

Consequences of underage drinking

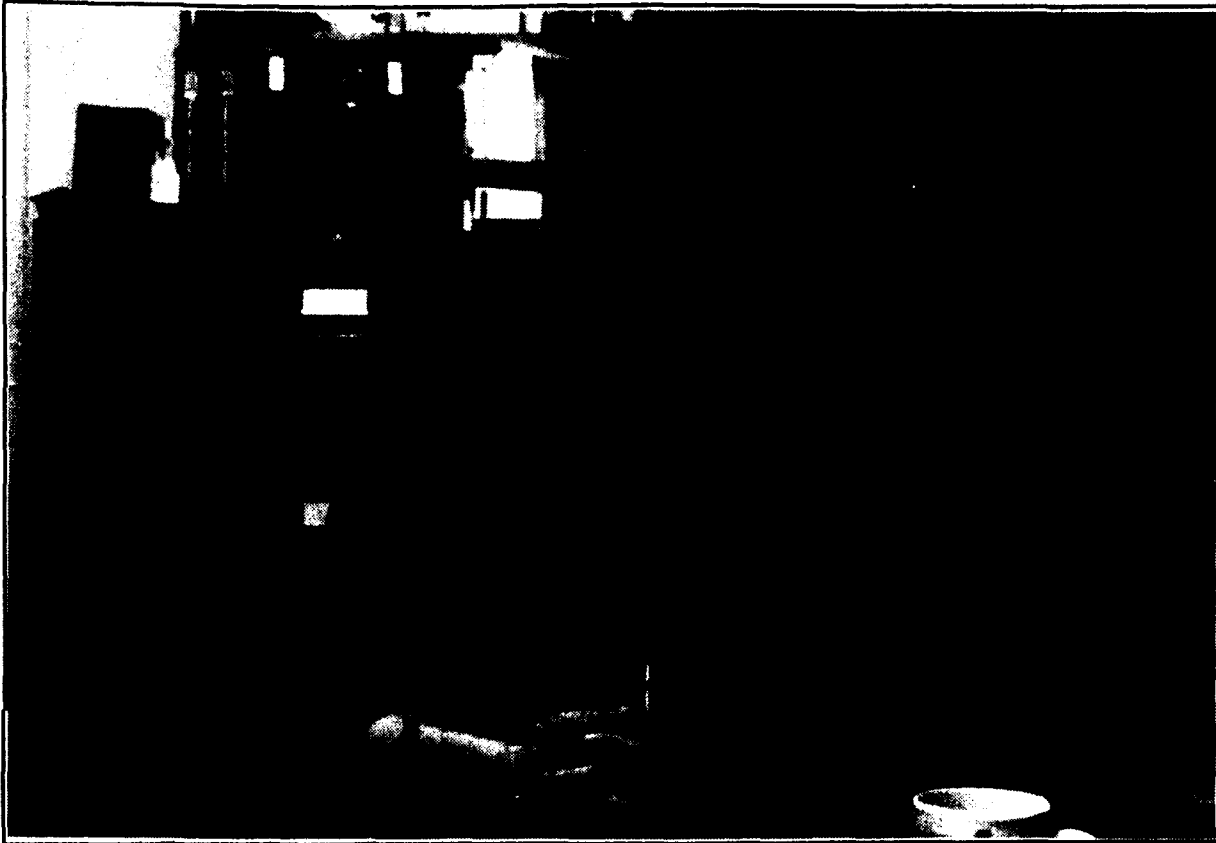


photo by Erin Costello

Bill Donahue: Manager of Police and Safety, who enforce the drinking age on campus.

by Ray Morelli
staff writer

Underage drinking is a controversial topic at any campus, and Penn State-Behrend is no exception. Every Monday, students see others, if not themselves, recuperating from the prior weekend, often with regret. A 1996 survey conducted among Behrend students reveals ninety percent of students have consumed alcohol in the past year. Alcohol abuse is a problem at campuses across the country. Is drinking unacceptable as many believe or is it, as it's defenders claim, "a part of college life?"

The federal and state governments clearly rule that any drinking by a person under the age of twenty-one is illegal. Unlike all other adult privileges which are given at the age of 16 or 18, drinking is withheld from young people until the age of 21. Regardless of whether or not it is fair, it is the law, and it is enforced. "There are serious consequences to underage drinking our students need to be aware of," says Tod Allen, a Behrend police officer as well as an advisor to BACCHUS, the campus group concerned with alcohol-related issues. Pennsylvania has adopted "Zero Tolerance," a nationwide term referring to tough new laws regulating underage drinking. Under the new laws, anyone under 21 may be charged with DUI for having a blood alcohol level of .02, which is only one-fifth the legal limit for of age drinkers.

Alcohol affects students on many different levels. Due to the social problems and academic difficulties

it causes, alcohol is the number one cause of freshmen to drop out in their first year. Patty McMahon, Director of Health and Wellness and advisor to BACCHUS, says, "Many students come here not knowing how and never being able to drink responsibly." What is responsible drinking? According to McMahon, "Never drink on an empty stomach-it has a much more drastic effect. Also, give your body time. It can handle about one drink an hour and stay under the legal limits, although everyone is different."

Alcohol also can affect your awareness and judgement. Under the effects of alcohol, people may do things they would normally never even consider, like breaking laws or engaging in sexual behavior they wouldn't normally. Also, eighty-three percent of all unwanted sexual assaults involve alcohol in some form.

Irresponsible drinking causes other serious problems as well. According to the Department of Transportation, one-hundred and fifty thousand people are killed, crippled, or injured each year by drunk drivers. Alcohol seriously impairs driving ability, although the driver is often unaware of it until it's too late. It throws off one's ability to judge distances as well as distorts depth perception, two essential driving abilities. No one can afford a DUI conviction- it carries a ninety-day license suspension, a twenty-five dollar license reinstatement fee to PennDOT, court costs, and a fine up to five hundred dollars.


Most alarming are student opinions and beliefs about alcohol. "Everyone

thinks that everyone else is using alcohol, which isn't really the case," says McMahon. Ninety-three percent of students believe "everyone drinks at least once a week," while only seventy-percent of those underage had drunk in the last thirty days. "We need to inform our students, because the laws are there, but they aren't doing it." Most student have been inundated with "don't drink" lectures throughout their school years, but still find themselves a victim to peer pressure and are unable to say no when many of their friends drink.

Although in the minority, there are Behrend students strongly opposed to drinking. "Drinking at any age is ignorant. I don't understand how people can so willingly turn themselves over to a drug. Anyone who needs alcohol to have a good time's got serious problems," says Greg Brown, 01 Engineering. Adam Salaga, 01 DUS, agrees, "Underage drinking is incredibly irresponsible. The worst part is everyone thinks it's just so cool to go, 'I was so drunk last night.' It's hardly something to brag about."

Drinking will probably always occur among college students. However, in a world where there are so many consequences to their actions, it's important for students make informed, intelligent decisions about their behavior. Drinking can lead to serious social, academic, and legal problems, as well as endanger the welfare of innocent people. Drinkers most importantly need to exercise good judgement. College students are now adults responsible for their own actions; there's too much at risk to be irresponsible.

4 in 5 women who
are victims of sexual
assault know their
attackers.



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Behrend celebrates Cultural Week

by Tammy Freeman
staff writer

The sounds of salsa and merengue will be wafting through the Reed Building this Friday night.

Tomorrow is the beginning of Cultural Week here at Behrend. Sponsored by The Multi Cultural

Council and its affiliate organizations, Cultural Week serves as a social and informative gathering. It aims to educate students, faculty and staff about cultures other than their own.

Kicking off Cultural Week tomorrow in Reed Commons at 9 p.m. is Friday Fiesta. A dance featuring salsa and merengue music, Friday Fiesta also functions to promote awareness and appreciation for the Hispanic culture and is sponsored by The Organization of Latin American Students (OLAS). Jose Orama, 01 Mechanical Engineering Technology, hopes that "everyone will keep an open mind about it." Refreshments are provided and

admission is free to everyone.

The musical group ensemble, Jorge Arce and Humano combines Afro-Caribbean with Latin American music to form a musical style distinctly their own. Arce, winner of several awards including the Boston music award for "Outstanding Latin Act" and Humano will perform live in Reed Commons Monday, November 17 at 7:30 p.m.

The annual Ethnic Food Tasting will be held on Tuesday, November 18 in Reed Commons from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Foods from all around the world will be provided. Samples are free of charge.

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Police And Safety REPORT:

- 11/03/97 Complainant reported that his son pulled the fire alarm pullbox in Nick.
- 11/04/97 Unknown persons tampering with plumbing fixtures in Turnbull Hall men's restrooms.
- 11/06/97 Report of entrance phone in Tiffany Hall knocked off wall.
- 11/06/97 Heard shots west of Almy Hall
- 11/08/97 Unknown complainant reported an unwanted guest ringing doorbell of an apartment and wanted him to leave.
- 11/09/97 Tow away sign at Niagara had been turned upside down. Also the sign on maintenance door by dumpster had been twisted around and the post bent over.
- 11/09/97 Complainant reported that the first floor west side of Niagara Hall lost power.
- 11/09/97 Report of a dog running around inside of Perry Hall.

