

Amid time of spiritual reawakening, students turn to peers for support

By Raymond Mccaffrey
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. - There was a laundry list of reasons why Randi Wilkerson drifted away from church when she went to college. First, she fell in with a wild crowd that loved to party. Second, she moved away from home, and her Christian parents. But mainly, like others her age, the 23-year-old thought church wasn't cool.

"People think it's boring," Wilkerson says. "That's why I was rebelling. All the guys who went to my church were dorks. I thought, 'Is this what I'm going to have to marry?' I'd never been exposed to cool Christian people." The term "cool Christians" might seem like an oxymoron. But for many people Wilkerson's age, being Christian and going to church is the hip thing to do.

College-age students are undergoing a spiritual reawakening, experts say, and in turn, churches are scrambling to reach them. The result: More and more poster children of the so-called Generation Y, the "millennium generation," are dancing away Friday nights at Christian

socials and spending Sunday mornings at worship services geared to them.

"It's because churches are getting a little bit more post-modern," says Wilkerson, who's part of Crossroads, the college-age ministry at Pulpit Rock Church in Colorado Springs. "They're not so traditional. That's what drove me around," she says. "I think people are getting involved because they realize how fun it can be and that people who are Christian are not boring. They're not dorks," says Wilkerson, a stock supervisor at a Gap store.

The spiritual reawakening among today's college students also constitutes a resurgence of the so-called Jesus movement on campuses, which began in the late 1960s and proceeded through the '70s, says Tom Yeakley, director of The Navigators' U.S. Campus Ministry, based in Colorado Springs. But by the early '80s, campus ministries that once had 1,000 members were down to about 50.

"We saw a very spiritually apathetic college student in America," Yeakley says. The decline continued until 1994 when "we saw

an uptake again in spiritual hunger," Yeakley says. That spiritual hunger was initially gauged by the individual campus ministries and confirmed in surveys The Navigators handed out to more than 50,000 college students in each of two years.

In the '80s, only 10 to 15 percent of college students polled answered "yes" or "maybe" to one or both of the following questions: "Would you like to be in Bible study?" and "Would you like to talk to someone about your spiritual life?" Over the past two years, 40 to 60 percent of college students have answered yes to at least one.

Jim Rottenborn, director of the college and career ministry at Woodmen Valley Chapel, witnessed the boom in the size of campus ministries while he was working with students at Miami University in Ohio. "It just seems there's a definite growing interest among students in spiritual stuff," Rottenborn says. "In '91 the biggest group on campus had about 300 kids showing up. When I left in '97, they had about 1,200 showing up."

Yeakley says he doesn't think anyone really understands why

there's a spiritual reawakening "other than God is at work again in the lives of this generation of students." That would be Generation Y, which according to Yeakley, consists of those born in 1980 or later, although some gauge the starting point as 1982.

"This is the leading edge of Generation Y, the millennium generation," Yeakley says. They are different than Generation X ... They're hungry spiritually." The common assumption is that the booming economy in the '80s prompted Generation X to focus on getting high grades so they could "get a good job and earn a lot of money," according to Yeakley. Church wasn't in the picture.

New methodologies are being used to draw Generation Y to church. At Woodmen Valley Chapel, for instance, there's a special Sunday-night service at which Rottenborn focuses on a message from the Bible. However, students lead the worship, as well as gather to play games and just hang out.

"It's a lot more of a coffeehouse atmosphere," Rottenborn says. However, Rottenborn maintains that

the most important part of his ministry involves one-on-one breakfast or lunch meetings with students. "The idea is that I give time to the oldest guys in the ministry so that they can take on one or two younger guys," he says.

First Presbyterian Church has a Sunday school class designed expressly for college students. The church also has students and adult leaders who preside over on-campus Bible study groups at Colorado College and the Air Force Academy. "I would say that's a scriptural kind of principle," says Mark Epperson, director of Young Adult Ministries at First Presbyterian. "Jesus met people where they were and that's why he was so effective," he says.

On Friday nights, Pulpit Rock Church hosts a social gathering for college-age adults called "The Merge." On the last Friday of the month the group engages in "The Detour," essentially an opportunity to do something different, such as go to places like Memorial Hall in Manitou Springs and dance.

And Pulpit Rock is initiating a regular Monday night service called "The Gathering," aimed at providing

a sense of community for "the post-modern generation, not necessarily attracted to the services that we have now," according to Doug Otto, the college pastor at Pulpit Rock Church.

"I think that's why shows like Seinfeld and Friends are so big," Otto says. "Their emphasis is community." Otto maintains that members of that generation "sense that there's something missing in their lives and they're willing to try new things. 'Hopefully one thing they find is Christianity,'" he says.

However, in Otto's view, this generation is looking for more than just live music and trendy services. They grew disillusioned with church because of a perceived superficiality. These students grew "up seeing maybe their parents attending church and maybe they saw their parents divorce," Otto says.

"I think one of the most important qualities in their search is that they're looking for something authentic," Otto says. "They're looking for somebody who lives the same way Monday as they did Sunday."

Michigan State's frats to ban alcohol

By Peggy Walsh-Sarnecki
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

ANN ARBOR, Mich. - Michigan State University fraternities are voluntarily banning alcohol at house parties after July 1. MSU is the only university in Michigan where all the fraternities on campus plan to ban alcohol, university officials said Tuesday. The idea is to put the focus back on scholarship and brotherhood instead of parties and drinking.

"It's the beginning of a national trend," said Billy Molasso, director of greek life. "Only a handful of universities have taken this step." MSU's ban was recommended by the Alcohol Action Team, a coalition of university, student and community members working on ways to discourage binge drinking.

MSU convened the coalition after a May 1998 student riot following the university's decision to ban alcohol at Munn Field, the students' favorite place for football game tailgate parties. University officials stressed the ban was voluntary.

"It wasn't the president telling the greeks what to do," said Kristen Teetens, university spokeswoman. "It was an action team recommendation that the greeks took on." Beginning in July, MSU's fraternities and their 1,500 members will hold all parties with alcohol at restaurants or other public sites, said Jason Rosenbaum, Interfraternity Council president.

This means professional bartenders and bouncers will take charge of how much students drink and try to prevent underage drinking. Fraternity members typically tend bar themselves when parties are held in their chapter houses. Professionals are much more likely to maintain stricter control, Molasso said.

Professionals are no guarantee, however. MSU student Bradley McCue died last November after drinking 24 shots to celebrate his 21st birthday. McCue was celebrating at Rick's American Cafe, an East Lansing bar. Rick's was closed for 30 days as a result of McCue's death, a spokesperson for the Michigan Liquor Control Commission said.

Members who are 21 and older will still be able to drink in their rooms, but alcohol will be banned from all common areas for all members, including those of legal drinking age. Sororities have been alcohol-free since the 1980s, Molasso said. "It's going to promote safer living-learning environments more conducive to academics, and still allow members to go out and have a good time," Rosenbaum said.

There are questions about whether some fraternities will cheat on the ban or whether it can be enforced. A 1997 Harvard School of Public Health study on campus drinking found that almost half of college men and about one-third of college women binge drink. Those numbers double for fraternity and sorority members.

Binge drinking is defined as five drinks at one sitting for men and four for women. Nondrinkers suffer from binge drinking through car accidents, assaults and sexual abuse. About 75 percent to 90 percent of campus violence is linked to drinking, the Harvard study found.

"There are a number of things you can do to promote responsible behavior when it comes to the use of drugs and alcohol," said Gregory People, dean of students at Eastern Michigan University, where alcohol at fraternity houses is regulated, but not banned. "Banning alcohol is problematic, and I think that the education and alcohol awareness is probably a better way to go," he said.

Oakland University has one fraternity house; Wayne State University has two. The OU fraternity can serve beer; liquor is allowed at WSU's. Those caught cheating on the ban at MSU will face penalties, Rosenbaum said, including community service, fines or suspension.

"Everyone won't go along with it, I will be the first to admit," Rosenbaum said. "With any major change, there's going to be opposition, and you have to deal with each situation accordingly. It takes time to implement this." Six out of 26 fraternities voted against the ban, but all agreed to support it after the vote,

he said.

Alcohol-free greek housing is a small, but growing trend nationwide, said Nancy Schulte of George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. Last year, Schulte led a national symposium on campus alcohol practices for the Inter-Association Task Force on Alcohol and other Substance Abuse Issues, a group of 22 higher education associations.

"It's not surprising to me that we would see more groups starting to make their own determinations that they don't want to be part of that group that's leading to fatalities, they want to go back to their roots of brotherhood," Schulte said. "And what's so nice about it is it's not being mandated," Schulte said. "It's coming from within their groups, so it's going to stick. That's where the campus culture is changing."

The change will make partying more expensive for fraternities. "Obviously it's more expensive to go out and rent a banquet hall," Rosenbaum said. But he didn't expect this to mean members would be

paying higher dues. Instead, he said, the fraternities may end up throwing fewer parties. A side benefit will be increased revenues for East Lansing banquet facilities, Rosenbaum said. He estimated MSU's fraternities and sororities hold up to 400 parties each semester.

MSU's notoriety as the campus that threw the biggest and wildest post-basketball riot has overshadowed the fraternities' alcohol ban, university officials said. Students rioted March 27, after the Spartans lost to Duke in the basketball Final Four. The riot frustrated many of those working to curtail student drinking.

Molasso said the riot only made the fraternities more convinced they need to be leaders in promoting responsible drinking. "If anything, it's going to hasten some of the changes we're making," Molasso said. "We have the benefit of being a very visible part of the campus. When we do something and do it right, other people will take our lead."

Berkeley researchers sight first known 'spiral star'

By Chuck Squatriglia
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

BERKELEY, Calif. - Researchers at UC-Berkeley have discovered a pair of stars revolving in a celestial waltz that leaves a pinwheeling trail of cosmic dust in their wake. It is the first known sighting of a spiral star, and the findings, published Wednesday in the journal Nature, putting a new twist on the age-old image of stars as dots in the heavens.

"There is nothing that we know of that looks like that," said John Monnier, a physics graduate student and one of the three researchers behind the discovery. "It's extremely exiting." The star in question is named Wolf-Rayet 104, and it is three times larger and 100,000 times brighter than the sun. Its distance from Earth, 28 million billion miles, shrouded the star in secrecy until telescope technology pioneered last year gave Monnier and his colleagues the clearest view yet of Wolf-Rayet 104.

What they found shocked them. Wolf-Rayet 104 appears not like a disk or sphere, but a quotation mark with a spiral "tail" of dust 18 billion miles long. "When we first saw the data coming in, we thought it was something out of Star Trek," said research physicist Peter Tuthill. "It didn't look real."

The discovery offers insights into the mechanics of stellar wind, which blows the fundamental building blocks of nature to the far corners of the universe. And it may solve a riddle that has long puzzled astronomers: How can cosmic dust exist in an such an inhospitable environment?

Wolf-Rayet 104 is buffeted by

stellar winds blowing at more than 620 miles per second. That wind kicks up a lot of cosmic dust, and scientists have long wondered why. Many argue the immense radiation cast by Wolf-Rayet stars would incinerate everything in its path. "It is a puzzle how the dust got there," Tuthill said. "That's something scientists have been throwing bread rolls at each other over at conferences for years."

Tuthill and his colleagues discovered Wolf-Rayet 104 is a binary star, meaning it has a second, smaller "twin" lurking nearby. The researchers theorize stellar winds blowing off the two stars collide, creating a cocoon that protects the dust from the stars' radiation. "It's like a snowflake between two blow torches," said lead researcher William Danchi. "It's amazing."

The star's spiral shape is created as the stellar wind blows the dust outward, much like a lawn sprinkler sprays water in a circular pattern, Danchi said. Danchi and his colleagues continue searching for other spiral stars to bolster their theory, and so far they've found two. They're keeping mum on the details until they have been published.

Danchi and his colleagues relied upon the latest technology afforded by the Keck 1 telescope in Hawaii, the world's largest optical telescope, to make their discovery. Scientists will be able to peer further into the cosmos as the technology continues to evolve, he said. "It is revolutionizing our understanding of stars we are seeing stars with unexpected shapes and more complex shapes than we ever expected," Danchi said.

Georgia State students arrested for role in bomb scheme

College Press Exchange

STATESBORO, Ga. (CPX) - Five students at Georgia Southern University were arrested after they allegedly tried to plant a bomb on campus in an effort to divert attention from their planned attempt to rob the university's business office. Police found out about the plot and managed to dismantle the bomb before it exploded. No one was hurt, and nothing was stolen during the April 7 incident.

Woodstock '99 will jam in July

By David Hinckley
Knight-Ridder Newspapers

Bet on rain in Rome, N.Y., the weekend of July 23-25, because that's when Woodstock '99 will bring a quarter-million people to the former Griffiss Air Force Base to see artists from Aerosmith to Rusted Root, Willie Nelson to Metallica and Sheryl Crow to Rage Against the Machine.

About three dozen artists will play on two stages in all-day shows Friday through Sunday, with jam sessions from 1 or 2 a.m. till dawn. This mirrors the 1969 and 1994 Woodstock festivals, which became legends despite heavy rain and gate-crashing.

John Scher, co-producer of this year's show and the '94 show, says "we're confident" that gate-crashing will be eliminated this time, in part because a 12-foot "art wall" will go up around the 250-acre site of the

festival. The site also will have an art village, film festival, food courts, beer gardens, ecology displays, video walls and other features. The event will be filmed and taped, with pay-per-view likely.

Tickets for package trips go on sale April 18, at Ticketmaster, and individual tickets go on sale April 25. Three-day admission plus camping is \$150, plus a \$5 parking fee. Michael Lang, co-creator of Woodstock in '69, says only 250,000 tickets will be sold.

Other scheduled artists include Bush, Chemical Brothers, George Clinton, Collective Soul, Counting Crows, Creed, DMX, Everlast, Fatboy Slim, Foo Fighters, Guster, Ice Cube, Jewel, Korn, Limp Bizkit, Live, Los Lobos, Moe, Alanis Morissette, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Sugar Ray, Brian Setzer, Offspring and Tragically Hip.

Undercover officers at the scene arrested Michael T. Miller, Shane T. McKevlin and Jason W. Guest shortly after the trio allegedly put the bomb inside an enclosure for garbage and air-conditioning equipment just outside the university's recreation and activities center. The three students were charged with conspiracy to commit burglary and possession of an explosive device.

Police arrested two other students, Matthew L. Foust, who didn't help plant the bomb, but whom police say conspired to commit the burglary, and Haley M. Berryman, who was charged with hindering the apprehension of a criminal because investigators believe she destroyed evidence.

The university has suspended all five students, two of whom had part-time jobs as safety escorts with the campus police department. Investigators say more arrests are possible. Campus police said they learned about the plot after intercepting electronic messages and

telephone conversations but didn't know that a bomb would be used until a day before the incident.

The bomb, which investigators believe was made at an off-campus apartment, was basically constructed from a 2-liter, plastic bottle filled with about 3 lbs. of gun powder. The bomb had a primitive time delay, a fuse attached to the bottom of a lit cigarette, and would have exploded in five to seven minutes had it not been defused.

Arizona faculty may consider warning labels for some courses

College Press Exchange

TUCSON, Ariz. (CPX) - Classes at the University of Arizona could eventually come with warning labels. The idea stems from the "Truth in Curriculum" bill recently introduced to state legislators. The proposal, tabled for this legislative session, is to require faculty at all public institutions to distribute syllabi and give detailed descriptions of topics that would be covered in each course. It would allow students to withdraw from courses without penalty if they determine that that they weren't given accurate course descriptions. The bill also would prohibit instructors from requiring students to purchase obscene materials.

State Sen. David Petersen pushed the idea after receiving a call from a constituent who complained that her

daughter enrolled in a course, "Women in Literature," without knowing it would include readings by lesbian authors who discussed female sexuality in explicit terms. The student also was required to buy books that featured several themes focusing on homosexuality. When the young woman dropped the course, she was told she could not recoup her tuition costs.

Less than a week after Petersen introduced the bill, Interim Provost Michael Gottfredson asked the university's Undergraduate Council, made up of faculty members and students, to consider the idea because he said he thinks such decisions should be left up to educators, not legislators.