

Va. BuzzKill anti-underage drinking campaign targets HU campus

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By Stephanie Smith

Hampton University Homecoming season arrived along with instances of underage drinking that occurs during traditional festivities.

Kyla Wright, a residence hall assistant from Detroit, said, "I witness the effects and consequences of underage drinking, especially during this week. Whenever there's a big event happening at Hampton, students prepare themselves by binge drinking. Whether it's Holland [Hall] or a Harbors [off-campus apartments] party, students don't like to be sober.



"Actually, I see it more often than I feel I should and that's a problem."

A psychology major from New York said, "I see **big**s serving their little liquor all the time. It's regular." The student's name was withheld by this news site.

Situations like these potentially stop students from getting their degree. This is why the BuzzKill campaign has caused campus police departments to enforce a statement: serve under 21 and the party's over. Underage drinking and impaired driving are illegal in Virginia.

More than 1,800 college students die each year from unintentional alcohol-related injuries, say advocates from the **Virginia Commonwealth University** Police Department, which launched the Richmond-area BuzzKill Campaign in 2015. Funded by the DMV Highway Safety Grant, BuzzKill made its way to other campuses near Hampton Roads, including **Hampton University**. The reason: to highlight the personal, professional and legal consequences of underage drinking.

Many students who are caught intoxicated aren't aware of the consequences. They may face suspension or expulsion from the university. They could receive that Out-By-5 p.m. letter immediately. Sometimes the consequences of underage drinking don't come from authorities. Students may experience the worse consequence of them all – death.

On the eve of Hampton U.'s Homecoming weekend keep in mind the consequences of underage drinking. If under the age of 21, do not accept

any alcoholic beverages or beverages you didn't prepare. During these festivities, keep your self-image and education in mind. Do not jeopardize your placement at Hampton.

To make others aware of the BuzzKill Campaign, post "pop-out" photos with the hashtag: #PARTYSAFEVA. Everyone be safe and enjoy the annual HU festivities!

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Here at Hampton University, the Buzzkill campaign has been spreading its message through posters, fliers, and picket signs that have been placed in front of the cafeteria and student center. Yet the message might not be getting across to the students living on and off campus.

"I have noticed all of the Buzzkill signs on my way to the cafeteria and class," said Alexander Franklin, a sophomore pre-pharmacy major from Atlanta, "But to be honest, it has been pretty far in the back of my mind."

Franklin isn't the only student that has not caught on to the message. Other students have walked by much of the campaign's propaganda without spreading news or looking for more information. But that does not mean all hope is lost.

"I have been seeing the posters all over campus and I think it's a great idea to let students know the consequences of distributing alcohol or even having it underage," said Maya McCombs of Maplewood, New Jersey, a second year strategic communications major.

Buzzkill is an Ohio-based program created by the **Drug Free Action Alliance**, educating college-aged students about the dangers of alcohol and the consequences of drinking as a minor or distributing it to minors. It is estimated that over 1,800 students between the ages of 18-24 die each year from alcohol-related injuries, and 696,000 students have been assaulted by someone who was under the influence of alcohol.

This fall the campaign has moved to **local campuses**, including Hampton University, Norfolk State University, Christopher Newport University, and Tidewater Community College, looking to spread its messages to our own community so that students know how to party safely or the possible consequences that can come to hosting parties.

Anyone can get involved by going online to the Drug Free Action Alliance website and filling out a registration and letter of agreement. There is also a \$50 fee for membership and to receive materials such as posters, signs, window clings, and stickers. Information can also be found by searching #partysafeva on twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. – *Joshua Waldrum*

*Both writers are students in the **Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications**.*

