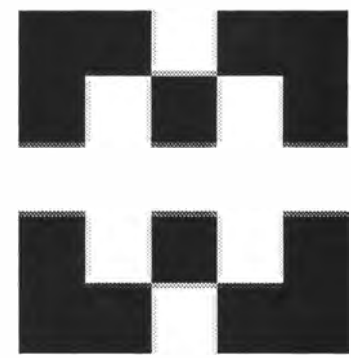


THE

CHALLENGER



A Publication

of the Harper College Honors Society

Fall 2004 - Issue 4



College Life

Issues and Opinions

The Vicious Cycle of College Life

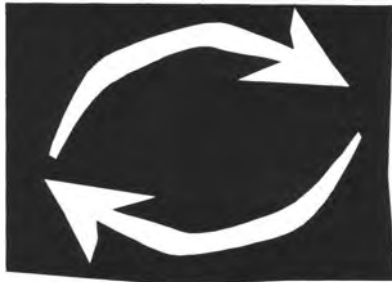
By: Allison Riggio

On a typical weekday, I wake up in the morning bright and early to head to school and attend several of the 17 credit hours I am enrolled in this semester. I come home in the afternoon, work on homework, try to eat something of a dinner, and then usually head straight to work around 6. There I sell t-shirts and jeans to fashionable, yet confused customers in the mall and clean up the messy store until around 11. At this rate, I'm home by about 11:30, just in time to finish up any last bits of homework and get to bed sometime after midnight. I get a poor excuse for a night's sleep, and then wake up to do the same routine the next day.

I know it sounds like a sob story. "Pity me because I work and go to school."

That's not really what I'm aiming at, however. In reality,

many college students are facing the same difficult challenge between school and work that I am. We hold part-time jobs in order to fund our education and everyday expenses.



That's great.

We're getting the real world experience of working and managing a stressful schedule, right?

Well, there is one slight problem. Often students work so hard that they begin to place their jobs before their schoolwork. Homework and studies are forgotten and ignored in order to get in those extra hours on the clock at work. Juggling learning and working becomes a vicious cycle. We must work to afford school, but then end up doing poorly in school because of work.

It's likely that professors see the effects of this vicious cycle constantly. I bet they couldn't even count the number of

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A Journey of Age

By: Margaret Brigham

A community college has a much different atmosphere than a university. It might be said that this is because there is a much more diverse student enrollment at Harper than one might find at the University of Illinois, for example. The reasons for attending a community college are therefore just as varied. The two strongest seem to be cost and convenience. That is not merely coincidental.

As was mentioned in the piece *Fast Forward* by Allison Riggio (published in Issue 2 of this semester's *Challenger*), Harper has a very strong appeal to non-traditional students who may not otherwise have access to the education Harper provides. And although there is a regard and

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Margaret Bringham: Office Manager

By: Mustafa Bhikapurwala

Maggie Bringham is this year's Honors Society Office Manager. She is incredibly involved with the Honors Program, but we'll get to that in a bit.

Maggie is a native Chicagoan. She was born and raised in the Northwest suburbs and graduated from Palatine High School in 1996. Immediately after her graduation, she enrolled at Harper College. Soon, she found a home in the Honors Program and was ecstatic to have the opportunity to take more enriched classes. She had originally planned on majoring in Music Education.

Maggie was the Fundraising and Promotional chairperson for the Honors Society, and from 1997-1998 took on the duties of Honors Society President. After being re-elected as President in the fall of 1998, Maggie stepped down to pursue a full-time job at Harris Bank, where she worked for nearly 3 years. It was at that point that she decided to change her major to Business.

Maggie moved to Green Bay, Wisconsin following her employment at Harris where she lived with her now ex-husband for about a year. This was when her adorable daughter, MaryEtta, was born. Maggie worked in a Montessori school while living in Wisconsin, and from that experience knew that she wanted to be a Montessori teacher and enroll her daughter in Montessori classes. In our interview, however, Maggie reminded me that she never remotely converted to being a Packers fan while in Green Bay; she has always been a faithful Cubbies and Bears fan.



Harper, however, had been a point of continuity throughout Maggie's tremulous life. She returned in the spring of '03 on a part-time basis and is now a non-traditional student here at Harper. If you would like to know more about that, read her article entitled *A Journey of Age* on page 1 of this issue of the *Challenger*.

Maggie returned to Harper with 30 credit hours already completed, and now plans on finishing up one more semester here. This will give her enough credits for junior year standing. She plans to transfer to National Louis University for their Adult Education program, which will allow her to complete her Bachelor's degree in 13 months while attending classes one night a week.

As I mentioned above, Maggie was at one point a Music Education major. She plays the trombone and the piano, but hasn't had much time recently to devote to her musical interests.

If there was one piece of advice Maggie would want Honors students to live by, it would be, "Never judge a man until you've walked a mile in his shoes. My shoes may be battered, but no one can honestly judge me believing they have the whole picture."

When I asked Maggie where she saw herself 10 years from now, she replied, "Ten years ago I never expected to be where I am now, so I take every day as it comes."

Maggie has faced troubled waters in the past and is a veteran now; however, she admits, "No matter what difficulty I have faced, for MaryEtta alone I would do it all again if I had to."



Image courtesy of rockthevote.com

Yes, I Voted. Now Go Away.

By: Nicole L. Ejzak

Several campaigns yelled, threatened, and harassed us to vote on November 2, 2004. We were told to "Rock the Vote," "Vote or Die," and "Choose or Lose." The question on everyone's mind is: did these campaigns work?

They most definitely did. Despite beliefs that 18 to 30 year olds don't care about who runs our country, young voters proved themselves otherwise. According to The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) at the University of Maryland, the "number of young citizens eligible to vote in 2004 was 40.7 million." MTV tells us that "20.9 million loud" came out to support democracy on the second of November.

That means that "nearly 52% of all eligible 18- to 30-year-olds in 2004 pulled the levers and punched the cards" (MTV.com). However, only 42% did in the last election.

Young voters preferred Kerry to Bush, 54 to 45 percent (MTV.com). Adults might like to think that most young voters support Kerry, but there is an overwhelming number of youth that support Bush as well. MTV says that 21 million voters "is too loud for politicians to ignore-- regardless of party affiliation."

The youth is speaking and getting active. The young voter turnout declined from 1972 to 2000; but now it is starting to rise again. Even though the campaigns on television and those booths at Harper were annoying, I guess they worked. I certainly didn't have faith in our age group, but over half of us voted. Hopefully in another four years, we will prove everyone wrong yet again.

"Cycle" Continued from page 1

times they've heard the phrases, "I couldn't get my paper done last night because I was at work," or "I have to leave class early today to get to work on time."

The grades of working students suffer each and every semester because of poorly (if at all) completed assignments and missed classes. Instructors are often very strict about attendance and homework policies and rarely make exceptions for these workplace excuses.

The way professors see it (and I don't blame them) is, "Shouldn't education come first?" Isn't that why I'm attending college: so that one day I don't *have* to go to the mall and sell t-shirts and jeans to people anymore? Won't a diploma ensure that my life will one day be something more than retail?

The problem is, however, without that job I wouldn't be able to purchase textbooks. Without that job I wouldn't be able to afford the transfer school I'm planning on attending. For many college students, that job determines the existence of their education.

So how do we fix this problem of balancing it all? Should professors be more lenient on students when it comes to class attendance and assignments? Well, I understand things come up, but most of us are adults and should really be able to plan accordingly when we receive a syllabus the first week of class. So I don't think it's fair to put the blame on strict teachers. This is college. They're going to be strict.

The only solution I see is really left up to the individual student. Organization is key. According to a book called *Time for College* by Al Siebert and Bernadine Gilpin, working 20 hours per week while attending school full time is the

maximum a student should attempt if they don't want to overload themselves. So don't take classes that are immensely demanding, and try to schedule class times that are conducive to all your life's needs and responsibilities. If issues do come up during the semester, don't be afraid to inform your professors about them. Many will be understanding of valid problems regarding time management.

On that note, sometimes all it takes to put an end to the overwhelming school and work cycle *is* to simply know how to manage your time. Siebert and Gilpin suggest students use calendars and day planners to their advantage. It may seem unnecessary at first, but they noted that it always becomes much easier to manage one's time when it is written out in a schedule. This can help students visually prioritize the aspects of their lives and allow enough time to get everything done. I'll be the first to admit that I am in love with my day planner! I'm lost without it. Don't be afraid to love yours, too.

Last, but not least, make sure your employers understand that education comes first. Finding a job that allows you to be flexible with attending classes, doing homework, and studying is key to successfully balancing school and work. Not to mention you may even be able to make time for a social life every once in a while, too! Now wouldn't that be nice?


**The Unthinkable Crime:
It's Rape, Not "Sexual Assault"**
By: Nicole L. Ejzak

Imagine yourself on campus at 6:30 at night. You've just pulled into the parking lot, and you see a lost-looking man flagging you down. He asks you where Avante is and you point and give him a play-by-play of how to get there. He still looks confused and asks if you could drive him to the Avante center.

You could be making the biggest mistake of your life. Most on-campus rapes occur from this exact scenario. You might have the intention of helping out a lost student; but you could wind up being raped by the very same person you were trying to help.

"Forcible rape can be defined as unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman against her will by force or threat of immediate force" (Arnold Loewy, *Criminal Law*).

The book also states that the victim must "affirmatively resist"; she must communicate a firm "no" to her attacker.

FindLaw.com states that even if a victim is intoxicated, she can still press charges against her rapist, but because of so many restrictions on the charges, most rapes go unreported. Victims blame themselves and/or are afraid to come forward and say they were raped (CAVNET Advisory Committee on Campus Violence).

In terms of college campuses, the University of Illinois at Chicago, for example, currently has on record *one* reported rape each year from 2000 to 2002. There are no reported rapes at Harper from 2000-2003; however, statistics regarding previous years were unavailable.

Gretchen Cook, a WOMEN-SNEWS correspondent,

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said, "Harvard University ignited a firestorm of protest last spring when its undergraduate school scrapped its long-standing policy of investigating all rape charges brought by one student against another. Instead it imposed a requirement that the victim [must] provide 'sufficient corroborating evidence' before a probe could be launched."

That's just great. Not only do women have to worry about being raped on campus, but while they're being raped, they have to worry about collecting evidence.

Usually the best evidence is bruising and sperm on the area of contact, but it's still hard for women to prove they've been raped. A rapist's defense attorney will try to convince the jury that the sex was consensual.

If you have been raped, you can contact your local hospital to talk with a rape counselor who will help you through your traumatizing situation.

Preventing rape is something every woman needs to think about. Taking a self-defense class to become more confident is one great way to deal with this crime.



Image courtesy of
www.uvm.edu

The Women's Rights Awareness Club at Harper is a club that deals with women's issues. Women can try to prevent rape by being aware of their surroundings, walking with their heads held high, and trusting their instincts.

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Higher Education: It Can Cost You an Arm and a Leg

By: Allison Riggio

With tuition prices rising year after year, it's a wonder anyone goes to college at all. According to various Illinois state school web sites, students generally spend somewhere between \$10,000 and \$20,000 a year on education. And that's not even looking into the prices of private schools.



Students might as well hand over their right arm at such costs, and maybe their left leg if they want to get that single dorm room.

What is it that makes the cost of a college education so high? According to *Straight Talk About College Costs and Prices* by James Harvey, the "cost per student" at any given college is defined as "the average amount spent annually to provide education and related services to each full-time equivalent student." In other words, this is a calculation of the amount of money needed to provide an education, or basically-- tuition. Year after year this "price to provide education" seems to rise, but is the quality of education getting any better? Why are we paying higher and higher prices if we're not getting something better and better?

According to www.NellieMae.com (an educational loan corporation), one of the reasons tuition prices tend to rise in public schools is because state funding is declin-

ing. The schools need to increase tuition costs to compensate for losses in government funds. According to the same site, one of the reasons private schools are raising prices is because they are funding more and more faculty research programs and, thus, need to cover the costs through tuition. A more vague, and somewhat shocking, reason the site listed was that many colleges raise costs simply because they know that they *can* and people will always continue to pay. Ouch. That's not what students like to hear.

On a more positive note, an increase in loans, financial aid, and scholarships has also occurred along with the increase in college costs (www.NellieMae.com). A student can find scholarships from a variety of companies, groups, and foundations all over the country. Also, student loans and low interest rates are allowing college students to pay off their education at a reasonable rate over the years following their graduation. So fear not.



You can obtain that college education one way or another.

To avoid the effects of that sticker shock, try speaking with Harper faculty in the Academic Advising and Counseling Center or the Admissions office for information on scholarships, financial aid, or the transfer process to a 4-year university.

“Journey” Continued from page 1

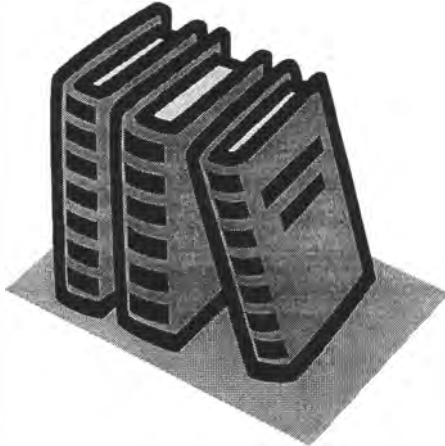
respect between the traditional and non-traditional students, I have often seen the two not fully understanding each other (and some professors not understand both categories for that matter, but that is neither here nor there). As a student who has existed on both ends of the spectrum at Harper, I would like to shed some light on the minds of students in both age categories in order to help strengthen the mutual respect and hopefully help us all grow in the way that only college can make us grow.

I ask all readers to not let the growing cynicism of this article become overwhelming. All the contents are meant to clarify, not offend, and it is important that this is made perfectly clear.

I began Harper in 1996 at the ripe young age of 17. I was merely a kid still, but I thought I had the world by a string. It was suggested numerous times that I heed the saying: *Teenagers, tired of being hassled by your stupid parents? ACT NOW! Move out, get a job, pay your own bills...*

While you still know EVERYTHING! I actually tried to do that shortly later, but the point was that life at 17, 18, and 19 years old is just so hard! (I hear the over--24 audience chuckling in the background!) It really did seem true at the time I lived it, and I'm sure that all the younger readers are probably upset at me now for ridiculing.

I am not at all belittling how difficult the transition from high school to college and the real world is, but once the real world jumped up and tackled me I



realized I would do anything to rectify my life eight years ago. College is a juggling act, especially if you are juggling work, family, and studies. It is a far cry however from juggling children and studies (and for most, add work in there also). I believe the old adage that "the grass is always greener on the other side" holds most true for the college set. I started out working and beginning a major that I really thought would be my life's career. Then life

got in the way. I thought, maybe the answer was working to make a decent dollar, and getting into a company that would pay my tuition for me. The trick was finding the time for school when the almighty dollar was winning out. Then I followed the conservative dream; I was a woman who wanted a family and a man supporting me. This led to learning the hard way that I can look to my family (a.k.a. parents and grandparents, *not* ex-husband) for support, but I needed to learn quickly how to survive by myself. And now I have a child looking to me for guidance as well.

I sincerely believe that most adult students will define their status much differently than the definitions most colleges use. I became a non-traditional student upon returning to Harper at the *old* age of 24 (the age requirement is 24 and over). I prefer to define myself as a student who has learned about the real world and returned to school. I used to watch those parents who were back in school with awe, wondering how they survived. Now I am one of them.

The funny thing is that I didn't quite realize how defining that was until I was out with one of my younger friends from Harper one evening a few months ago. She started telling me a story about one of her professors that continually used another non-traditional student (and parent) as an example in class. I don't believe this friend realized how profoundly that comment struck me. She couldn't understand why this professor was making an illustration of the adult student being able to manage work, a home, and school work. I believe my friend felt that her own struggles seemed insincere. After all, everyone has a life outside of school, right? It was then that I realized how large the gap between her life and mine was.

I can only bridge this gap so far by suggesting that the younger set respect the life experience we bring to the table as adult students. I cannot explain our experience completely, as I'm uncertain any adult could. Maybe that's why the gap is there.

But non-traditional students have an obligation to the younger set. Even though they may not always listen, we should reach out to



traditional students with our support. We may have taken our own journey to come back and realize how important a degree (yes, one single piece of paper) is in life. We need to build friendships with the kids that are struggling through community college looking for the light at the end of that tunnel, and explain to them that the light will become much more brilliant with age.

She Works Hard For Pennies?

By: Margaret Brigham

Without a college degree, the typical jobs held by college students these days would generally fall into the categories of food service, retail, and clerical. Most often students are looking at the lowest paying jobs on the market because of the perceived importance of higher education in America today. So if the lowest paying jobs pay minimum wage, what happens when the minimum wage is impossible to live on? Where does that leave the independent student? With inflation continuing and the cost of living in this area increasing, an economic dilemma is created.

An outsider's perspective to the minimum wage dilemma in America was offered by author Nick Blake in his article published in the August 2004 issue of *Australian Nursing Journal*.

Blake stated, "In the USA today minimum wage levels are set at \$5.15 per hour (i.e., \$206.00 per week or \$10,712 per year). This amount was determined in 1997 and has not changed in the past seven years. Legislation currently before the USA House of Representatives seeks to increase the minimum hourly rate to \$7.00 per hour, but USA employers are strenuously resisting this."

He continued by saying, "One only needs to look to the USA, where the minimum wage has been neglected, and is now so low it no longer offers any protection for workers. As a consequence, the USA has

introduced the term 'the working poor' to describe people who are in the workforce but living below the poverty line."

But, Harper is a suburban community college. Surely poverty is not an issue of substance in the suburbs right? In the September 20, 2004 issue of *Nation* author Peter Dreier begged to differ with the facade of affluent suburbia.

He explained, "Hidden in a Census Bureau report on poverty in late August....Today, 13.8 million poor Americans live in the suburbs--almost as many as the 14.6 million who live in central cities....Especially in the suburbs, where the expansion of low-paying jobs in the service economy is most evident, the poor are the 'working poor.'"

These facts give new meaning to the term poor college student, especially for the independent students working hard for pennies and trying to survive. The importance of an education becomes quite clear with these statistics staring straight at us. For those who wonder why we are here working on a degree, look at the facts. The benefits in pay we will experience as the result of a degree in hand will determine our future.

**Meet Your Secretary**

By: Allison Riggio

It's a wonder Nicole Ejzak ever finds time for herself. From Student

Ambassadors to Phi Theta Kappa, community service work to her part-time job, this girl still somehow manages to find



time to be your Honors Program Secretary for the 2004-2005 school year.

As Honors Society Secretary, Nicole is responsible for preparing agendas for the weekly Society meetings and taking minutes. She noted that all of the Honors Officers work together to coordinate events and admitted that she sees herself as "kind of just part of the team."

When she's not fulfilling her Honor's duties, you can most likely find Nicole working with one of her various other campus activities. She is the Vice President of Fellowship for Phi Theta Kappa, where she recruits, organizes, and communicates with members of the program to coordinate events. Nicole is also an active member of both the Student Ambassadors and the Women's Rights Awareness Club.

Oh, right, Nicole gets an education here, too. This fall marked the beginning of her second and final year here at Harper College. She was a 2003 Fremd High School graduate and plans on transferring to the University of Illinois at Chicago next fall. There she intends to study Political Science in the school's Pre-professional Law Program.

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"Secretary" Continued from page 6

When asked why she chose to attend Harper College for her first two years, Nicole simply responded, "I wanted to take baby steps. My umbilical cord doesn't stretch very far!"

Nicole admitted that she wanted to take the college process slowly, first enrolling in a 2-year school, advancing to a 4-year university, and finally attending graduate school. She also wanted to maintain close ties with her family and didn't want to go too far away from home.

Luckily for her and her career plans, Nicole was also able to land a great part-time job as a law office clerk for a local group of attorneys and counselors. She works about 20 hours per week drafting motions, filing, and writing letters to clients.

"I love it because basically it's job training," she stated.

When Nicole can actually find some free time to relax, she admits that she can be quite the bookworm. She has a 7x4-foot bookshelf in her house that is filled to capacity with books. Her favorite is *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, but, mind you, she found it difficult to pick just one. She'll also be the first to admit her addiction to the television show *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, and likes to catch MTV's *Real World* whenever she can. If the opportunity arises, Nicole loves skiing, dancing, and singing.

When asked to provide some words of advice that she thought her Honors peers should live by, Nicole thought it best to refer to a quote by her ultimate idol, Princess Diana Spencer of Wales. She stated quite simply, "I wear my heart on my sleeve."

And those few words sum up Nicole better than this article ever could.



Photo courtesy of
www.time.com

Substance Abuse

By: Mustafa Bhikapurwala

Eighteen million Americans are addicted to alcohol. Tobacco causes 400,000 deaths every year-- killing more people than AIDS, alcohol, drug abuse, car crashes, suicides, and fires combined. Nearly half of all Americans say that they know someone with a drug problem (jointogether.org). In our society, substance abuse is a bigger problem than it seems to be and is greatly underrated.

If I had one word to describe substance abuse it would be "devastating." Devastate is exactly what substance abuse does to both the individual and society as a whole.

According to author Paula Ford-Martin, "Substance abuse and dependence cuts across all lines of race, culture, education, and socioeconomic status, leaving no group untouched by its devastating effects. Substance abuse is an enormous public health problem, with far-ranging effects throughout society" ("Substance Abuse and Dependence," *Gale Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine*).

Ford--Martin defines substance abuse as "the continued compulsive use of mind-altering substances despite personal, social, and/or physical problems caused by the substance use."

She continued by saying, "Abuse may lead to dependence, where increased amounts are needed to achieve the desired effect or level of intoxication and the patient's tolerance for the drug increases."

"In addition to the toll substance abuse can take on one's physical health, substance abuse is considered an important factor in a wide variety of social problems, affecting rates of crime, domestic violence, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), unemployment, homelessness, teen pregnancy, and failure in school," Ford--Martin stated.

The cost of dealing with illicit

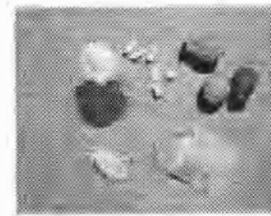


Photo courtesy of
www.ohcinc.com

drugs alone approaches \$67 billion annually. Through taxes, every man, woman, and child in America pays nearly \$1,000 a year

to cover the costs of unnecessary health care, additional law enforcement, auto accidents, crime, and lost productivity resulting from substance abuse (jointogether.org). But, how does a person become dependent on these substances?

Ford--Martin stated, "It is generally believed that there is not one single cause of substance abuse, though scientists are increasingly convinced that certain people possess a genetic predisposition which can affect the development of addictive behaviors."

But genetics can't be the only cause. With national divorce rates towering each year, more and more teenagers are caught up in the crossfire and struggle between their parents. Struggling with the instability in their private lives and deprived of stable and dependent parental love, these hapless teenagers resort to alcoholism and substance abuse to temporarily relieve them of all their woes.

Another reason is the lack of social acceptance by friends, family or someone they love, which some teenagers experience today. But, what is not understood by these social outcasts is that their perceived "resort," in fact, just adds more to their infamous status in society.

The same happens when teenagers do not perform well in school, are laughed at on sports teams, or are fired from jobs. Instead of pulling themselves together to fight off these setbacks, unaware teenagers fall right into the hands of substance abuse, which only adds to her/his failure in academics, sports, workplace, etc.

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"Substance" Continued from page 7

As we see here, this is a vicious, never-ending cycle which needs to stop.

Sometimes dependence is caused by the seemingly harmless concept of experimentation. You take a little, feel great, and want to feel great again. You take more and more and more, and before you know it, you're in it. External influences also play major roles in addiction. External influences can be media, friend circles, and peer pressure. This is where we need to act.

The people who sell, advertise, distribute, and market such substances, however, also need to be taken to task. These are vicious predators who feed off the young and promising lives of teenagers. They are guiltier, in my opinion, than murderers. A murderer kills a person, but these people not only kill the individual, but also destroy his or her family, career, and life. They also cost society a lot, with major impacts to Medicare, brain-drain, law-enforcement agencies, etc.

I have always believed that prevention can be better than a cure. According to Ford--Martin, prevention programs educate and inform teenagers about the risks and consequences of substance abuse as well as how to resist peer pressure.

"Prevention is best aimed at teenagers who are at very high risk for substance experimentation," she said. Such individuals may include "victims of physical or sexual abuse, children of parents who have a history of substance abuse, especially alcohol, and children with school failure and/or attention deficit disorder."

What we need is firm and determined action on our part, especially from parents, government, interest groups, society, and communities as a whole. We need preventive measures, more awareness, intensive campaigning, and resistance in general to this vice that is strangling our generation and the world's future.

"Rape" Continued from page 4

A website called prevent-crime.com says that if you are raped, "preserve all physical evidence. Don't shower, bathe, change clothes, douche, or throw any clothing away until the police or rape counselor say it's okay."

WholeFamily magazine said, "80 percent of all rape victims know [their] attacker at least casually. Fifty percent of all rapes take place in the woman's home, oftentimes after the rapist was invited in, many times during the course of a date. Rapists seek power and control. They enjoy hurting and humiliating women. Often they have a willing sex partner at home, so sex isn't their motive--*violence is.*"

Women need to be aware of men who try to take advantage of them. A man should never try to over-power anyone. Women have fought for many years to prevent this, but it still occurs daily. Every six minutes, to be exact.



Image courtesy of www.uvm.edu

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Allison Riggio

Contributing Writers

Mustafa Bhikapurwala

Margaret Brigham (also photographer)

Nicole L. Ejzak



The Honors Society Meetings are held from 3:30pm-5:00pm on Wednesdays in L329. Discussions begin at 4pm and all (Honors and non-Honors alike) are welcome to join in.

Honors Officers 2004:

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