

Students using alcohol-free housing option

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

Given the option, a significant number of students living in college dormitories this fall chose alcohol-free housing, according to officials at three universities that attract students from Oakland County.

Roughly 45 percent of freshmen dorm residents at Oakland University, 20 percent of dorm residents at Eastern Michigan University and an estimated 10 percent of freshmen at the University of Michigan indicated they wanted alcohol-free rooms or roommates.

ALTHOUGH THOSE figures can be interpreted differently, a state lawmaker from West Bloomfield Township and a federal judge from Birmingham say they convey a clear message.

"It's obvious students want to make a choice" and should have the opportunity, said State Rep. David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield.

Freshmen and, in some cases, upperclassmen got a chance to choose between roommates who use or tolerate alcohol and those who don't when they enrolled this fall at 12 state colleges and universities.

FOR MOST, it was the first time the schools offered students the opportunity to choose alcohol-free housing, although all schools previously asked incoming dorm residents if they wanted non-smoking roommates.

The schools offered dorm residents the choice after Honigman introduced legislation to require public and private colleges and universities to offer students a choice.

Honigman's bill wasn't enacted. But it had an effect.

"In our discussions, most public colleges agreed to consider the idea or to offer students the choice (on alcohol-free rooms)," he said. "Michigan State University (the state's largest) is the only one I know of that didn't."

"I PLAN to reintroduce the legislation this session."

Getting the law enacted is important, said U.S. District Judge Bernard Friedman, formerly of the 48th District Court serving Birmingham and the Bloomfield Hills.

"Once you get the law on the books, people can't forget about it. They can't ignore it," said Friedman. Friedman has worked with a group of Oakland County parents and substance abuse counselors on the issue.

Friedman and others insist students

should be given the choice of avoiding roommates who drink or use illegal drugs.

ALTHOUGH SOME believe the law is essential for students who might have a substance abuse problem — or a tendency toward one, Friedman says it's common sense.

"It's not necessarily a matter of being for or against alcohol (or drugs) on moral or ethical grounds. The absence of alcohol promotes an atmosphere of academic achievement."

Giving students the choice of an alcohol-free environment takes away peer pressure towards alcohol, said Lorna McEwen. McEwen is public relations director for the Maple Grove Centers, the West Bloomfield-based substance abuse treatment clinics affiliated with Henry Ford Hospital.

"It promotes the idea that it's not bad to be a non-drinker," said McEwen.

When informed of the numbers of dorm residents choosing to live in alcohol-free rooms, McEwen was elated.

"I'd like to think we at the Maple Grove Centers are partly responsible."

BETTY NICOLAY of Farmington Families in Action hadn't heard about the pro-

gram but thought it was a great idea.

"It's a marvelous way to say 'no,'" she said. "It gives students an out. A lot of young people want to say no to drugs and alcohol. This is their way to respond to the pressure."

At OU, 201 of 462 incoming freshmen living in dorms expressed a preference for roommates who didn't drink, said Eleanor L. Reynolds, director of residence halls. OU previously offered students the option of alcohol-free dorm rooms, she said.

Since more than half of OU's incoming freshmen live off campus — and thus didn't express an opinion about residence halls — the statistics do not reflect a trend or attitude of the entire freshman class, she said.

But the figures do indicate that freshmen want to live in dorms without alcohol in their rooms, she said.

AT EASTERN Michigan University, where 4,200 dorm residents were given the choice, a choice, 879 chose alcohol-free rooms, said Colleen C. Tompkins, the school's manager of consumer services.

A much larger percentage of students said they didn't want roommates who smoke, she

said. "It's much harder to place somebody who smokes."

"Many students say alcohol isn't important to them" and they will tolerate a roommate who drinks moderately, Tompkins said. "But they don't want roommates who smoke."

THE STATISTICS haven't been compiled at the University of Michigan. But preliminary figures indicate that 400 of 4,000 expected freshmen have selected alcohol-free rooms.

Michigan State University officials said a more effective way of approaching underage drinking is by enforcing the existing law that prohibits alcohol consumption by anybody 20 or younger.

"By designating room A as a room where alcohol will be tolerated and not mentioning room B, the university is saying that alcohol is acceptable at room B," said Moses Turner, vice president for student affairs. "We take a different approach. We say no under-age drinking — period. And we're trying to enforce it."

"Allowing students to choose may work for some schools, but we think this is a better way to promote an academic environment."

police/fire calls

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week:

HANDGUN FOUND

Two men face felony charges after officer Bob Tiderington found a loaded 9mm handgun in a briefcase behind the driver's seat during a traffic stop at Northwestern Highway and Valley Oct. 1.

The suspects are a 20-year-old Detroit man and a 22-year-old Ferndale man. Neither had a permit to carry a concealed weapon, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

KNIFE SEIZED

A 30-year-old Detroit man faces a felony charge after officer Dave Lucoma found a survival knife in a shrub behind the front seat during a traffic stop at Haggerty and 14 Mile Oct. 1.

The man did not have a permit to carry a concealed weapon, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

REGISTER TAKEN

A cash register and computer valued at \$10,000 was stolen from the Ground Round Restaurant, 3000 Orchard Lake, between 11:45 p.m. Oct. 1 and 12:20 a.m. Oct. 2.

Five patrons were dining at the time. A man who had dined there earlier that night is the prime suspect, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

HOUSE RANSACKED

A burglar took a car parked in the garage and several other things from a house on Rocky Crest between Saturday and Monday.

The 1988 Toyota Supra was valued at \$24,000. Taken from inside the house were four VCRs, a stereo receiver, a personal computer, a compact disc player, jewelry, a graphic equalizer and a cassette deck, a cordless tele-

phone, an answering machine and a dresser (with bowl) containing change.

Total value of the property taken, including the car, was \$34,155.

After breaking a window with a brick, the house was ransacked. Furniture was knocked over and cabinets were opened. The car key was located.

Police believe the stolen property was loaded in the car. The garage was opened and closed with a remote control device found in the car.

The car was recovered in Detroit late Monday with front-end damage.

A TV moved from a bedroom was found on the garage floor. Four stereo speakers, a TV and a stereo booster were found on the kitchen floor, according to a Farmington Hills police report.

HOUSE FIRE

A grease fire in the kitchen caused about \$5,000 in damage to a house on the 19100 block of Appleblossom Friday.

The stove top fire extended into the range hood. Light smoke was visible to firefighters when they arrived at 7:20 p.m., according to a Farmington Hills fire report.

BURGLARY INCIDENTS

A VCR, a color TV, two telephones and U.S. coins valued at \$760 were reported stolen from Gateway Apartments, Farmington Hills, Sept. 22-27.

A tool chest and a gas can valued at \$265 were reported stolen from a garage on Ranchwood Drive, Farmington Hills, Sept. 24-27.

Shrubbery, including a red dwarf Japanese maple, valued at \$222 were reported stolen from the front yard of a house on Harrow, Farmington Hills, Sept. 25-28.

Four dwarf burning bushes valued at \$250 were reported stolen from in front of a house on Kenloch Sept. 25-28.

Silver coins and a diamond ring valued at \$1,560 were reported stolen from Woodhew Apartments, Farmington Hills, Sept. 26.

A VCR, a CD player, stereo speakers, jewelry and cash valued at \$4,260 were reported stolen from a house on Hitching Post, Farmington Hills, Sept. 26.

Hills, Sept. 26.

A personal computer and printer valued at \$3,442 was reported stolen from a house on Leamington, Farmington Hills, Sept. 27.

A gold ring and a wristwatch valued at \$1,050 were reported stolen from a condominium on Laurel Drive, Farmington Hills, Sept. 29.

A TV, a jewelry chest and jewelry valued at \$2,050 were reported stolen from a house on Hawberry, Farmington Hills, Sept. 29.

Three shrubs valued at \$150 were reported stolen from the front yard of a house on Empire Court, Farmington Hills, Sept. 29-30.

Cigarettes valued at \$830 were reported stolen from Union 78, 29510 Grand River, Farmington Hills, Oct. 1.

A 1989 Chevrolet Suburban valued at \$20,000 was reported stolen from along Danvers Court, Farmington Hills, Oct. 2.

Cigarettes, men's gloves and other items valued at \$3,054 were reported stolen from Knight Enterprises, 29510 Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills, Oct. 1-2.

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