

Editorial: Drug issues strike Rider

Current trends show that the number of drug cases as well as drug arrests has been on a steady incline over the past three years. In addition, there have been five reported incidents involving drug use in the Hill Residence Hall over the past week and a half.

It is unclear what exactly is causing these increases but there are many possible explanations. The first of these is that police have been cracking down harder on drug offenses. During the 2001-2002 school year the Lawrence Township Police Department (LPD) made seven drug arrests. In 2002-2003 the number increased to 10 and has increased further to 15 in only the first semester of this year.

These numbers seem to indicate that new security measures have made it much easier to catch drug users. One of these measures is late evening to early morning patrols by the LPD on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. These patrols greatly increase the response speed of the police to drug complaints.

In addition to the LPD's increased response time, Rider campus security has also begun responding to drug complaints in a much more timely fashion. Previously, when a complaint was made about the smell of marijuana, campus security would sometimes not respond until the smell had already dissipated. Because of this, it did not have sufficient evidence to enter several rooms.

Today, Security arrives much more quickly after they are called. With the evidence still fresh, it can easily enter suspected rooms and catch drug users. This could be one of the main reasons why such a jump in drug arrests is taking place.

On the other hand, students could simply be giving security more opportunities to catch them. Since drug arrests had been down over the previous years, drug users could have conceivably gone lax in their attempts to avoid detection.

Most drug arrests begin when someone detects the smell of burning marijuana in their hallway. While complaints had been made in previous years, their volume has never been greater than it has been this year.

This is especially important because without student complaints, campus security is powerless to act. Security is not permitted to enter student rooms without evidence of illegal activity taking place inside. While a call from a student is not enough evidence in itself, it alerts security about potential problem areas that it can investigate.

The increased complaint volume is most likely the result of careless students. It is highly unlikely that the number of drug users as well as the number of students who would complain about such activities has actually increased. However, the amount of drug complaints and arrests are both on the rise. This can be attributed to the new found lack of caution displayed by drug users.

However, neither potential cause has brought about this large increase in arrests. While faster security response times allow more room searches, it is student complaints that bring them there in the first place. Neither can take place without the other.

So while increased security measures have certainly gone a long way towards catching on-campus drug users, it is also the users themselves who have been allowing themselves to be detected. Campus security and the LPD should continue with their increased efforts to combat this problem while Rider students should be certain to continue reporting such incidents as they detect them. It is only in this way that the drug problem at Rider can truly be solved.

This weekly editorial expresses the majority opinion of The Rider News editorial board and is written by the Opinion editor.

Letters to the Editor: *The Rider News* welcomes letters on all subjects of interest to the campus community. Letters must be typed and include the name, address, phone number and signature of the author for verification. Send to *The Rider News* via e-mail (ridernews@rider.edu), campus mail, or hand deliver to Ridge House. All letters must be received by midnight Monday preceding publication. *The Rider News* reserves the right to edit all letters for space and clarity.

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Tales From Africa: A letter from Ghana

Greetings Rider! For those of you who don't know, I am spending three months volunteering and living in Cape Coast, Ghana, which is located in West Africa. I finished the course work required for graduation in December so I decided several months ago to spend the spring semester traveling and working abroad.

I arrived in Accra, Ghana last week filled with anticipation and excitement. I had been preparing for this trip for awhile (I had to get a special visa from the embassy, get several vaccinations and do research on the country and lifestyle) and was eager to jump right in. I have traveled abroad before in Europe and Israel, but never to a third world nation like Ghana.

While many of my friends questioned my motives for going and my ability to survive in Ghana for three months, I am not only here to prove them wrong, but to prove to myself that I can live anywhere and do anything.

Upon arrival, I first noticed the overwhelming heat and humidity. While all of you are probably freezing under a harsh winter, I am enjoying the beyond summer-like tropical climate that Ghana offers. So far, I have visited the capital, Accra, for a day, where my new friends took me around to several bars and a jazz club for Valentine's Day — a big deal here! I met their friends, many who went through the Peace Corps and are now expatriates and United Nations or non-governmental organization (NGO) workers in Ghana.

The next morning, we left for Cape Coast, a smaller city in the central region of the country. The drive only took us about two hours, normally a three to four hour drive with traffic, but because almost all Ghanaians attend church on Sundays, the roads were fairly clear.

Thus far, I have gotten to know my way around Cape Coast, one of the poorest cities in the country, and met many people. I live in a guest house with four other volunteers, all from the states. I also live with my boss.

I have lived as the Ghanaians do — I have eaten the local specialties, used local transportation (everyone takes taxis,



Brooke
Olster

called trotros) and even learned some Fante, which is the tribal language spoken here. Most people can speak decent English but it is very difficult to understand them with their accents.

The biggest thing to see in Ghana is not the wild animals (sorry, there are no safaris), but the culture. The Ghanaians are a happy, relaxed and open group of people that welcome all visitors. Everyone is extremely friendly. People come up to me all the time to ask how I like Ghana and they want to know about where I come from. I already received a marriage proposal, which is not uncommon. The Ghanaians are fascinated by Americans.

Some other major differences that I have encountered include the lack of running water (yes, I've learned to take baths in a single bucket of water). Time also moves very slowly here — people are just not in a rush to do anything and this frustrates us Americans, who are accustomed to our full schedules. The people are not money driven and instead place value on their families and cultural activities, like drumming and dancing.

I was also horrified, but not shocked, to see the extreme poverty that most Ghanaians live in everyday. Gutters full of sewage run throughout the streets and wild goats and chickens cross the streets freely. Everyone carries everything on their heads, even if it's only a small can of soda. People also dress very nicely here, even in the heat.

Most of all, I miss my cell phone, late night runs to Crystal Diner, driving my car, high speed internet, ice cream, air conditioning, showering and my friends, but right now, there is no other place I would rather be.

This Week in History:

February 21, 1848 — Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publish *The Communist Manifesto*.

February 22, 1968 — North Vietnamese halt the Tet Offensive.

February 25, 1964 — Muhammad Ali defeats Sonny Liston for the world heavyweight championship.