

"Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." - Hebrews 13:2



Adopt-A-Rat at St. Pat's



Every year, hundreds of young men and women choose to enroll at the Virginia Military Institute, in what is probably the most grueling military college training program that exists. Most do so as a pathway to a life of service and sacrifice to our nation as commissioned officers in the United States Armed Forces. For the first few months at VMI, these students, called "Rats," are stressed to their physical, mental, and psychological limits in their mission to earn the title of VMI Cadet.

And every year, many parishioners at Saint Patrick's respond to the Rats' "yes" to sacrifice by adopting two or more Rats - volunteering to provide Rats a quick respite and refuge on Sunday. The material and psychological impact of this generosity on the Rats is powerful, but the most profound impact is the witness of Christ's love and care shown by Catholics who model authentic Christian charity! At its core, the program represents an extraordinary evangelistic opportunity to provide these young men and women – at a time where they are choosing to make their faith their own – the powerful witness of families that are doing their best to live out our beautiful Catholic faith.



So what is the Adopt-a-Rat Program? The Adopt-A-Rat program is executed at a grassroots level in churches/religious communities in the Lexington/Rockbridge area. St. Patrick's helps to match two or more Rats (our newest parishioners) to a parish host family, who commits to offer the Rats some time on as many Sundays as possible away from the "Rat Line" (the extremely intense first few months of training at VMI - normally Sept to Feb). Host family activities might include: taking them out to eat or eating-in with your family, going on a hike, taking them to events, or simply allowing them a place to relax and study in the comfort of your home. Our goal is that every Catholic Rat will have a host family. Please prayerfully consider providing some Catholic fellowship for these cadets.

If you cannot commit to every Sunday, there are many other ways to support! Partner with another family, offer to be a substitute host, or sign up to "Feather the Nest" - bringing goodies to St. Pats and spending an hour or two with the Rats to allow the Campus Minister to meet with his student leadership team for their Sunday meetings.

Who can Adopt: Per the VMI Chaplain's office guidance and diocesan policy, Adopt-a-Rat hosts must be a married couple who are registered adult members of Saint Patrick's parish. Non-married parish members wishing to participate will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the parish. Additionally, in order to host students who are minors, host families must complete the Richmond Diocese Safe-Environment training (3-hour virtual training and background check). Please indicate below if you have completed this training or are willing to complete it.

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." - Romans 12: 13

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Where: Your home. These students are missing their own families and being able to be in your home and a part of your family routines, traditions, and life means more to them than you can imagine!

When: Rats have very limited free time. This is usually for a few daytime hours on a Sunday. You could meet your Rats at Mass and then invite them back to your house for a meal, rest and relaxation. They are typically so tired from the high demands of the Rat Line that they are so appreciative just to be able to even take a short nap on the couch.



If you are interested in helping with the Adopt-a-Rat Program, or in any other way with this ministry to these young adults, please fill in your information and put into the offertory basket or bring by the parish office:

- ___ Yes, I am willing to adopt 2 or more Rats (list how many you would like to adopt)
- ___ I am interested in the Adopt-a-Rat program but have some questions. Please contact me.
- ___ I cannot commit to adopt but would like to support as a substitute, partner, or “featherer”
- ___ Special preferences such as male or female cadets, branch of service, etc

Name: _____

Other members of your household:

Spouse: _____

Children (ages): _____

Pets: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I have completed the Safe Environment training with the parish: ☐

I have not completed the training but would like to do so: ☐

Any other Special preferences/ considerations: _____

Contact: Donna McCullough at (703) 216-5050 - saintpatsrats@gmail.com

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