

TSU President reflects about Patricia Burton

“Liberal arts for the people!” This is the phrase I will always associate with Dr. Patricia Burton. This is what compelled her to come to Truman a quarter century ago. Ever since then, she has embodied the values of this University like no other individual. Her commitment to her discipline and students is unmatched. The long-lasting impact she has had on hundreds of students is undeniable. I hear of her influence every time I travel the country to meet with our alumni.

Although Dr. Burton is probably no more than 95 pounds dripping wet, I learned early on in my tenure at Truman not to mess with her. She gave her life to this place, and she was not about to stand by and let some hapless administrator like me mess it up. God bless her.

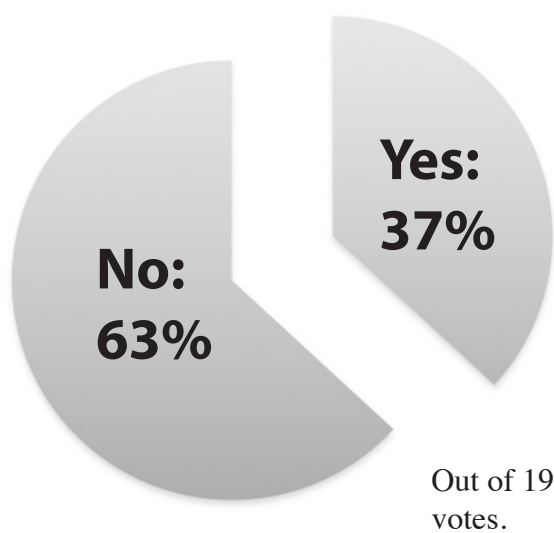
She always fought so hard for her students and the mission of Truman because it matters. The liberal arts are the surest path to empowerment and full engagement in our political life; not “political” in the sense of voting in an election but in the way Thucydides used the word: to mean activity with other people at every level, from the family to the neighborhood to the broader community to the city-state. Dr. Burton understands better than anyone, that if our democracy has any hope of survival and all of its citizens any chance of full participation in it they must first learn how to reflect. We simply cannot leave this important work to those who work in private schools and at expensive universities.

That is right, Dr. Burton, liberal arts for the people. You will be missed, but your legacy will live on.

Troy D. Paino
University President
Truman State University

Web Poll

Do you think Truman State’s Alcohol Awareness Week adequately educates students about unsafe alcohol consumption?



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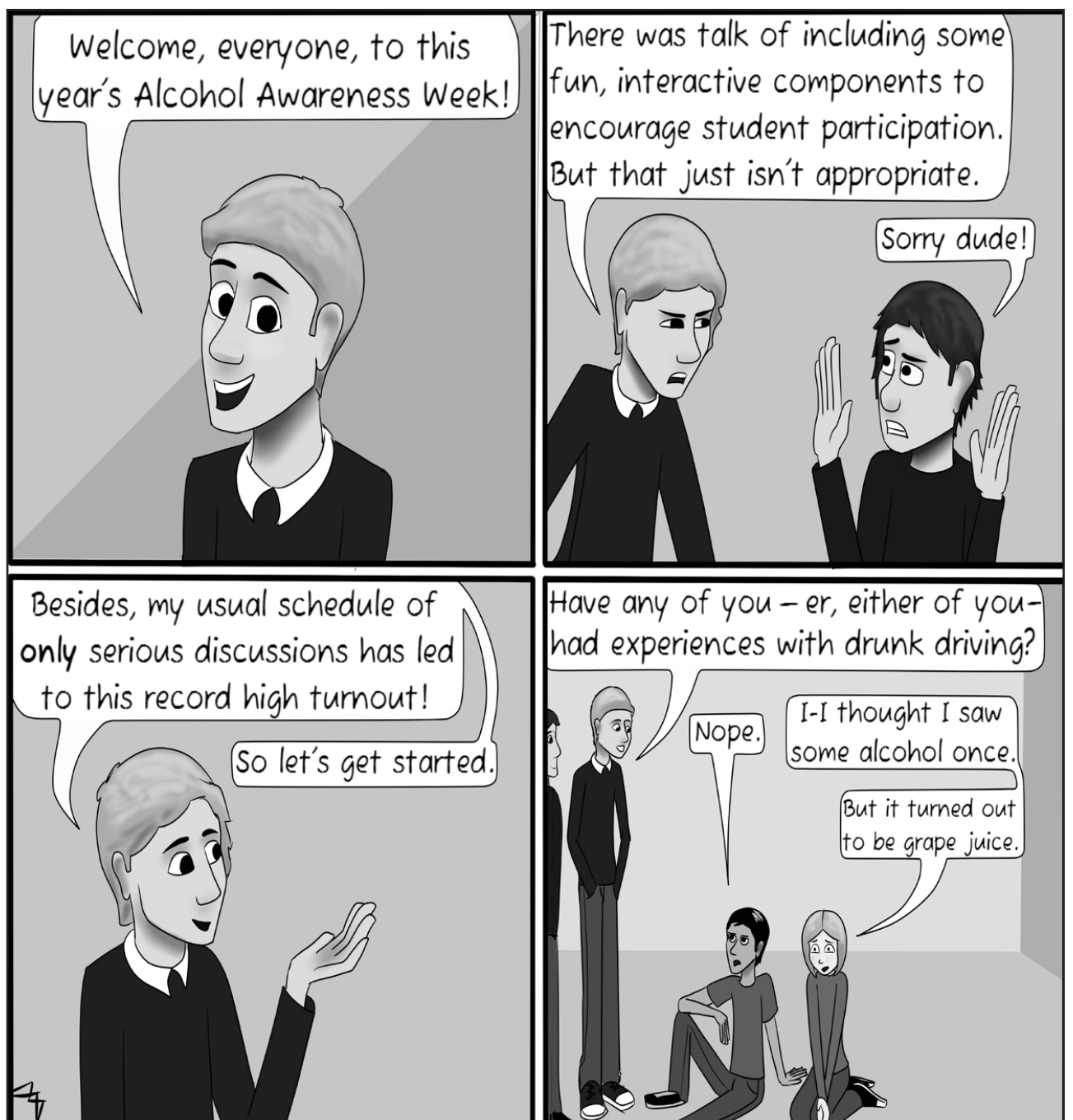
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Cartoon

By Megan Archer



Awareness week is too gimmicky



Robert Overmann

This week, Truman State Residence Life is hosting a series of alcohol awareness events.

Tuesday’s event was entitled “Portion Sizes.” When I first read the title of the event on my TruView Event section, I imagined the event would be an educational seminar by a faculty member or other professional demonstrating to students what a standard drink is, whether the liquid be beer, wine or a liquor.

Curious about the event, I clicked on the link. The event description, I quote, included “Happy Hour Tables ... Drunk Goggle Mario Kart with Mocktails ... and BAC to BAC drinks.” With a markedly different tone, a disclaimer below the event description reminded students that “Truman State University does not promote alcohol consumption on or off campus. Events are for educational purposes only.”

While I applaud Residence Life for its mission of attempting to educate students about safe alcohol consumption, Residence Life must be conscious of the message they’re sending with these events. Appealing to students’ desire to be part of the college “party culture” is counterproductive to discouraging that danger-

ous “party culture.” If Residence Life has a serious interest in discouraging students from underage or unsafe alcohol consumption, then they must promote serious educational events which reflect that.

My freshman year, I attended a Thursday evening Mocktails event at West Campus Suites. There were tables set up with soda and various mixers, along with dimmed lights, loud music and light effects. Students requested for one of the “bartenders” to make them a drink, many of them with cleverly parodied names of famous drinks. Students then enjoyed their mocktails, danced and socialized.

Conspicuously absent was any mention of safe alcohol consumption, or discouragement of underage drinking. I was stunned — Residence Life, in its attempt to discourage excessive and unsafe alcohol consumption, seemed to be sending an unadulterated message of encouragement. Those with no previous drinking experience undoubtedly wondered what they were missing, why the common denominator of the drinking culture, the intoxicant, was being so glorified. Coincidentally, many of their peers regularly consume alcohol in similar environments. Between their spiked — pun intended — curiosity and the social pressures to drink, there is no doubt some of these students who participated in Mocktails spent their Friday evening imbibing a few, or more, cocktails.

Truman students are intelligent, rational beings. We’re willing to participate in an open dialogue about the risks of alcohol consumption. I’d wager that a frank presentation about the legal risks, the health risks or the entertainment alternatives to unsafe alcohol consumption would be well-received — and would be much more

useful to those in attendance than a gimmicky event including “Drunk Goggle Mario Kart.” Even more useful, perhaps, would be an honest conversation hosted by Residence Life inviting students to voice the social pressures that they perceive surrounding alcohol consumption, along with the degree of risk and danger they think is associated with alcohol consumption.

Residence Life is fighting an uphill battle. Drinking has been associated with college in the minds of Americans for many generations. Alcohol, as a legal drug, incorrectly is perceived to be significantly less fraught with risk than illicit drugs. To me, Residence Life’s sponsoring of such events as “Mocktails” and “Drunk Goggle Mario Kart” seems to constitute a tacit acceptance of their loss.

This isn’t, however, the case. While Residence Life is not going to prevent all, or even most, of the dangerous drinking that occurs among Truman students, this isn’t cause to give up. Even if one life is spared, when it would have instead been lost during an alcohol-related car accident, or a case of alcohol poisoning, that is reason enough for Residence Life to continue to educate students about the potential dangers of alcohol consumption.

Truman students wish to learn, listen and participate in a dialogue about safe alcohol consumption. Residence Life, however, must provide students with the opportunity. Events described as “Drunk Goggle Mario Kart” are the diametric opposite of that sort of opportunity.

Robert Overmann is a junior English and biology major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, and additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the Editor-in-Chief, managing editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

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