Cabrillo hosts ‘Welcome Day’ orientation for new students
350 attend workshops, tours

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APTOS — Standing at the back of a long line of students, incoming Cabrillo student Sunny King slowly shuffled toward the entrance of the enrollment services building, where the second session of a half-day new student orientation would soon begin.

As a first-time college student, King, a 26-year-old Watsonville resident, was admittedly nervous, and her self-consciousness was heightened by the sea of youthful faces that surrounded her. But the single mother of two was determined, deciding to enroll in the medical assistant program because “I need to learn something new and have a new career to support my family.”

Thursday’s “Welcome Day” event on the Aptos campus was organized by Margery Beglado-Rodriguez, Cabrillo’s matriculation coordinator and dean of counseling and educational support services. Melissa Brillio of Cabrillo’s Transfer and Career Center, who helped coordinate the event, estimated 330 students and staff pitched in to give the 330 students and their guests a warm welcome before the first day of the fall semester Aug. 21.

Incoming Cabrillo College freshmen get their bearings during ‘Welcome Day’ on campus Thursday.

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goal, she said, was to help familiarize the newbies with the campus and services so they can hit the ground running.

Earlier that morning, volunteers posted directional signs on miniature sawhorses, all topped with helium-filled balloons in black, white and blue, Cabrillo’s official colors. In the main quad stood half a dozen tables where the incoming students could pick up leaflets and informational brochures about campus life.

Two young men standing farther up the line than King are more representative of the hundreds of students who went through orientation that day. Jorge Olivas and Jesus Benitez, both 18, graduated in June from Monterey High School in La Selva Beach, and will be the first members of their family to attend college.

They’d just completed their first session in the library, where they toured the building and learned how to access services, including obtaining a library card. Next up was a workshop about enrollment services and financial aid, then a third about educational planning, geared toward helping students make the best use of their time.

By late afternoon, the workshops had wrapped up and lunch had been served, and the students were free to take self-guided tours, meeting faculty and staff in various classrooms along the way.

The “Welcome Day” was voluntary and meant to augment the required online orientation all new students must complete before they register for classes. In less than two weeks, about 1,800 students will start taking classes at Cabrillo for the first time. It’s important for them to feel comfortable not only with the campus, but also with faculty, staff and each other, said Sean Escoto, dean of student services.

Thursday’s event was the first new student, on-campus celebratory event in the 11 years Escoto has worked there.

“Those it becomes an annual event,” Brillio said.

Fleta Santilar reports for Kimberly
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