

Campus News

Be Smart, Get Tested

Tamika Green
NEWS EDITOR

Young people often place their health onto the back burner as college students. In the midst of other priorities such as classes and extra-curricular activities, health issues frequently take a back seat to other aspects of college life. It is imperative that sexually active college students take a proactive approach to their sexual health and be knowledgeable about protection and prevention against unwanted pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

According to Smartersex.org, a Web site that offers peer-oriented support, addresses health concerns, and provides information about various sexual health topics: one in five people in the United States has an STD, two-thirds of all STDs occur in people 25 years of age or younger and at least one in four Americans will contract an STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) at some point in their lives.

Even more astonishing is the fact that fewer than half of adults ages 18 to 44 have been tested for an STD other than HIV/AIDS. Such statistics may serve as a wake-up call for many young people to be more responsible regarding their sexual well-being.

Perhaps one of the main reasons some American youth tend to be passive about their sexual health is the fact that they believe that they would be able to know who is or is not infected by relying on sight alone. A recent survey conducted by Smartersex.org found that 62 percent of men and women think they can tell if someone has an STD just by looking at the person, despite the fact that the two most common STDs, Chlamydia and Human Papilloma virus (HPV), may not show any visible symptoms.

Another factor is that many students may feel ashamed or embarrassed about talking to others about sexual topics. This fear or shame may keep them from getting tested or asking questions that may prove informative. There are many reliable resources regarding sexual health for young people, such as Smartersex.org aforementioned, which can provide students with the answers to many questions and clear up misconceptions about sex. One should take into account that embarrassment or fear is temporary, but some STDs are not. These feelings should not get in the way of students' health.

Some may also feel that they are invincible, and they would never encounter anyone with an STD. "College students generally have a low perception of their risk," said Chantha Prak, Forsyth County Health Dept. HIV/NTS Coordinator. "For instance, some may say: 'I use condoms with some partners, but not others,' 'I use condoms at the beginning of a relationship,' or 'He/she said they were clean.'"

The main way students can

make an effort to ensure they are being proactive about their sexual health is to get tested for STDs. WSSU's A. H. Ray Student Health Center provides students with free and confidential HIV and syphilis testing every other Tuesday of the month from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. This service, provided by the Forsyth County Department of Public Health, includes pre-test counseling, testing, and post-test counseling. The department began offering HIV/Syphilis testing to WSSU students in Spring 2002 through its Non-Traditional Offsite testing program (NTS).

Are students really taking advantage of this service? According to Prak, about four students are tested each visit. "I do not believe many students are taking advantage of our testing service. You would think more people would take advantage of the test, simply because it is free and confidential," Prak said.

She said she believes many WSSU students do not visit the Student Health Center to get tested because there seems to be a negative stigma associated with it. "Some students assume that if you go to the health center, then you have 'something,' and usually an STD comes to mind. Of course, we know that this is not true. Other students may not be taking advantage of testing because they may not know about our services," Prak said. The department is currently working with the Student Health Center to devise better promotion strategies for the testing.

Prak believes that if more students took advantage of services such as the ones the department provides, it would aid in the decrease in infection rates, but that



Photo by Sharrod Patterson

Condoms not only protect against unwanted pregnancies, but they also protect against sexually transmitted diseases.

is only the first step. She suggests that students should be more knowledgeable about their partner's sexual history and status before engaging in sexual activity.

"People have to not only be educated and aware of HIV and STDs, they have to acknowledge that what they are doing may be risky. Too many people think they are invincible to this virus—that it can not happen to them. It's not just the IV drug users, or prostitutes, or gay men that are at risk for HIV. It's also those of us who are in a 'supposedly exclusive relationship' that may also be at risk if we are not communicating with our partners about our past relationships as well as behaviors," Prak said.

HIV and STD testing is very important for sexually active students. "It is very important for students to get tested, especially if they are sexually active and not using condoms every time, simply because early diagnosis of the HIV

virus is important," Prak said. "With early diagnosis, people can live longer and prolong the time before they develop AIDS by taking antiretroviral medications if their doctor advises them to, by incorporating a healthier diet plan, and by exercising.

"Knowing your HIV status can also protect other people from getting infected. During testing, it also provides health professionals the opportunity to speak to each student individually and to counsel them on safer sex and how to reduce risky behaviors," she said.

Prak advises that students should respect their bodies, reduce their number of partners, communicate with their partner(s), use protection every time, get tested, and become more educated about HIV and STDs.

"Someone can look and feel healthy and still be infected with one or more STDs," Prak said.

'Locals' increase students' concern for safety

Darius Porter
STAFF REPORTER

Nowadays, it is not just the student population that increases on campus, another population has also risen: "locals," which many Rams define as Winston-Salem city residents who do not attend Winston-Salem State University, but who use the campus as a "hot-spot" or local hang-out. Because of the recent burglaries and thefts that have occurred in some of the dorms, some students are concerned about the uncomfortable encounters they have had with locals, while others are concerned about seemingly unsafe visitors loitering on campus.

"You can't tell the difference between the locals and the ones that aren't locals, because sometimes they perpetrate with book bags like they go to school here," Amanada Mitchell, senior nursing major said.

It seems as the campus grows, so does locals' accessibility to the campus, causing a common student body concern of how to keep themselves and their belongings safe. WSSU Police Chief William Bell sent out a campus-wide memo in October regarding the issue of safety and the presence of locals. The memo had some good tips for student to help keep



Photo by Sharrod Patterson

The small chore of locking your door can deter an unwanted guest.

themselves and their belongings safe.

"Keep your room door locked at all times, when you are inside and when you are gone," Bell said.

Many students fail to lock their doors when they are in their rooms, or leave their rooms even to go down the hall for a moment.

"Never leave your door unlocked, no matter what you are doing and especially when you go to bed at night. If you leave the

room and your roommate is asleep, lock the door behind yourself," Bell said.

Another way unwanted locals or visitors get into buildings is by following students when they enter the dorms. "Never allow a stranger to follow you into a residence hall when you enter. This is one main way locals get access into the dormitories," Bell said.

Some students leave their door unlocked because they or their roommate misplace their keys. Instead

of paying \$75 for another key, they leave their room doors open. "Don't be embarrassed about losing a key and try to hide it by leaving your room door open for one another. If you lose your key you should notify housing immediately," Bell said.

Students should take every precautionary step necessary to protect themselves and their belongings because responsibility is key.

National Coalition of Negro Women forms new WSSU chapter

La'Chelle Lewis
COLUMNIST

The Winston-Salem State University Section of the National Coalition of Negro Women had its first meeting in October. This new and upcoming organization was inspired by the vision of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune in 1935 to uplift and empower African-American women within the community. She coined the motto for this organization: "Leave no one behind." This motto encourages women to bridge the gaps that exist in communities with a "Unity of Purpose and a Unity of Action."

The Winston-Salem Section of NCNW was chartered on April 10, 1973, and members meet the second Tuesday of each month at 1501 Mt. Zion Place, Winston-Salem. National headquarters are at 633 Pennsylvania Ave, Washington, D.C.

Crystal Winston, president of NCNW, says her expectations for NCNW: "being a part of a strong and grounded organization that empowers women to be better in today's society." Winston feels that this organization can help women become strong forces not only in homes, but here on campus as well as in the communities.

Candrice Nolan, treasurer, also expresses strong views about NCNW says: "Being around a very supportive ambitious, active and hard-working group of African-Americans in my local community influenced me to join the NCNW."

The process for joining is simple; fill out an application and pay the annual national student membership fee of \$10 to Faye Stewart who can be contacted at fstewart2@traid.rr.com. To find out additional information about NCNW contact Crystal Winston at cwinston498@wssu.edu or Faye Stewart, Section Liaison at fstewart2@traid.rr.com.

At this meeting officers for 2006-2007 year were elected.

The Slate of Officers of the NCNW-WSSU Section (UNC014) is as follows:

Crystal Williams, *President*
Gabrielle Leonard, *1st Vice President*
Michelle Gorham, *2nd Vice President*
Katrina Hagan, *3rd Vice President*
Jamilah Dixon, *Recording/Corresponding Secretary*
JaQuinta Smith, *Assistant Recording Secretary*
Alicia Sinclair, *Assistant Corresponding Secretary*
LaShema Funderburk, *Assistant Financial Secretary*
Candrice Nolan, *Treasurer*
Latisha Christensen, *Historian*
Ladia Rutledge, *Parliamentarian*
Sharonia Ellerby, *Chaplain*

During Homecoming, the ladies of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. took home first place for best sorority step team during the step show. Congratulations to the ladies of Crimson and Creme.