

The Behrend College Collegian
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Child Care For College Students Who "Suffer" From Binge Drinking

By Froma Harrop
Providence Journal-Bulletin
Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Services

Anyone suspicious the American university experience has become a four-year extension of childhood need look no further than the colleges' latest response to the binge-drinking "problem." Now, in a grownup world, college administrators would tell students who down four or five stiff drinks in a row they are jerks. If they commit violent acts as a result, the police get called. If they drive after drinking, they go to the slammer. If they die from alcohol poisoning, they have nothing but their own stupidity to blame.

But if they can drink responsibly, then have a good time.

Forget about hearing any such counsel, for that would turn students into self-directing adults. Better to blame the problem on all-purpose "cultural attitudes" and "societal pressures" abetted by the villainous alcohol industry.

Thus, demands grow for better policing of off-campus liquor outlets. That is, turn local businesses into babysitters. There are calls to ban sponsorship of college events by companies selling alcohol or the marketing of such beverages on campus. That is, protect their charges from evil influences and trample on free speech.

One former college official has suggested universities stop serving champagne at parents' weekend brunches or at fund-raising events. Remove the bad example for the sake of the children. (Somehow it is hard to believe a college with any sense of self-preservation would insist that its big-check writers remain cold sober.)

The truth is, most Americans can drink without problem. Careful use of alcohol relaxes and warms the drinker with a sense of well-being. Winston

Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt saved Western Civilization without ever missing a cocktail hour. Students have long enjoyed their own drinking traditions. Brahms's Academic Overture, the stately piece heard over and over again at college commencements, took its melody from a student drinking song.

Where is there a campus drinking crisis, anyway? Six college students have supposedly died this year from excessive drinking. These cases are lamentable, but many more college students died from sports-related injuries or car accidents.

An even more interesting question is: How many noncollege people in late teens or early 20s have died from alcohol poisoning? Take note no one is memorizing this particular statistic even though the majority of high school students do not go on to college. That number is not etched on our

national worry list for the following strange reason: Our society considers the 19-year-old who has a job an adult while universities see the 19-year-old pre-law student as a child. Working people who cause trouble because they drink are punished. College students are given others to blame.

College administrators should know that, from a purely practical point of view, playing hide-the-bottle does no good when dealing with an alcoholic. Indeed, anyone who has hung around Alcoholics Anonymous or Al-Anon can immediately identify such behavior as "enabling." Rather than allow the problem drinker to sink into the mire of his addiction until he can no longer stand it and takes steps to straighten out, the enabler tries to save him. Rest assured students interested in getting smashed for the night will find the booze.

Let us end here with yet another

proposition: that binge drinking is more about binge than drinking. It would seem that someone who gulps five glasses of Jim Beam in five minutes is not looking for a pleasant high. Binge drinking is a stunt that has more in common with diving off bridges or swallowing goldfish than the quest for inebriation.

What any increase in binge drinking probably indicates is the students really don't know how to drink. Binging may just be the latest evidence of decline in our nation's table arts. Instead of savoring wine and spirits in the course of a civilized meal, young people are administering it. The colleges' response is to put condoms on bottles. Predictable if simple-minded.

Froma Harrop is a Providence Journal editorial writer and columnist

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Letter Policy: The Collegian encourages letters to the editor on news coverage, editorial content and University affairs. Letters should be no longer than 400 words. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer.

Editorial

With the change of the editorial staff came changes in the way the Collegian is organized. One of our biggest editorial decisions was how to handle the opinion page.

According to some on this campus, there is no opinion page in the Collegian. Anyone who even glances at page four can see the obvious; our opinion page is alive and well. The name is different, but the content is the same.

The editorial page has columns from nationally recognized journalists who write for the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times. The editors write a weekly staff editorial and sometimes editors write their own editorials. Letters to the editors, such as the one from IFC and the Panhellenic Council in response to the article

"Greek rush time a hazy situation," are welcome and encouraged.

The main difference from last year is student editorials. What is printed in the Collegian reflects the editorial staff. We feel that we have an obligation to make sure the editorials are responsible. The most effective way to handle this is to train writers to become good journalists before they can editorialize on what they report. Staff writers may write editorials after meeting a requirement of three articles. The Collegian is dedicated to responsible journalism and responsible journalism is a skill that has to be learned.

The rumors of the missing opinion page are simply false. We want to hear what students have to say, as long as they can say it responsibly.

Broadening of Ban on Child Pornography Went Too Far

By Joan E. Bertin—Special to the Los Angeles Times

The first round of papers has been filed in a federal appeals court in San Francisco challenging the constitutionality of the Child Pornography Prevention Act of 1996. At the same time, the new movie version of Vladimir Nabokov's book "Lolita," starring Jeremy Irons, is opening all over Europe, even though it is not scheduled for release here.

These events are connected. The United States long has had laws prohibiting sexual abuse of minors and trafficking in child pornography. The Supreme Court allows state and federal officials wide authority to protect minors from the sexual exploitation involved in making pornographic material with actual children. In 1996, Congress decided that this wasn't enough, so it added prohibitions. The new law outlaws images that appear to be of children, even if they are not. So even if a movie like "Lolita" was filmed with an adult body double, it apparently would be prohibited if it contains simulated sexual conduct that appears to involve a minor. If you recall, that's

what "Lolita" is about: a man's sexual obsession with a pubescent girl.

The theory behind the law is that such images encourage pedophilia. But sexual abuse of minors is already illegal.

Human motivation is complicated. There's no persuasive evidence of a causal relationship between exposure to sexually explicit material and rape or sexual abuse or between viewing violence and committing violent crimes. Savage acts (sexual and other, against children and adults) have been undertaken under the influence and in the name of religion, but that doesn't mean religion causes savagery.

Disturbing images cannot be prohibited because of the fear that they will induce someone to engage in undesirable or criminal conduct. Otherwise, legislatures could decide that movies about armed resistance might encourage disaffected people to take to the streets with guns or that pictures of lynching might encourage bigots to act on their racist beliefs. It is a basic tenet of our constitutional system that government can control people's behavior, not their thoughts.

There's no denying that words and images have

power to affect how people think and act. But suppression of "bad" ideas or images, even if it were possible to agree on what those might be, does not result in the disappearance of those ideas or of acts premised on them. Ironically, some opponents of pornography who endorse censorship have had their own anti-pornography literature censored.

Silencing stories like "Lolita" will not eliminate pedophilia, which has existed throughout time, in permissive cultures and repressive ones. The film could help us understand something about sexual obsession. Will it? I wouldn't know. I can't see it.

Not every sexual image involving a minor should be suppressed. Some serve important and legitimate goals. In its indiscriminate approach, Congress may have opened the door to creating a whole class of taboo subjects. It could sweep away sex education materials, serious artistic work with sexual content and pictures about other cultures and eras. If it is upheld, Americans may have to go to Europe to appreciate fully the value of the First Amendment.

Bertin is executive director of the National Coalition Against Censorship



Eye on Erie

by Anne Rajotte
managing editor

Recently, there has been more and more attention given to Behrend's surrounding area and the possibility of attracting businesses to Station Road. The misconception has been, so far, that Station Road is zoned as a residential area and there is only a small parcel of land zone for business.

Donna Mindek, the Harborcreek Township supervisor and the secretary-treasurer of the township clarified the zoning question by stating that Station Road has R4 zoning. R4 zoning means that anything college related may be built. This includes restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores, video rentals, basically anything that would be of student use.

Mindek, who is running for reelection, said that the goal in township planning is to have low density development. This means about two houses per acre. Dean Lilley was a part of the development plan, and his involvement resulted in the R4 zoning for Station Road. Mindek said that the Township takes the college's needs into consideration and is proud to have it in the township.

Despite the zoning, businesses have yet to move in because there is no public water system on Station Road. The Erie Water Authority, Behrend officials and the Greater Erie Industrial Developers have combined efforts to get the water system up to Behrend and eventually to the I-90 interchange. It should reach Knowledge Park by next June, and Mindek states, "Hopefully we will have the support of Tom Ridge behind the effort."

Students have great opportunities to get involved with this project. There are township meetings every Wednesday and Planning Commission meetings on the first and third Thursdays of each month. The public, including students are welcome to attend these meetings. Students can be a catalyst in the changes by attending these meetings and voting for candidates who care about student issues. Students can also write letters to Dean Lilley, the water authority, and Mindek to let them know the importance of this issue to Behrend students.

Mindek states, "It's a benefit for all residents of the community to have influence on decisions." Behrend students are residents of this community and can have just as much influence as anyone else. If you are sick of the food on campus, if you don't have a car and can't go into Wesleyville for food and videos and groceries, if you think that student life would improve with the addition of outside businesses, then it is time for you do something about it. We all are in a very real position to make a difference about where we live.

Simply voting can start things in the right direction. If we take our own complaints seriously enough, we can change things. The township and the administration is on our side, but the students have to be the force that pushes them along. Write letters, go to township meetings and let the community know what the students at Behrend need. Students are by no means powerless. As members of this township, we have the opportunity to change what we don't like.

