Student-run guesthouse at Loyola opens
Team of 8 undergrads operate facility
By Jason Melser | TRIBUNE REPORTER

Students were flocking back to Loyola University Chicago’s campus in Rogers Park last month, unloading fotos, catching up at coffeehouses and preparing for the onslaught of classes after a long summer.

But for the students toiling in a small office on Sheridan Road, summer never really got started.

A team of eight Loyola undergrads from a wide range of backgrounds has spent hundreds of hours putting the final touches on a high-end, 10-unit guesthouse they developed and operate. On Thursday, they are holding an open house.

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Chicagoland EXTRA

Student-run guesthouse opens at Loyola

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Loyola officials tout the $3 million Flats at Loyola Station project as the first of its kind in the country. The students are paid about $8 an hour for their labor and receive three hours of class or internship credit.

For senior John Adorno, it means more than some credits and a little cash. It means a shiny new title: chief executive officer.

"Working with this great team and working toward a goal like this, I’m pretty certain I’ll remember things in a way I can say they’ve been able to stick," said Adorno, an international business major from Knoxville, Tenn.

The apartment building sits at Arthur Avenue and Sheridan Road, across the street from campus.

The intersection used to be a drab, slate-colored parking lot and a run-down dive. Today, the massive Mohawk Apartments Station project has taken over, anchored by high-end rental apartments, a 100-seat restaurant, a gas station, coffee shop and deli as well as Burgers & Fries franchise.

One-bedroom units at the Flats rent for $1,000 to $1,100 per month, with prices going up to $1,900 for a two-bedroom, two-bath unit with a balcony.

The apartments are typical of new-construction residences in Chicago — lots of amenities like hardwood floors, modern kitchens, in-unit washers and dryers and free wireless Internet.

But Adorno and his team have added other touches, like tissues for sick tenants, nutri-bars for training teams, a big-screen TV for big-game events, a fitness center and a rooftop deck with a grill and photographs from the iconic skyline.

Since it opened July 25, the Flats has entertained more than 30 guests, most of them parents of Loyola students looking for lodging near campus that offered more than a basic hotel.

Eventually, the students running the Flats want to cater to everyone from extended vacationers in firms who send employees to Chicago for weeks at a time.

"This is a whole new industry. There’s a whole new market of people who want something different from the normal hotel," Adorno said.

Part of the project will be put back into development of new residences under a holding company called Loyola Ltd.

Students will receive a share of the profits in the future, such as sales, restaur-