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Armed police to bolster security



Photo by Carl Beahler

Changes for Guilford's Security and Safety are currently being considered by the administration.

Matthew Levy
News Editor

Provost Dan Poteet announced the administration's decision to bolster campus security with armed off-duty police officers in an Oct. 5 memo directed to the entire Guilford community.

The officers, who will be supervised by Security and Safety, will be on campus mainly at night. According to the memo, "The police supplement is temporary while we review current college security practices."

While Director of Security Mary Ann Weedon was not available for comment, Poteet explained the reasons behind the decision.

"Several of us think that there have been incidents this fall when readily available professional security backup for student security officers would have been helpful.

"There have been some altercations on campus, there have been a lot of automobile break-ins, probably involving people

from off-campus, and there has been a mugging.

"There has been no ultimate catastrophe, of course, as a result of these situations, but they were serious...

"While this probably isn't a real escalation from things that have happened in the past... it just seemed that the time has come to take a look at the level of security that we provide and review it, considering whether to change it in some way.

"While we are thinking about that, it made sense to bolster security in the meantime rather than leave it as it was."

The police are not intended to replace student officers and will be very much in the background, according to Poteet.

"These officers will be on the perimeter, they're not going to be patrolling through dormitories or residence halls—they will be under the supervision and guidance of our own security people; they will be supporting our people."

"This is not a negative reflection on the skill of our employees, either professional or student... Our student security officers do a fine job of

what the college ask's them to do. It's just that there aren't very many of them," said Poteet.

While most have expressed relief about the added security, Senior Mike Livingston did have a negative reaction to the professionals being armed.

"When I came to Guilford, I thought I was joining a gun-free community. The nonconsensual decision to bring weapons onto campus is a breach of contract," he said.

Poteet pointed out that police are required to carry weapons even while off-duty and they have always been armed when hired by Guilford to patrol on special occasions.

"No one is thrilled about the idea of having arms on campus," said Poteet. "I have to assume there are some members of the community who think this is absolutely the wrong thing to do. But the response has been unusually bland for something of this nature.

"We didn't go out to look for people with arms, we went out for people who are already trained."

Coming Out Day to be celebrated

Gail Kasun
Staff Writer

Guilford will be observing National Coming Out Day, the holiday established in the mid-80's to celebrate sexual freedom for gays, lesbians and bisexuals, on Oct. 11.

The related Pride Week will be observed in the same week.

"Coming out" is the term used for the process in which an individual brings one's sexuality "out of the closet."

Association of Guilford College Gay, Lesbian, Bisexuals and the Straight Allies (GLBA) President Alison Mee explains other aspects of coming out.

She says, "Coming Out Day is a celebratory time—not to be ashamed, afraid, or worried about making someone uncomfortable. It gives people an opportunity to talk."

There are social benefits to coming out, specifically promoting positive change, according to GLBA bookkeeper R.J. Nickels:

"Slowly changing public attitudes have a lot to do with coming out. The public image of gays is not a good one."

The high visibility of radicals in groups such as Act-Up and Queer Nation often promote this negative image, explained Nickels.

The popular stereotypes of the sexual minority lead to "the glares, the looks, the sneers, and the rolling of eyes," says Mark Ferguson, a GLBA member.

Having experienced overt discrimination on campus earlier this year, he feels, "Those hurt more than someone walking by me and

saying 'faggot'.

"People forget that other people have feelings, too. Things like that don't go unnoticed—it

"I can get past it now. On a personal level, it is a much smaller issue. The lifting of guilt and the shame is so necessary for my mental health."



really hurts."

Mee explained how coming out has liberated her.

"When I was in the closet I felt like it [my sexuality] was a big issue, and I needed to tell people.

Nickels looks to an increase in gay visibility to eliminate prejudice.

"On a social level, one of the largest barriers is plain ignorance," he said.

Coming Out Day shows people

"there are people all around them who are gay. Until people know someone who is gay, it's very easy to believe all the stereotypes and promote them."

"The awareness [through Coming Out Day] still needs to be raised," explains Mark Ferguson.

GLBA has many activities planned for Coming Out Day and Pride Week.

Blue Day will occur on Oct. 9. Anyone wanting to show support for the equality for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals can wear blue clothing.

On Oct. 10, a van will be going to Washington D.C. to see the NAMES Project AIDS quilt, among other activities.

There will be a forum about coming out on Oct. 11. A potluck dinner will be held beforehand at Pope House. In addition, My Own Private Idaho, a Union sponsored film, will be shown. It is a movie with gay themes relevant to all people regardless of their sexuality.

Nickels comments, "If not everyone is able to celebrate Coming Out Day, then the point is lost."

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