

Blackout Elon revealed: buzz campaign seeks to change perspectives

by Kaitlin Ugolik, April 16, 2008



Flyers displaying only two fingerprints were posted across campus as part of Live Oak Communications' Black Out Elon campaign.

The mysterious fingerprint flyers that created a buzz during the past two weeks were finally explained at College Coffee on April 8 when members of Students Promoting Awareness, Responsibility, Knowledge and Success (SPARKS) peer education and Live Oak Communications passed out free T-shirts explaining their Blackout Elon campaign.

It is a "social norms" campaign thought up by Lee Bush's corporate campaigns class and executed by Live Oak Communications and SPARKS to change Elon students' perception of drinking on campus.

Students in the corporate campaigns class looked at the 2007 Core Alcohol and Drug Survey, a survey given out every two years to freshmen, and found what they described as surprising results: Of students who choose to drink, most only do so once a week and only 8.6 percent of students reported drinking five times per week. But the survey showed that many students think their peers drink five times per week.

"Students think their peers drink a lot more than they do," junior Andrea Griskey said. "If we put the facts out, maybe those who drink more will change to fit in."

Griskey said that the goal was to use a peer-to-peer method of getting the facts out, first by getting students' attention and generating a buzz — that's where the fingerprints came in.

Sophomore Chrissie Cordeira, peer educator for SPARKS, explained the name of the campaign.

"'Blackout' on this campus means getting drunk to the point that you don't know what you're doing," she said. "We're trying to change the definition of the word and make it positive, to blackout misconceptions."

Cordeira said that although Elon students do drink more than students on other campuses, according to the survey, a lot of them drink responsibly.

She said that the campaigners want to show students that not everyone at Elon lives the same lifestyle: There is a population of responsible drinkers and students who don't drink at all.