

Dry Campus? *(Continued from front cover)*

Downtown bars, restaurants and bottle shops at Happy Valley adjusted their operating hours for the 2012 State Patty's Day. Many closed entirely for this sixth annual drinking holiday, while others simply closed early. Maybe this was the first step to properly addressing Penn State's alcohol and drug policies.

Although State Patty's takes place at University Park, Mont Alto students are no strangers when it comes to drinking. Mont Alto is classified as a dry campus, though when one student was asked if she thought the campus was actually dry she simply laughed and stated, "Define dry". She went on to say, "no matter what, people will always find a way to drink, we are in college; that's what college is for right?"

On Monday, March 19, Penn State Mont Alto hosted a Drug and Alcohol Awareness seminar. The session was run by Officer Lewis Sweigart, who has worked as a university police officer at the Mont Alto campus for three years. Sweigart started out by asking, "What is the most commonly used drug?" to which everyone replied correctly: alcohol. Based on people's responses, the top two reasons why people consume alcohol are "to relieve

stress" and "escape reality." Another common reason is peer pressure. Research has shown that people are more likely to drink or use drugs if their friends are doing it. Sweigart stressed that if you are under 21, you shouldn't drink. He goes on to say that he knows it's hard for college students to say no, so if you must drink "never take a cup of beer from someone. Instead ask for the can and open it yourself."

From there, Sweigart went on to talk about the different policies and penalties of alcohol and drug consumption in the state of Pennsylvania. One such major policy is Pa.C.S.A 6310.1, which deals with the selling or furnishing of alcohol to minors. A prime example of this is when a person charges minors to enter a party where alcohol is being served. A Mont Alto student who lives in the nearby Apex apartment complex was asked if he has ever thrown a party where he charged guests for alcohol. "Yup," he replied.

When he was asked why he did this and if he plans on doing it again he said the reason he charged people to enter his parties was to "make back the money for the beer" he bought. Finally he was asked if he thought what he was doing was

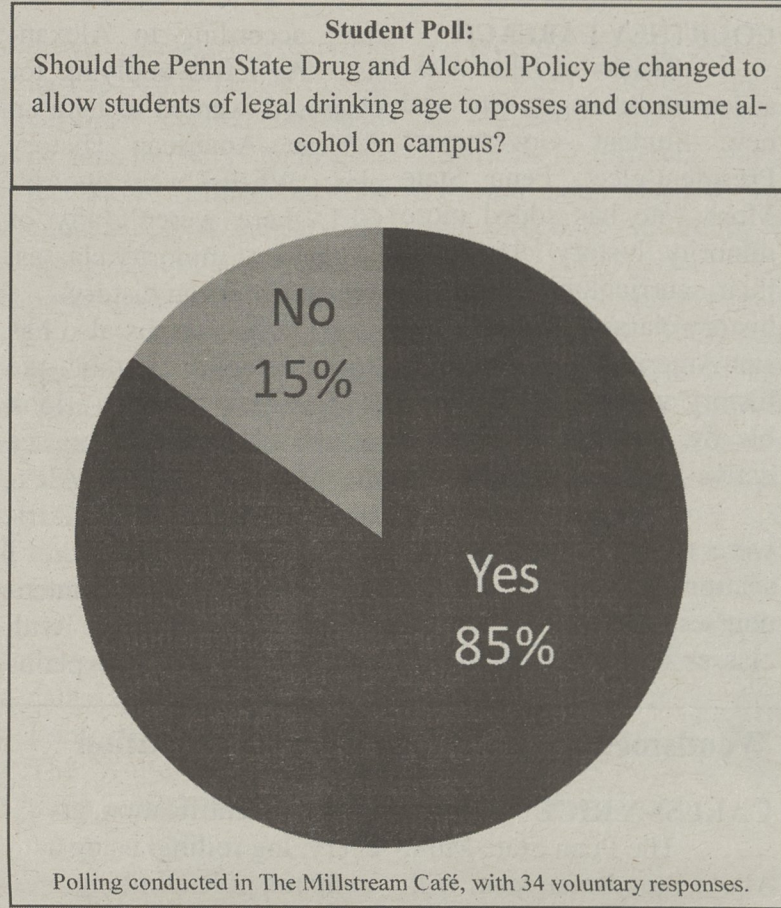
wrong, to which he replied "I'm 21 so it's legal."

Pa.C.S.A 6310.1 is one of the more serious alcohol violations. It is considered a misdemeanor and a first offense will find you with a \$1000-2500 fine and up to one year in jail. If you are convicted even once, you cannot become a nurse in the state of Pennsylvania.

Many students agreed that drinking is the norm for any campus, not just Mont Alto, regardless of whether or not alcohol is banned, as it is at MA. "Dry campus" is the term used for the banning of alcohol at colleges and universities, regardless of the owner's age or intention to consume it elsewhere. In a 2001 article in the Herald-Mail entitled "Committee to tackle drinking on Penn State campus," the author talks about the status of Mont Alto being a dry campus. He states that Mont Alto is a dry campus because "Mont Alto is a dry town". He later compares Mont Alto's drinking habits to that of State Colleges. He says "There is drinking here, but it's probably not as bad as it is on Penn State's main campus." He then adds, "You can't walk down a street in State College without passing a bar. It just isn't as readily available here in Mont Alto. There aren't any bars or taverns within walking distance."

When compared to State College, Mont Alto's drinking rates may appear to be low, but this is not the case. The fact is that Mont Alto students are still drinking on a regular basis and they don't see anything wrong with that.

In an anonymous poll conducted by The Fourth Wall of students in The Millstream Café, 72% of students polled admitted to breaking



the Drug and Alcohol policy in the past. Furthermore, 38% admit to doing so on a regular or semi-regular basis.

Research supports that if students want alcohol it is likely that they are going to do what it takes to get it. Many feel that instead of acting like it's not going on or turning the other cheek, we should as a community try to inform students as best we can about the dangers of alcohol.

A large majority of the students also feel that the policy itself is unjust. 85% of students polled feel the policy should be changed to allow students of legal drinking age to possess and consume alcohol on campus.

Newly elected Student Government President Jalon Alexander said in the presidential debates that he "is not all for a dry campus," and that we need "an appropriate Drug and Alcohol policy" that is "non-coercive" and "isn't overbearing".

Another related policy that has much student support is that of PA's "Amnesty Policy," in which students can call Police Services for assistance if they feared they or someone else was in danger of alcohol poisoning on campus without the fear of legal trouble. 84% of students polled support this policy. President-elect Alexander also mentioned during the course of the debates he supported this policy, saying, "I think this would help individuals that were in trouble and were sick, and could possibly save some lives."

Students can better inform themselves by visiting the Mont Alto website and clicking on the "Safety" tab under the "About Us" section. Students can also familiarize themselves with University Parks', or any Commonwealth Campus' Alcohol and Drug policies by visiting their websites.

Student Voices:

"The rules in place may stop students from reporting a crime or seeking medical help because they fear punishment."

"If it's the students legal right to drink anywhere else, it should be their legal right to do so at their school."

"Not all students are entirely irresponsible with alcohol, so those who are legally allowed to drink with no previous alcohol abuse should be allowed to do so."

"Students will drink if they want to, whether it's legal or not."

"It's the student's right to drink."