

# ALCOHOL AWARENESS WEEK HELD AT WCC

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Did you know that:

- A person who begins drinking as a young teen is four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than someone who waits until adulthood to use alcohol?
- During adolescence significant changes occur in the body, including the formation of new networks in the brain. Alcohol use during this time may affect brain development?
- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among youth ages 15 to 20, and the rate of fatal crashes among alcohol-involved drivers between 16 and 20 years old is more than twice the rate for alcohol-involved drivers 21 and older. Alcohol use also is linked with youthful deaths by drowning, suicide, and homicide?
- Alcohol use is associated with many adolescent risk behaviors, including other drug use and delinquency, weapon carrying and fighting, and perpetrating or being the victim of date rape?

\*Data from National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Alcohol Awareness Week was held on the WCC Campus November 1-5. A variety of educational activities for students, faculty, and staff were offered.

At the entrance of the Student Commons a large banner displayed messages concerning awareness of alcohol abuse.

On Tuesday, Dr. Stephen Walker, Assistant Professor in the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, presented his findings on the biological/genetic basis of substance abuse. His discussion centered on the results of chronic alcohol consumption in primates. Dr. Walker stated that the use of drugs to "solve problems" is a major contributing factor in becoming addicted. One can develop a tolerance and physical dependence

where brain patterns change to the point that receiving the drug in the body becomes the norm. This equates to psychological and physiological dependence. He also noted that the cost of substance abuse to society is great. It causes more deaths, illnesses, and disabilities than any of the other preventable diseases. Alcohol can be attributed to one-half of all prison incarcerations and 40% of federal prisoner of violent crime sentencing. A practical point which Dr. Walker emphasized was that an individual can have a genetic disposition for alcohol addiction; however, if the person does not drink, then there will never be an addiction problem.

On Wednesday, Byron Brooks, mental health counselor at N.C. Central University presented, "Substance Abuse 101." His discussion centered around the most common drugs of abuse, the most dangerous drug of abuse, and why people use and abuse. Mr. Brooks stated that alcohol is the biggest social problem in America, "I want to make students aware of the health effects of substance abuse. More students will die from alcohol-related causes than will graduate with advanced degrees. That's the information that I want students to know, the true costs of drinking and drug use."

On Thursday 145 students, faculty, and staff participated in the "Save A Life" Drunk Driving Simulator. The experience created a firsthand simulation of the devastating effects of driving under the influence of alcohol. Each participant was issued a citation of their infractions and consequences.

During the upcoming holidays individuals will be celebrating the season with family and friends. Make a pledge today to be responsible, safe, and sober in order to fully enjoy this special time of the year with loved ones.

\*For more information on alcohol issues, log on to <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>



*Drunk Driving Simulator*