

Forum provides free testing, information about STDs

Ebony S. Smith
STAFF REPORTER
esmith109@wssu.edu

Do you know your HIV and STD status? If you attended the HIV/AIDS Awareness Forum Nov. 3 in the Thompson Center, you would have been able to get that information and more.

The forum not only included free HIV testing, but also games and discussions focusing on risky sexual behavior.

Stickers with the phrases "I have HIV," or "I have been tested, but I am unsure of my status," were randomly placed under chairs to symbolize that anyone can become infected with HIV/AIDS. Students who found stickers under their seats were asked to stand and reflect on how they felt about their "status."

Students were also asked to complete a survey about their sexual experiences and behaviors.

"I wanted to host an event that would shine a light on one of the major epidemics on our campus," said Amilca O'Conner, event coordinator.

"Many people are unaware that once you acquire

one sexually transmitted disease, like Chlamydia, or Trichomoniasis you become more susceptible to contracting HIV," O'Conner said.

O'Conner is a senior rehabilitation studies major from Raleigh. She is Miss Senior 2011 and a member of the Ralph Bunche Society.

Director of Student Development Natasha Jeffreys led the discussion "Why College Students Are Not Staying Protected," and emphasized the importance of knowing STD/HIV status and knowing the risks of not practicing safe sex.

"I was delighted to speak at the seminar," Jeffreys said. "The overall goal [of the seminar] was to encourage students who are sexually active to use condoms in order to reduce the spread of HIV and STDs on college campuses and specifically Winston-Salem State University."

Students asked Jeffreys questions about misconceptions, myths, and personal concerns.

"I learned a lot about the many STDs that thrive on college campuses, mostly because people are not aware of risks, and do not know they are infected,"

said Jhazzmine Jacobs, junior psychology major from Charlotte.

"My friends and I all took advantage of the free HIV testing."

While many female students were in attendance, the number of males in the audience was below the expectations of the event sponsors.

"I wish the turn-out would have consisted of more males," said Alan Sturdivant, who worked closely with O'Conner to organize of the seminar.

"The silent killers, like Chlamydia, effect a lot of men, so the ones who really need the knowledge were not really in attendance like we would have liked." Sturdivant is a senior music education major from Charlotte and also a member of the senior class council.

"The hardest part was waiting for the outcome," O'Conner said. "I was unsure how the students would respond to the activities, Mrs. Jeffreys' presentation, or even how many would attend," she said.

"The success of the seminar most certainly superseded my expectations."

Campus police consider options, when doling out punishment

Victoria Staples
STAFF REPORTER
vstaples107@wssu.edu

Winston-Salem State students were reported by Campus Police for smoking marijuana in the Gleason-Hairston Terrace courtyard Oct. 18. Those students were not issued campus appearance tickets.

In another instance Oct. 22, a male was caught exposing himself in Brown Hall parking lot.

Campus Police issued a campus appearance ticket to him.

"They are going to Judicial Affairs," said Deputy Chief Marcus Sutton in regard to the drug-related incident.

"We do not want them to have a criminal record. Everyone does not need to go to jail."

"In the real world, they get arrested, go to jail and have an automatic record," said Police Chief Patricia Norris.

"We have the option to arrest or send you [suspects] to Judicial Affairs, and it also punishes the individual without being so punitive," Sutton said.

"It can be more damaging to go through judicial affairs than a criminal process in some instances."

Sutton and Norris explained that Judicial Affairs has the power to send a case to court, revoke housing, or suspend or expel any student in violation of University rules and the law.

Sutton said he does not want students to think that they will not be charged.

"On the first offense, they [WSSU students] may receive a deferred prosecution if they comply with conditions of the courts," Sutton said.

"On the other hand, first or second offense could resort in suspension. It all depends on different scenarios. It could be surrounding issues," Sutton said.

"It could be a group of guys, and we may deal with attitude problems. The have to realize their life is in my hands."

Sutton said each decision is up to the officer handling the incident, and students are charged accordingly.

"We are trying to help young people become young adults, making better decisions," Norris said.

"I think you put yourself in a lot of danger when you associate yourself with drugs. You do not know where they could get it from, what it is mixed with, and you take a chance," Sutton said.

Sutton said that the case of the drug trade Oct. 7 caught on camera outside of Gleason-Hairston Terrace is still under investigation.

That case will be "wrapping up soon" and will be sent to the district attorney office.



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