

Ewing Township and College team up as ultimate party crashers

By Alex Seise

The College's administration is joining with the Ewing Township Police Department and township residents in an effort to reduce disturbances caused by off-campus parties.

The initiative is known as the Ewing Community Watch, also referred to as the Crime Awareness Program, according to the Fall 2006 Connections newsletter. Connections, a biannual newsletter, helps to inform communities directly surrounding the College about events, achievements and progress being made on and around campus.

According to Connections, Community Watch is comprised of members of the Ewing Township council and police force, township citizens and staff and faculty from the College.

Ewing residents patrol neighborhoods by foot in organized teams. Upon finding instances of disruptive behavior, the teams notify Ewing Township police and College administrators. The teams function primarily as a detection service and are not authorized to handle disturbances.

According to Connections, patrols coincide with weekends and other times when classes are not held the following morning. Potentially disruptive social events are more likely to occur during these times. Patrol teams are organized for each neighborhood and have scheduled time slots.

Community Watch was created by Township and College Together (TACT), a four-year-old committee created to identify ways to improve communication and interaction between the College and the community.

"TACT really came about because there are so many residents who keep an eye on what's going on in their neighborhood," Patrice Coleman-Boatwright, associate vice president of Public Affairs, said.

Supporters of the program say that it helps off-campus students learn what it means to be a good neighbor. Others feel that in addition to the off-campus patrols, the program should have a separate on-campus extension to deal with excessive parties.

"I think the watch program is just one part of the solution," said Steven Kramer, junior biology major.

"While it is a step in the right direction, it does not completely deal with disruptive parties on campus. There needs to be an emphasis on both the community and the College."

Kramer, a member of the Wellness Housing Program, suggests greater frequency in the searches of suspicious dorm rooms. "There are obviously underage drinking parties on campus," Kramer said. "The best way to cut back would be to stop them at odd hours when the students are least expecting it."

In addition to Community Watch and Connections, TACT aims to increase its presence and to foster communications between Ewing Township and the College through other means. Members have used forums and meetings as well as various studies to work toward these goals.

"Connections is a way of connecting with the surrounding community," Coleman-Boatwright said. "It is a hard copy, unlike current electronic newsletters. This allows the College's updates, as well as its achievements, to reach a lot of the retirees living in the area."

Similar programs at other universities have greatly increased relations between colleges and their local communities.

In San Luis Obispo, Calif., students from two local universities are recruited by the local police department to respond to noise complaints and help resolve disputes that occur between off-campus college students and their neighbors. The program also relieves officers from having to deal with such issues and allows them to better serve the rest of the community.