

Ministries offer UNL religious answers

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you're just giving them a Band-Aid." What's underneath for most students, Hatfield said, is a spiritual void, often coupled with a desire for acceptance. It's a void, he said, that only God can fill.

Scott Pixler, leader of Christian Student Fellowship campus ministry, agreed.

When people buy new cars, he said, and the owner's manual says to use unleaded gas, chances are the car won't run as well if a different type of gas is used. The same principle applies to our lives, he said.

"We can try to put other things in there - fill our lives with money, drink, sex, drugs - but it will never satisfy the way God can."

Drugs and alcohol

Pixler said a heavy-handed approach is especially ineffective with students and alcohol.

The most effective way to treat drug and alcohol abuse is to treat the cause instead of the symptom, said Pixler, who has led Christian Student Fellowship for 11 years.

Students, he said, drink for three main reasons: acceptance from peers, to have fun and to rebel or experiment, especially if they were forbidden from drinking by their parents and are alone for the first time in their lives.

But the real weakness of drinking, he said, is that the satisfaction of alcohol is only temporary.

"The fun you had last night isn't nearly as much fun when you have a hangover the next morning," he said.

And he said that those who get drunk for acceptance find that any friendships that are based on alcohol often are fleeting.

But it is not enough to simply discourage drinking, Pixler said, because whenever something is prohibited it tends to immediately become popular.

What Christian Student Fellowship does instead, he said, is offer students the alternative of a relationship with God, a relationship in which the high of one day is still there the next morning.

Navigators member Paul Pankonin, a sophomore business administration major, said he is a firsthand witness to

the emptiness of alcohol abuse.

He said he drank to excess often during his freshman year and early in his sophomore year before making a decision at a Navigators event in October to abstain. His decision was not affected by outside pressure, he said, but was simply a personal decision to put his trust in God.

"If I didn't have that loyalty toward Christ," he said, "I would drink as much as anyone else."

He said he was nervous about how some of his Farmhouse Fraternity brothers would react to his decision, fearing that some may think his abstinence was a form of judgment on those who did drink. But it is a decision he does not regret.

"I feel better and don't feel guilty about the night before," he said. "At parties, I still act crazy and have a good time, and people don't mind that I'm not drinking."

Although Pankonin's friends were supportive of his decision, he acknowledged that some people might have a tougher time.

"It's a struggle fitting in some times for some guys," he said. "People get frustrated that so much revolves around alcohol."

Hatfield, who was a yell-squad and Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity member at Kansas State University in Manhattan in the mid-1970s, said he can relate to such struggles because he fought the same battles.

But what is worse in the campus climate today, he said, is that alcohol abuse is now more likely to lead to other problems, such as physical and sexual abuse.

Sex

Pastor Bill Steinbauer of the UNL Lutheran Center, said he, too, can relate to what students are going through, especially young men.

"I have a doctorate degree on being a boy," he said.

The majority of his counseling is on sexual issues, he said, and his biggest advice to students is that when it comes to sex, students must believe they are worth the wait.

Students become sexually active, he said, because they believe that they don't have a sense of self-worth. But that lifestyle will eventually leave them

empty, Steinbauer said.

"They don't see themselves as worth waiting for. Then afterward they realize that they didn't get much."

Many students come to such a realization during their junior or senior years, he said, although some never do.

"I've spoken with people who have gone wacky with their ideas on sexuality," he said. "They have really lost control of themselves and are going to have problems later on in their lives."

Last year, Steinbauer gave an eight-part lecture series on the Biblical book "Song of Solomon," a book that deals with issues of sexuality, to help students think about sex and relationships.

Other UNL ministries have also dealt exclusively with sexual issues recently.

The Rev. Melissa Finlaw Draper of the campus ministry Cornerstone directed a program called "Sexuality and Spirituality" last fall. She said the program consisted of small discussion groups that dealt with a broad range of sexual issues. Historically, she said, the church has taught Christians to separate their spirits from their bodies, when in fact they are both part of God's creation and are intertwined.

Navigators and Campus Crusade for Christ have a yearly program called "Man Maker" that tries to explore what it means to be a man, including issues of sexuality and how to treat women.

Steinbauer said that challenging young men to be godly is one of the most important parts of his ministry. During his all-male Bible studies, he said, he asks his students to hold themselves accountable when dealing with sexual situations and teaches them to develop their nurturing sides.

One change in female students he has noticed over the years is that more have joined men as active sexual pursuers, which leads to more sexual relations and consequently, he said, to more students selling themselves short.

"Nine times out of 10, sex makes relationships more difficult," he said. "I encourage them to not make it harder than it already is."

Saving souls

There are 26 campus ministries listed in the UNL student directory, and Hatfield said more students than ever

are joining.

Navigators, which has been on campus for 47 years, divides its services up into large fellowships, such as the Friday night worship, small-group studies and one-on-one studies. Hatfield directs a staff of nine full-time employees who administer the studies, often held in dormitories and greek houses.

Hatfield said he thinks many students are ignorant of how involved Christian ministries are on campus and how many people are involved.

Tom Yeakley, director of U.S. Campus Ministry for Navigators, visited the UNL chapter April 14-17. He said the spiritual temperature is rising on campuses across America and that more students are joining ministries.

But he said there is still a long way to go to reach what he calls "revival": a

rededication of student Christians that would spill over to other students and attract them to the church.

Today's students are coming to campus with greater needs than ever, Yeakley said, whether it be from experiencing alcohol abuse, sexual abuse or from coming from a broken home. And campus ministries have the solutions to those needs, he said.

"We present Jesus as the answer, and people are willing to come and investigate that."

Steinbauer said he finds it immensely satisfying when troubled students accept this answer and are able to clean up their lives.

"People who have messed up see themselves as damaged, as not repairable," he said. "But anyone can be put back together."

Program sheds light on drinking problems

BY ERIC RINEER
Staff writer

While he has spent much of his life being a man of God, Otto Schultz knows, too, what it is like to live life on the wild side.

Schultz, a reverend at several Midwestern churches during the 1970s and member of All Saints Lutheran church in Lincoln, 8251 Pioneers Blvd., often found refuge in alcohol during his priesthood.

A recovering alcoholic for 25 years, Schultz's drinking days may be over, but his memories are not.

The priest is now working with several colleges and universities across the state to teach youngsters the dangers of substance abuse.

"A lot of local bars and neighborhood bars are like religious institutions," said Schultz, who recently started an alcohol awareness program.

"You go (to the bar) - you get comfort and pain. You get celebration in times of joy. ... There's a certain competition between the religious community and the bar community."

Schultz's program, Flashing Your Brights, is still in its early phases, he said, but much progress has been made to this point.

This spring, Schultz said he and his staff had conducted surveys to find out how many students agreed that, by personal intervention, they could help resolve a friend's drinking problem.

After interviewing 629 students, Schultz said 93 percent of those students said peer intervention could help binge drinkers with their drinking problems.

The term, flashing your brights, was an analogy for personal intervention, he said.

Schultz gave an example of how to flash brights at a person abusing alcohol.

If people forget their car lights are out because they are driving under the influence, he said, flashing headlights at those people could save them from being arrested, he said.

Flashing brights could also be letting someone know how they acted after a particular alcohol-related situation, he said.

Schultz gave an example. "Hey man, last night you barfed on my shoes, and this doesn't go with me."

"It's a matter of holding somebody accountable for their behavior," he said.

Flashing Your Brights will consist of five strategies for peer intervention, he said. These strategies include:

- expressing personal concerns about a friend's behavior;
- holding drinkers accountable for their behavior;
- offering people hope for a change in their lifestyle;
- offering informal education;
- being factual with drinkers

about their behavior.

While Schultz said he did not believe drinking to be a major problem on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus, he said he believed that students generally consume more alcohol than others between ages 18 and 24.

"A lot of students hurt themselves - a lot of dropout is related to excessive alcohol abuse," he said.

Schultz said he did not see consumption of alcohol as a moral issue, but said alcohol sometimes served as a false god to people dependent upon the substance, he said.

"Alcohol as a god sucks," said Schultz, who said he was also concerned that binge drinking hurt students socially.

Many times, males who engage in sexual activity upon finishing a few beers are the same males who do not know the first thing about picking up girls while sober, he said.

"Our theory is that one of the things we can change is the social norms."

Alcohol often interferes with a person's social skills, Schultz said. He said young people who abused alcohol often grew up socially awkward.

"Anytime you are under the influence of alcohol or a drug, you don't experience behavior in a realistic way," he said.

By next semester, Schultz said, he and his staff will seek to train student assistants on different methods for utilizing peer intervention in alcohol-related situations.

The idea is for student assistants, in turn, to teach those methods to other students. Schultz said he and his staff would also develop activities and place ads and articles in newspapers to promote the program.

Larry Meyer, a campus pastor at UNL's Lutheran Center and member of Flashing Your Brights, said he hoped the program would make others aware of the dangers involved in alcohol abuse.

"Binge drinking, in my mind, is irresponsible behavior," Meyer said.

"Other than putting your life at risk ... alcohol poisoning is part of (the danger)," he said. "(Both) can throw you into a coma."

While alcohol poisoning and drunken driving were extreme examples, Meyer said there were plenty of other reasons binge drinking put people at risk.

Some examples he gave were students engaging in unsafe sexual activity or students breaking laws that they normally would not.

In many cases, Meyer said, binge drinkers often get the wrong impression: that friends are comfortable with their behavior.

"I think if the program can give some people some warnings that (binge drinking) is dangerous behavior ... then it has done what it is supposed to do."

David Spade Sophie Marceau

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