

The Banner

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Safe Sex Week to promote awareness

by Michael Gouge
Assistant News Editor

Underdog Productions has joined in the effort to promote safe sex practices by sponsoring 'safe sex week' at UNCA.

In cooperation with the Student Health Advisory Council (SHAC), Underdog is striving this week to promote a greater awareness of the need for condom use and other safe sex practices, according to Michelle Biddix of Underdog Productions.

In spite of the growing need for protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), Chancellor Brown has refused to allow condom machines in campus restrooms. Biddix expressed, "I think its ludicrous." Placing condom machines on campus would, Biddix said, "show that you have someone in charge who cares about the students."

Biddix stated condom machines are present at other Universities and in many respectable restaurants and pubs. "I think that before he (Brown) says no vehemently, he should look into it." "That one little thing that embarrasses people could save people's lives," said Biddix.

Cynthia Van Duesen, family nurse practitioner at the Weizenblatt Health Center stated, "We probably treat about 12-15 cases of STD's a month, with the number one infection being Chlamydia." Van Duesen added, "We also see cases of gonorrhea and herpes, but in less numbers."

Van Duesen said the health center provides pregnancy and STD tests as well as giving away free condoms. Van Duesen stated,

"Condoms offer a 95 percent protection from infection (of STD's)."

Biddix said that Underdog took up the safe sex campaign because of the alarming number of pregnancies and cases of STD's on campus last semester. "We have had a lot of freshman girls become pregnant." Biddix also referred to the significant numbers of Chlamydia cases among the students.

Biddix feels the campaign is important, "especially for freshmen coming into the university. Many of them don't know how to protect themselves." Biddix added, "It's smart, there are too many diseases out there."

Linda Greene of the SHAC said, "We want to promote awareness. We want to emphasize that condoms are available and to promote safe sex." Greene said the safe sex week will also provide an opportunity for students to meet with SHAC members and become aware of the organizations membership and activities.

Milena Vari, co-chairperson of the SHAC, said her organization is providing pamphlets and staffing a desk in Highsmith during safe sex week. "We've placed pamphlets there for students who are interested. We've had a really good response and a lot of questions."

According to Vari, many students have questions concerning birth control. Vari said many of the students that ask SHAC questions, "have a minimum knowledge of birth control. They see only two options, condoms or birth control pills. They don't

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WCU Photo--Mark Haskett

Audio-visual equipment sits destroyed in the University Media Center in Western Carolina University's Hunter Library. Burned items in

the racks above included projectors, recorders, mixers and computer terminals.

WCU may use Ramsey Library

by Scarlet Bell
News Editor

Ramsey Library may soon become a haven for Western Carolina University (WCU) students who lost temporary access to their library due to a fire on Feb. 26 at the facility.

A fire in Hunter Library at WCU destroyed a service area of the University Media Center and caused smoke damage to other sections of the three-story library building, according to a WCU news release.

Mel Blowers, university librarian at UNCA, said he

and WCU University Librarian William Kirwan had been discussing the possibility of WCU students using Ramsey Library until their library was restored for use.

"They're still trying to understand the magnitude of their problem and how they can most effectively address it. These assessments are still going on; and, probably by the end of the week, they'll have some better idea how long the problem is going to last. There are probably several options," Blowers said.

"At some point, we likely

will work out some kind of an arrangement with Western to try to help them out. On the other hand, I sense the concern of UNCA students that they may suffer if we spread our resources too thin. So, we're going to be very careful about that," he added.

Blowers said that, since WCU students do not have the Online computer system in their library like the system installed in Ramsey Library, the UNCA library staff might encounter some difficulties in training WCU students to use the system and experience "tied-up"

terminals.

In addition, each time a WCU student used the library, the librarians would have to go through a manual process of entering the student's name, social security number and other bits of information, according to Blowers.

"So, that itself is a problem," Blowers said. "However, should we provide in-library service to any great extent, Western has already agreed they will send some of their staff over here to

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Snowfall causes class cancellations

by Scarlet Bell
News Editor

Classes at UNCA were cancelled three school days in a row due to the recent snowy weather in Western North Carolina.

Students missed an entire day of classes on Feb. 23, arrived two hours late on Feb. 24, and one hour late on Feb. 27.

According to Larry Wilson, vice chancellor for academic affairs, UNCA is one of the few colleges in the area that cancels classes due to inclement weather.

"We're unusual that we close at all. Most universities do not close for snow. If you've got a real serious ice storm, you might. But, I was flabbergasted to find that I was not only supposed to call snow closings, but the people expected that we would close," Wilson said.

Though the UNCA student population has one-third commuter students, Wilson said he believed this high number did not influence class closings at UNCA.

"In the north, there are schools that have a lot more commuters than we do, and they never close with bigger snowstorms than this.

"It's tricky here because of the mountain roads, and the fact that the weather patterns vary so much from cove to cove. It does make it a lot more difficult to call, and it does mean that some people are going to have bad conditions while others don't," Wilson said.

Wilson said he had had no experience in making decisions about closing classes before he came to UNCA; however, Wilson said he has employed some "scientific" techniques to help him make his decision.

"I get out my rabbit's foot and my crow's beak and make a guess. It's clearly a witchcraft call. You try your best judgement and ask, 'Is it reasonable that someone can get to school safely?' And then, I call it one way or the other."

Wilson said that, contrary to the method employed by

public schools in cancelling classes, he does not make his decision based on the weather forecasts the night before classes will be cancelled.

Instead, Wilson said he gets up early in the morning and drives around Asheville to see the condition of the roads firsthand.

"I get up about 5:30 a.m. or so, and get in my trusty car and start driving around both city and county roads trying to decide whether or not they're safe, all the while listening to two or three radios in my car to hear various weather forecasts.

"I've got to get up and see what the roads are like and, understanding that faculty and students and staff are coming from a lot of different places, and the conditions in those places might be a lot worse or a lot better than they are around Asheville, I simply try to use my best judgement," Wilson said.

He said he drives on Merrimon Avenue, highway

19-23 north to Weaverville, Reems Creek Road, Patton Avenue; and occasionally he will drive to the Asheville Mall and around the Haw Creek area in east Asheville.

Wilson said he has usually made his decision about cancelling classes by 7 a.m. However, he said that on Feb. 27, he was a little late in making the call because weather forecasts had predicted only rain in the morning.

At 6:30 a.m., the forecasters changed their predictions to snow in the morning and rain in the afternoon, according to Wilson.

"I was reversing things like crazy, and we didn't get to the radio stations in time for them to get the announcement on at 7 a.m. For commuter students and faculty, we really need to make it (at 7 a.m.) because they need to be counting on an hour or so."



Staff Photo--Stacey Higdon

The recent snowfall caused class cancellations at UNCA.