Editorial: Vandalism epidemic

Halloween night brought with it more problems than the infamous Mischief Night this year at Rider. The recent string of vandalism that has plagued the Lawrenceville campus since the beginning of the semester has only gotten worse. Vehicles seem to be getting the bulk of it. There have been reports of slashed convertible tires and even a car being set on fire. Windows all over the campus from the residence halls to sororities are being smashed. Exit signs have been slashed and stolen. Even the giant pumpkin that was part of a contest in Daly's was stolen and later found in pieces. Security Briefs, although sometimes humorous, really have some sad stories behind them. The number of incidents is not the most alarming thing. It is really more the malicious nature of the crimes. With no apparent plans to take any action, what is Rider going to do about this?

People who are the victims of these senseless crimes all ask the same question. Why? What brings a person to ruin someone else's property without any motive? For the most part, it’s not personal. These crimes are a result of boredom. Alcohol could be one thing to blame, but in some cases it’s just stupidity or malice.

Boredom seems to be more of an issue this year because of the lack of parties. Without anywhere to go, students are wandering the campus doing ridiculous things. Having fewer parties this year is also affecting how many students actually stay on campus during the weekend. One idea to reduce this mass exodus is to expand the Barr Luedke Center (BLC). Maybe installing a pool table or some video games outside the pub would make the BLC more student-oriented.

Since Rider can obviously not control the way some people’s minds work, the administration and Security should be taking action. One of the biggest problems we have is that the consequences are not taken seriously. The punishments at Rider are often taken as a joke because they are not at all consistent. Sometimes, things are left go because it would be too much work to report them. Many of those who have received three strikes for alcohol have either gotten out of it on appeal or simply slipped through the cracks.

Vandalism in residence halls often goes unsolved and, by extension, unpunished. When a door is broken or when a fire exit sign is destroyed, the whole building or possibly a floor or wing is billed. This is a logical thing to do, but it isn’t making enough of an impact. Perhaps raising the fines so that each person has to pay more would make a difference. If this is done, students might be encouraged to keep their eyes open and report things to their resident advisor. But to some people, money is of no consequence as their parents pay the bills, so it might not matter. In addition, raising the fines may not be fair to the innocent.

The administration has to talk to the average student. The problem with this is that the average student would not attend any open forums. Students are not willing to make the effort to change anything, but they will very happily complain. How can things change if nobody wants to take the initiative? Maybe students could be contacted through e-mail or polled through the residence halls.

The immediate solution, however, is up to Security. Maybe having more lights could make a difference. Video cameras in the parking lot are always a good idea, but the cost could be a problem. In addition, cars not in the view of the camera would be more likely to be targeted.

The violence has to be stopped somehow, and it’s going to take everyone’s cooperation. We should take care of one another.

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 Centennial House. All letters must be received by midnight the Monday preceding publication. The Rider News reserves the right to edit all letters for space and clarity.

Quote of the Week:

“Any event, once it has occurred, can be made to appear inevitable by a competent historian.”

— Lee Simonson

By the Editorial Board:

Results of Halloween horror

Rider is suffering from a vicious cycle. There has been a sharp increase in violence and vandalism on campus, leading to stricter restrictions on social events — particularly on the Greeks — which gives students less to do, which in turn leads to more violence and vandalism.

Several fraternities have been on social probation this year, which is one of the reasons that there is less to do on campus. They have had to be careful because there is a possible threat of being thrown off campus.

The crackdown that resulted from incidents like the Phi Kappa Tau and Interclubcultural Greek Council events has had negative social consequences. We saw them at work just last week. It is sad that on Halloween, a day that is supposed to be a fun tradition, certain students can ruin it by breaking other people’s property. Without the crackdown, there would have been more events and people on campus, and perhaps the vandalism would not have been so bored that they saw off campus.

Even though the lack of campus parties and security being too lax may be blamed for vandalism, the bottom line is that we are all human beings and have no reason to harm each other’s property. There is no reason and no excuse.

Slitting a classmate’s tires, defacing a neighbor’s door and knocking off somebody’s side-view mirror all seem like pathetic, desperate moments of entertainment for dull-minded people who can think of no better way to spend their time.

Many vandals likely continue their malicious acts on campus because they feel the “rush” of the act is well worth the minor penalty they will receive from Community Standards. Many violations are met with fines that are merely billed to one’s account. However, when a $200 fine for a broken exit sign is divided amongst 25 residents on a wing and tacked on to a $30,000 bill, it can be difficult to notice.

Harsher punishments should be instituted for all campus policy violations and student appeals should be taken more seriously. Policy violators should not be able to win appeals as easily as they can. After all, Rider is an institution of learning and acts like binge drinking, drug abuse and vandalism distract from the educational atmosphere.

One could argue that even if one is involved in activities and makes an effort to actively participate in events on campus, this place is dead after midnight. When people in their early 20s are restless and roaming about, things happen. Having a party on this campus has become more dangerous for organizations than Russian roulette.

Because there is nothing to do and the party scene is dead, people leave and come back late, and usually drunk. This leads to a lot of intoxicated people walking through parking lots, which leads to a lot of mirrors hanging from their wires. It sounds sad, but one of the things that will lead to a halt of this type of behavior is more social activities.