

As Final Home Football Game Approaches, U.Va. Blitzes Students on Perils of Substance Abuse

November 17, 2008 — Susan Bruce spends a good deal of her professional life trying to prevent extremely smart people from engaging in extremely stupid behaviors.

Saturday marks the last home game of the University of Virginia's football season. In the sports pages, the story line will be the Cavaliers' quest to reach a postseason bowl game by defeating Atlantic Coast Conference foe Clemson.

But Bruce's attention will be fixed upon the student section, where a few of the brightest fourth-year college students in America will have attempted to polish off an entire fifth of liquor — the equivalent of 17 shots — before the game. The so-called "Fourth-Year Fifth" is one of the University's most dangerous, and persistent, traditions.

Bruce, director of U.Va.'s **Center for Alcohol and Substance Education**, plans to attend the game with her young son. She'll check in on the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Team peer educators and Fourth-Year Class Trustees who will be distributing the water to students who signed pledges not to participate in this dangerous drinking practice, take a few pictures for the Web site and with any luck, enjoy a Cavalier victory.

"Hopefully, this will be a game that all of our students remember," she said.

It's been 11 years since a student, Leslie Ann Baltz, died in an alcohol-related fall on the day of the last home football game — the last U.Va. student to die in an alcohol-related accident at the University.

"We've been really lucky," Bruce said. "I'd like to think it's a combination of luck and all of the student efforts to educate their peers about how to protect themselves and others while drinking.."

The week leading up to the game is designated as "Substance Abuse Awareness Week," with several events and activities designed to highlight some of the possible side-effects of alcohol abuse and provide some healthier alternatives.

The idea is to support peer leadership on these issues and not to try to scare students about worst-case scenarios, Bruce said. Peer education can provide solid information and allow students to make informed decisions about their behavior.

"As peer educators, we are dedicated to addressing the issues of alcohol and drug abuse at the University of Virginia," said Shana Wrobel, Substance Abuse Awareness Week coordinator and ADAPT member "We hope that the programs we're offering will aid in our mission to promote awareness, provide educational outreach, and serve as accessible resources for other students on the dangers of alcohol misuse."

Additional Resources

• [Center for Alcohol and Substance Education](#)

Contact

Dan Heuchert
Media Relations
(434) 924-6857

danh@virginia.edu

The week will include a speaker who will highlight the link between drinking and the sexual "hook-up" culture; a discussion led by a panel of U.Va. students in recovery from alcohol and drug addiction; and a game-day 5-kilometer foot race run in honor of Baltz. (Complete list of events below.)

"I don't think a one-time speaker is going to have a huge impact," Bruce said, "but to have it as part of a comprehensive, year-round program might make a difference. I feel it's an appropriate time to really focus on alcohol."

One event, in particular, may draw some attention: Wednesday's screening of the recently released documentary "Haze." The film, to be shown at 7 p.m. and 10 p.m. in Newcomb Hall Theater, examines the issues surrounding the college drinking culture in America, including the death of University of Colorado freshman Gordie Bailey, who died of acute alcohol poisoning four years ago following a fraternity initiation ceremony.

A rough cut of the film was screened at the University in the spring before an audience of 50 to 60 students, whose input led to some changes in the final version, Bruce said.

The film has other U.Va. ties. Bailey's stepfather, Michael Lanahan, who co-produced the movie with his wife, Leslie, and Watt Imagination!, is a graduate of the Darden School of Business. Several current U.Va. students were high school classmates of Bailey's at Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts, Bruce said.

Several fraternities and sororities are expected to attend a screening in fulfillment of requirements in their Fraternal Organization Agreements. The ADAPT peer educators will lead a brief discussion after the 7 p.m. screening and will provide a more detailed discussion guide for chapter members to bring back to their fraternity and sorority houses.

The Center for Alcohol and Substance Education recently received a grant from the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Board that will help it study selected "celebratory drinking events," including Halloween, the last home game and Foxfield. Bruce will send out a survey in the days after the game, seeking information about their game-day choices.

Thus far, she has heard about students planning to split the fifth, rather than attempting to drink the whole thing themselves, or women who say they will drink a bottle of wine rather than booze. Others may start the fifth at midnight, then sleep for awhile before resuming their drinking later in the morning. Some plan to designate a friend to watch them, or eat a big breakfast to slow the absorption of the alcohol.

While these halfway solutions aren't ideal, they're an indication that students are trying to reduce their risks, Bruce said. "We try to meet the students where they are."

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE AWARENESS WEEK EVENTS

- **"Hookin' Up and Hanging Out: Sex on Campus,"** Dr. Robin Sawyer, associate professor and associate chair of the Department of Public and Community Health, University of Maryland-College Park.
Tuesday, 7:30-9:00 p.m., Gilmer Hall, room 130

Sawyer's teaching has gained national attention in the Washington Post, and he has appeared on NBC's "Today" show and "The Tyra Banks Show." This annual event is held in memory of Susan Grossman, who was the founding director of prevention programs and services at U.Va.'s Institute for Substance Abuse Studies (now the Center for Alcohol and Substance Education) and who collaborated with the Department of Athletics to develop the Student Athlete Mentor program.

Groups planning to attend are requested to RSVP to Alejandra Montano, am4fd@virginia.edu or 434-982-2911.

(Sponsored by the Women's Center, Department of Athletics, Office of the Dean of Students-Center for Alcohol and Substance Education and ADAPT.)

- **Free Bottled Water on the Corner**
Tuesday and Thursday, 9 p.m. to midnight

Sponsored by the Student Athlete Mentors.

- **"Haze: The Movie,"** in recognition of National Gordie Day.
Wednesday, 7 and 10 p.m., Newcomb Hall Theater

"Haze" is a documentary film about college drinking and hazing behaviors, including the story of Gordie Bailey's 2004 alcohol poisoning death. Produced by the Gordie Foundation (www.gordie.org) to address the dangers of drinking and hazing, it's a very powerful film.

From the "Haze" Web site (www.hazethemovie.com): "In a time when feature films have brought insight to such major issues as global warming and health care, a major full-length documentary brings to the forefront a growing problem that is responsible for more than 1,700 deaths and hundreds of thousands of injuries each year ... alcohol misuse and hazing on college campuses. The motion picture is titled 'Haze' and its purpose is to dramatically and thoroughly present an impressive case that it is time for leaders to wake up and attack this national health crisis that affects just about every campus in America. The film uniquely weaves together a collection of interviews, many by national experts on the subject of alcohol abuse on campuses. Evidence of the severity of the problem is presented through highly graphic and disturbing images filmed at campus parties, during emergency medical calls and from police files."

After the film, members of ADAPT will lead a follow-up discussion about how the

movie relates to the drinking behaviors of U.Va. students.

(Cosponsored by UPC-Cinematheque, the Inter-Sorority Council, the Inter-Fraternity Council, the ADAPT peer educators and the Office of the Dean of Students-CASE.)

• **Hoos in Recovery Panel Discussion**

Thursday, 7:30 to 9 p.m., Clark Hall, room 107

Hoos in Recovery is a group of U.Va. students, faculty and staff who are in recovery from alcohol or drug addiction . Their goal is to provide a place for members of the University community to come together to discuss struggles with substance abuse and if necessary find further resources to stop using their substance of choice. Contact HoosInRecovery@virginia.edu for information.

(Sponsored by Hoos in Recovery, ADAPT, and the Office of the Dean of Students-CASE.)

• **17th Annual Fourth-Year 5K Run/Walk**

Saturday, 8 a.m., Newcomb Hall Plaza

Registration will take place Monday through Friday at Newcomb Hall (11 a.m.-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m.), at U.Va.'s Observatory Hill Dining Hall (11 a.m.- 2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m.), and on the U.Va. Lawn (9-11 a.m.). Participants may also register through Friday during regular business hours at the Ragged Mountain Running Shop on Elliewood Avenue, or at the Office of Health Promotion in the Elson Student Health Center.

The Peer Health Educators are a diverse group of 40 U.Va. students trained to educate their classmates about college health and wellness issues in a positive, interactive, fun and nonjudgmental manner.

Proceeds from the race benefit the Leslie Baltz Foundation, a scholarship foundation established in memory of a former U.Va. student who died as the result of a fall after consuming alcohol on the day of the last home football game.

For information, contact Sindhu Jujavarapu at sj5h@virginia.edu or Bryn Ritchie at bmr3y@virginia.edu.

• **Free Bottled Water at the Game**

Saturday beginning at 11:30 a.m. inside Scott Stadium

The Fourth-Year Class Trustees and ADAPT will provide free bottled water to fourth-year students who sign a pledge not to attempt the "Fourth-Year Fifth." The pledge will be available Monday through Friday at a table on the lower Lawn; signees will receive free, long-sleeve T-shirts and other giveaways.

— *By Dan Heuchert*