

Condoms on campus

Condom vending machines bring mixed reactions to Behrend

by Vicky Snyder
The Collegian

On college campuses across the country you'll find vending machines for pop, candy, laundry detergent and stamps. But more and more condom vending machines are being installed next to their big brothers, receiving protest from some and quarters from others.

And now they're here.

Installed in both the men's and women's rest rooms in Niagara, Perry and Lawrence Halls, as well as the laundry room of the community center, the machines are designed to provide two varieties of condoms for either \$.50 or \$1. Their arrival, however, had mixed reactions from the Behrend community.

Monsignor Robert Smith, of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie, said the church would rather educate students about abstinence. "The church feels that this is an unfortunate situation which encourages promiscuity and only advances the myth that condoms equal safe sex," he said. "Even the best medical professionals will tell you that it's not true."

Behrend administrators, according to Chris Reber, dean of Student Services, didn't have a problem with the installation of

the vending machines.

"Several years ago a university-wide decision was made to make condoms available to students, but it was up to the individual campus as to how they would do it," he said. "University

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- Patty McMahon,
Behrend's nurse practitioner

Park has had condom machines in the residential areas for a couple of years and the community there seems to have accepted it."

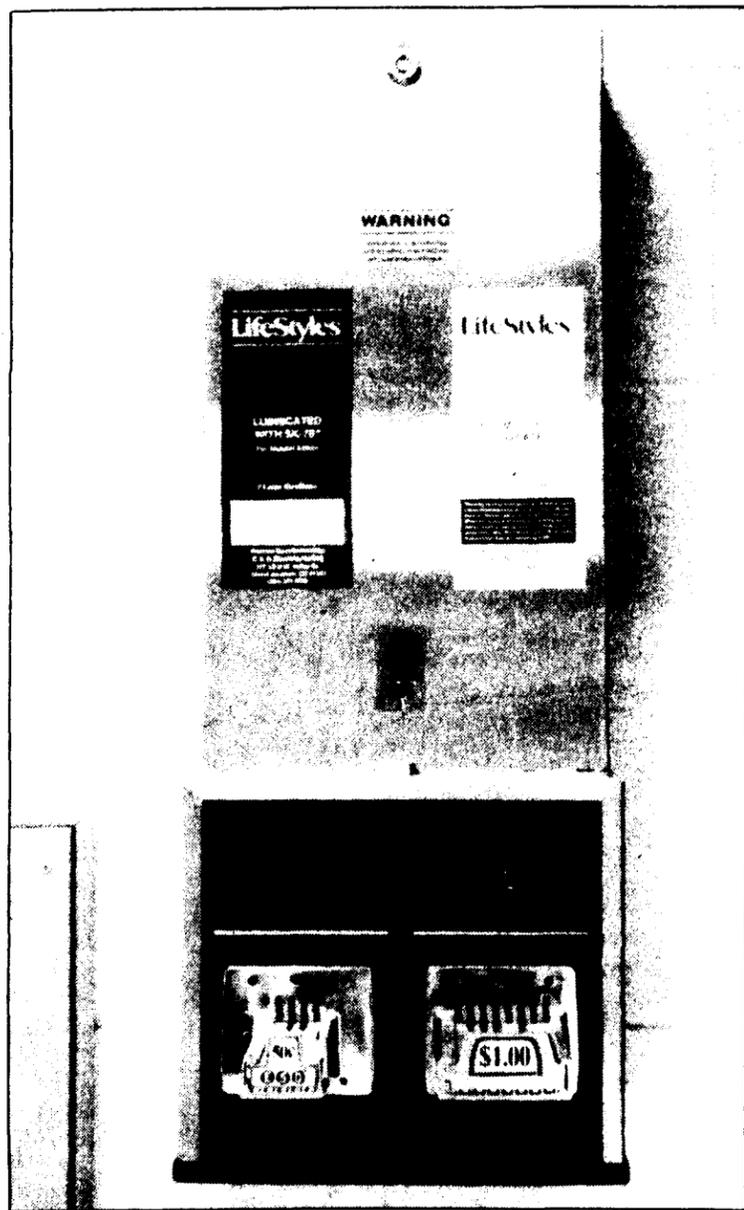
Patty McMahon, nurse practitioner at the Health Center, said that the machines were installed to cover the hours that

the Health Center was closed. The center has been supplying condoms to students since 1987, but they were only available during business hours.

"College-aged individuals, ranging from 17-25 years old, are the largest and fastest-growing group to test positive for the HIV/AIDS virus and other sexually-transmitted diseases," she said. "We're hoping the machines will increase the use of condoms and other safe-sex practices." Currently three out of every 1,000 college students test positive for the HIV virus.

McMahon urged students to abstain from sex if they don't feel comfortable with the situation, but if they are sexually active to observe safe practices.

The machines have been received well by Behrend students. "It's a step up for Behrend because Behrend is known as being uptight," said LaTanya White, a sixth-semester accounting student. Diana Ziemniak, a seventh-semester communications major, said "Condom machines out in the open says society accepts that we are beings that make our own choices. It's a sign of enlightenment."



Condom Controversy: These machines are part of a growing trend of safe sex awareness.

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