

the CATAMOUNT

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WHAT'S INSIDE?



Members of Student Council prepare for many school events and contribute to the community.

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Students learn how to prepare meat products during the first year of the food processing class.

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Art students are inspired to express themselves through their passions.

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"JUST A DRINK"



Underage drinkers overlook dangerous reality of alcohol

AJ Jones and Lisa Liu
Features Editor and Editor-in-Chief

**Name changed to protect the student's identity.*

Getting caught by his parents didn't stop him. Tangles with the police didn't stop him. Seeing his friend get hit by a car finally made Joseph Quinn* reevaluate his choices to drink.

"He just had a broken leg and a broken arm, but it still kind of shook me that anything can happen while you're drunk," said Quinn, who had been walking the streets intoxicated with his friend when it happened. "I didn't want to do it anymore, but at the same time, since I was already hooked on it, it didn't stop me that much."

Although Quinn couldn't quit cold, he did lower the rate at which he drank and eventually stopped completely. His story is not uncommon among underage drinkers, who sometimes ignore the possibility of consequences until they're confronted directly

with them.

"It's kind of a false reality of 'That'll never happen to me, that happens to someone else,'" assistant principal Kim Rodgers said. "But it could. I think it's a false sense of security."

Rodgers is one of the school's staff members who have received training in detecting intoxication in students. If a student is caught on campus under the influence, the administrators handle the incident on a school level first, then take legal action if needed. The limitations of the process are relatively relaxed.

"Something I think people don't realize is that schools do not fall under the same regulations that a police officer does," principal Tiffany Parkerson said. "If we have a reasonable suspicion that a student is under the influence, we do have full right to search backpacks, lockers and cars in the parking lot."

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Teens ignore legal, social consequences of underage drinking

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Having this ability to step in if students are suspected of intoxication is important to the school's ultimate goal: to help the student.

"We will have to intervene, and it's sad because in the situation, you realize there is a symptom going on," Parkerson said. "If we would've known earlier on, we could've intervened and helped."

For Quinn, his underlying reasons for drinking were depression and loneliness.

"My parents would always be gone for a long time. I would be alone, so the only people that I had around me were friends," Quinn said. "Those friends were always drinking, so I joined in with them."

That social bond, according to resource officer Rhonda Seaton, is often why teenagers will fall into the dangerous habit.

"I think a lot of times, you hang out with people who [drink], and it's just part of the culture of the group that you're in," Seaton said. "Everybody in your group drinks, so you think it's okay."

Several of senior Mitchell Bradford's friends drink, but he chooses not to because of his personal beliefs. Surprisingly, even in a group in which drinking is common, his friends don't push him to join them.

"They've never pressured me to drink because they know how strongly I feel about this," Brad-

ford said. "If they really are your friends, they won't mess with you."

Part of the reason why underage drinking is so normalized, according to Seaton, is its constant presence around teenagers.

"Society kind of makes drinking acceptable. They don't look at it as being a drug, and alcohol is a form of a drug," Seaton said. "It's everywhere. It's on television. You see your parents do it, you see your older siblings do it, and it's just part of life."

The consequences of drinking, as Quinn experienced firsthand, can be severe. He saw his performance in the sport he played deteriorate, and he would occasionally show up to practice hungover. He began taking risks, like coming home drunk and then simply going upstairs to evade his parents. Sometimes, he would even lose his memory.

"There were points where I passed out outside my house, and I didn't remember what happened," Quinn said. "Stuff would be missing—my shoes, my watch or my wallet sometimes."

During the two years Quinn spent drinking, the reality of his decisions never quite sunk in, even as his friends were put under house arrest and the police began to look into their activity. But as trouble escalated, he was forced to recognize that he could not keep it up anymore.

"Nobody thinks that they're going to get caught," Seaton said. "Eventually, everybody gets caught." •

ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION IN COMMON DRINKS

These standard drinks vary greatly
in alcohol concentration:

12 fluid ounce
can of beer



contains 5%
alcohol

5 fluid ounce
glass of wine



contains 12%
alcohol

1.5 fluid ounce
shot of vodka
or whiskey



contains 40%
alcohol

Source: www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov

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