

homewood-flossmoor high school the voyager

999 kedzie ave. flossmoor, il 60422



UNDER THE RADAR.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Despite risks, H-F students continue to drink and drive

ALEX REICH
MANAGING EDITOR

Before kids are even tall enough to reach the pedals of a car, they are taught that drinking and driving do not mix. Not only is underage consumption of alcohol illegal, but students are educated at a young age that driving under the influence is a surefire way to wind up in a body bag. So if all this is true, why are H-F students still drinking and driving?

"I try to drink every weekend; that is my goal," said Kyle, an H-F senior whose name has been changed. "Alcohol is extremely prevalent. The teenage market for alcohol is supersaturated. There is more alcohol than can be consumed," he said.

It is impossible to deny the common occurrence of illegal behavior among students, especially underage drinking. According to the 2004 Illinois Youth Survey, 49 percent of high school seniors in Cook County admit to alcohol use. In fact, the same survey reports that the average starting age of regular alcohol use in Cook County is 15.6-years-old. However, few people realize just how many H-F students do not hesitate to get behind the wheel of a car after consuming alcohol.

"I drive almost every time [I drink]," said Kyle. "You just have to have some self-confidence when you are driving. If you think you are drunk, you are going to drive like you are. Your expectations determine a lot of your actions," he said.

Kyle is not alone. In a survey of 300 H-F students, 65 percent of upperclassmen report to having been drunk at some point in their lives, while 30 percent said they have driven under the influence of alcohol. Thirty-five percent of seniors polled claimed to have driven under the influence, and 75 percent of students said they had witnessed someone drinking and driving.

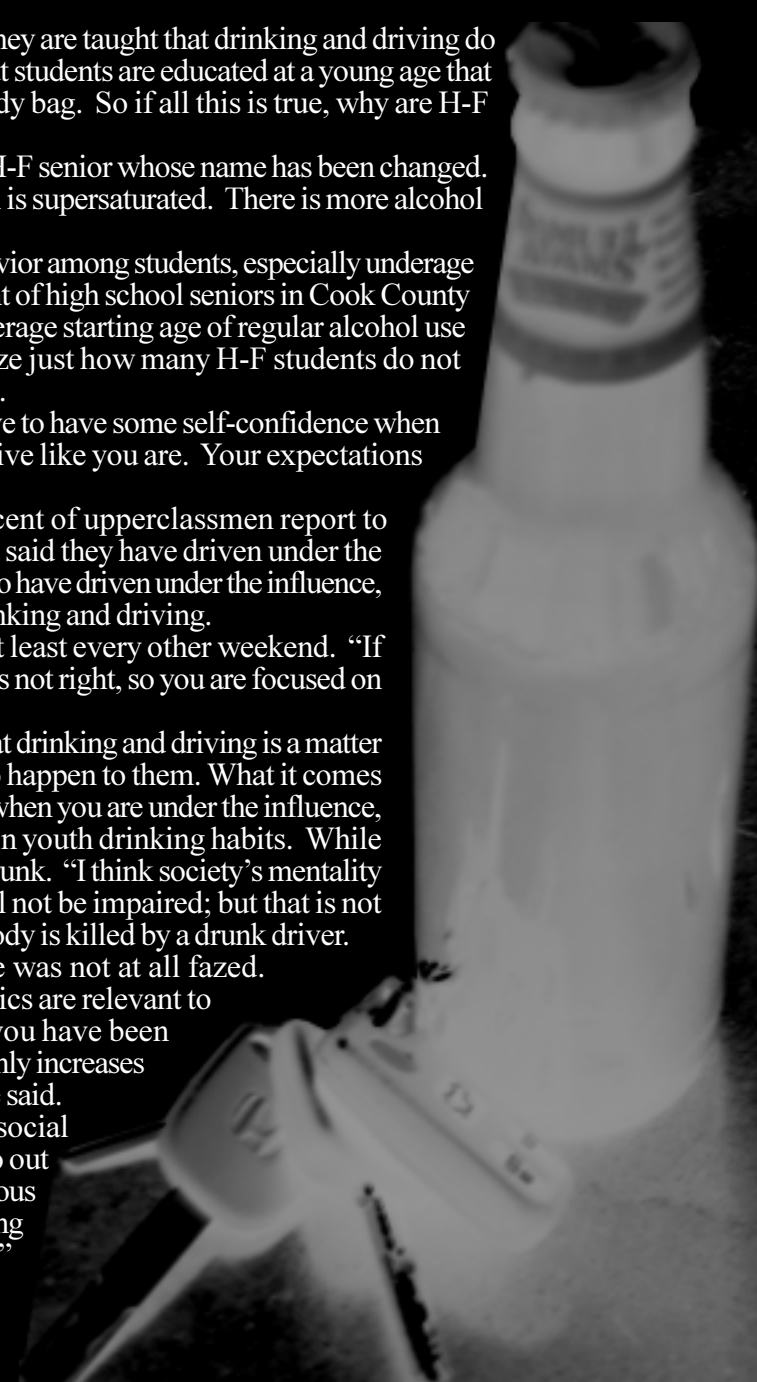
Mike is another H-F senior who claims to drink and drive at least every other weekend. "If anything it makes me drive safer. You know what you are doing is not right, so you are focused on the road, and more aware of obeying traffic laws," he said.

Student Services Coordinator John Schwaller is convinced that drinking and driving is a matter of teenage perceived invincibility. "They think it is not going to happen to them. What it comes down to is that people think they are going to be in control... but when you are under the influence, you perceive things differently." He noted a changing pattern in youth drinking habits. While people used to drink to be social, now the sole purpose is to get drunk. "I think society's mentality is that if you have a couple drinks you will be okay, and you will not be impaired; but that is not true," said Schwaller, who added that every two minutes somebody is killed by a drunk driver.

When confronted with the dangers of drunk driving, Kyle was not at all fazed. "Correlation does not imply causation. I do not think the statistics are relevant to real life because the dangers are there regardless of whether you have been drinking. You can get in an accident either way. I think drinking only increases my chances of getting in an accident by a minuscule amount," he said.

Although alcohol has a strong presence in the high school social scene, there are students who refrain from drinking. "When I go out with my friends, I do not need alcohol to have fun," said an anonymous H-F senior. "I think it is stupid to risk someone else's life [by drinking and driving]. It is not fair to the person you are putting in danger." However, these students are in the minority, as 55 percent of all students polled admitted to being drunk at some point.

continued on page 3



October 28, 2005

Volume 47
Issue 3

news
notes

On-site Admission

Western Michigan University, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, will have an on-site admission interview session November 1 at 1:30 pm. Admission representatives will be present to offer admission decisions that day. Regular admission standards are an ACT score of 18 and a GPA of at least a 2.5 on a 4.0 scale. Sign up in the Guidance Office with Kathy Fleming.

Computer Science Information Session

The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign will be holding an informational session here at H-F for female students interested in studying Computer Science October 31 at 8:33 am. Any interested students should sign up in the Guidance Office with Kathy Fleming.

Outstanding Senior Award

The Daughters of The American Revolution's local chapter will honor an outstanding person in the senior class who demonstrates qualities of a good citizen. Students interested in participating in the essay contest should see Kathy Fleming in the Guidance Office by November 4.

Open Field House

The Field House is open to the public for walking, running, and raquetball from 5:30 am to 7 am and from 6 pm to 9:30 pm on weekdays.

on the
inside...



"Harry Potter Mania"
see page 8



"The Dangers of Pitbulls"
see page 15

PETAR MANDICH
NEWS EDITOR

A potential 70 student athletes from Schaumburg and Hoffman Estates may be suspended from their sports teams after pictures showing certain student athletes drinking were posted online.

In early October, after pictures of the students drinking at parties last school year were posted online at *myspace.com*, school officials from both school districts took action. *MySpace.com*, or My Space, is a free service that uses the internet for online communication through an interactive network of photos, web blogs, user profiles, e-mail, web forums, and groups, as well as other media formats like photographs, as they were in this case.

School District 211, which includes Schaumburg, has a strict no-tolerance drinking and drug use

policy, according to *nbc5.com*. As a result, 55 students were notified that they will not be playing this quarter in any of the current and upcoming seasons' games.

All of these students will also have to successfully complete a "Fresh Start" program of substance abuse control and counseling. Two students from Schaumburg were also put on probation, and one was suspended all together.

Student athletes in School District 211 are all required to sign a code of conduct in which they promise not to drink or take drugs while they are playing sports in the district. Many of the athletes reprimanded were in breach of that contract and action was taken to penalize them. "Before we lose a young person to alcohol, is it now time for parents to know where their child has been and what he or she has been doing," said School District 211 Superintendent Roger

Thorton in an official press release in October.

Although nothing quite like this has happened at H-F, there are still rules and guidelines which all student athletes must follow. Every year, student athletes are required to sign a Training Rules Form, H-F's athletic code of conduct. Training Rules meetings are held three times a year at H-F by Athletic Director Ross Howatt. A student and a parent or legal guardian must attend one of the three meetings and sign the binding, legal contract.

"Here at H-F, athletic participation is considered a privilege offered to eligible students on an equal opportunities basis. Students considering participating in athletics must agree to submit to signing the Training Rules Form if they wish to participate...we refer to and value this as an ethical understanding," said Howatt.

Once students sign the contract,

they are forced to follow the policies year long. "While possessing pictures of rule violations can be pretty convincing... 'When' and 'where' are significant factors. According to our Training Rules Policy, once an athlete signs the form, the rules are in effect year round, anywhere, anytime. This means on campus and/or off. Once an athlete signs the form, they are making a pledge that they will abide by our rules and pay the penalty if they violate them, period," said Howatt.

H-F also does random athletic drug testing to further insure the health, safety, and general welfare of all student athletes. "We hope to prevent, deter, and detect the use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco... 'Just Say No' does not work with teenagers. We need repeated messages and regular communication to lower usage," said Howatt.