

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**LEAN-UP DAY** — Landmark College maintenance supervisor Brent Pettit, right, watches as Landmark faculty member Jerry Morgan washes windows during Thursday's clean-up session at the school. Landmark's first students will arrive on Sept. 17.

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of their orientation.

Some of the new college's faculty members, selected from more than 300 applicants, spent the summer learning Landmark's special teaching techniques and working with students at the school's Massachusetts campus.

Reading instructor Lise Schnurr of Putney praised Landmark's curriculum. Schnurr said that some of her students were able to pick up two school years' worth of reading skills during the six-week summer session.

"Landmark's method really works for the kids," Schnurr said.

Landmark's 80 students are coming from at least 20 different states this year. Ranging in age from 18 to 25, the student body will include 20 women and 60 men.

According to Skeeel, many of the students are from California, Florida, Texas and the East Coast, but there are no Vermonters in the class.

Tuition, room and board at the college is \$18,200 for students in the one-year "pre-college" program and \$17,500 per year for students entering as first-year college students, according to Skeeel. Tuition is high because each student requires individual tutors and small classes in order to master basic reading, writing and study skills for college-level work, explained Skeeel.

To help families afford the high tuition costs, Landmark's recruitment package includes a sheet showing how Landmark tuition can be considered a medical cost or tax deduction under federal income tax regulations, Skeeel said.

As the former dean of Marlboro College and now dean of Landmark, Skeeel is ready to help many of the incoming students make the transition from living in Houston or Los Angeles to life on the sloping East Putney campus.

"Our answer is to have more to do than they can handle," said Skeeel as he reviewed the school's intensive curriculum.

Like Skeeel, many of Landmark's faculty, senior staff, secretarial and maintenance staff are longtime area residents.

Jerry Morgan of Westminster West will teach pre-college courses; Jeffrey Gaddis of Putney is Landmark's business manager, and Robert H. Rhodes, former Windham College librarian, has returned to head up Landmark's library staff.

Language instructor Schnurr, a resident of Putney "on and off for the past seven years," said she feels that she has found the perfect job in her favorite town.

"It's great to be on the ground floor of a new organization in a town I love to live in," said Schnurr, as she clipped away at the maple branches.