

University of Virginia

Celebrates 21st Birthdays, Follows Up on Project

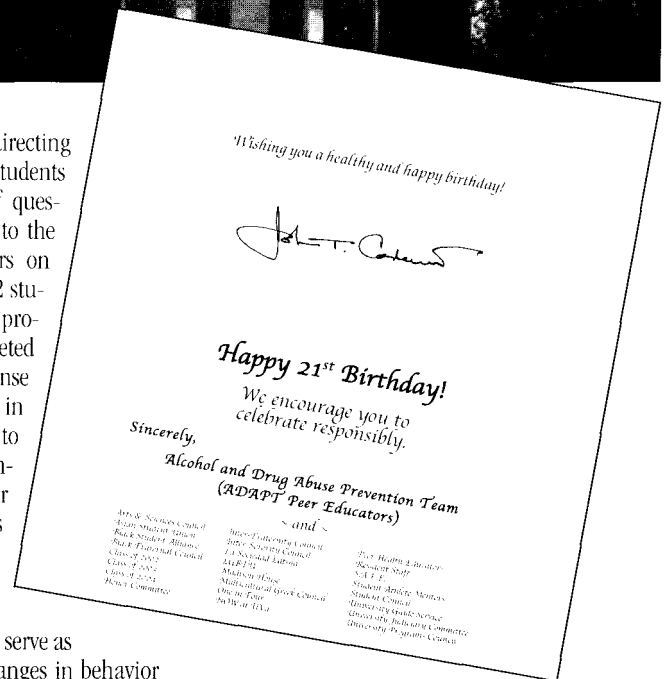
Alcohol Issues

In light of recent hospitalizations and deaths across the country involving students consuming high-risk amounts of alcohol on their 21st birthday, the University Advisory Committee on Substance Abuse, in conjunction with the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Team (ADAPT) peer educators, developed a health education birthday card for students about to turn 21. The purpose of the 21st Birthday Card Project is to reduce the incidence of alcohol poisoning and mortality associated with high-risk drinking on students' 21st birthdays. The program is modeled after similar initiatives at Michigan State University and the California State University at Pomona. The card design features a cover picture of the Rotunda and an inner message from President Casteen and several student organizations asking students to enjoy a "safe" birthday.

A UVA Parents Program grant enhanced the 21st Birthday Card Project by funding wallet-size inserts with gender-specific Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) information, effects of different BAC levels, responsible drinking tips, alcohol poisoning information, and emergency resource numbers. ADAPT members pre-tested the birthday card and alcohol poisoning card using intercept surveys on the "Lawn" at UVA. Over 93% of those who responded said they would "somewhat" to "very much" appreciate receiving the card, and

over 75% indicated that they would save the informational insert.

ADAPT began mailing birthday cards to all students turning 21 on or after December 1, 2000. Cards were mailed one to two weeks before a student's birthday. Students who turned 21 after December 1 received an e-mail in April directing them to an on-line survey. Students were asked to complete a brief questionnaire about their reactions to the card and about their behaviors on their 21st birthday. A total of 332 students who turned 21 after the program was implemented completed the survey (about a 33% response rate). Students who turned 21 in November 2000 were also asked to complete an on-line survey concerning their behaviors on their 21st birthday. Fifty-one students (about a 20% response rate) who turned 21 before the program was implemented completed the survey. These students serve as a baseline group to indicate changes in behavior as a result of the birthday card program.



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Survey results suggest that the card program did have a positive effect. Students drank an average of 9.24 drinks on their 21st birthday before the birthday card program was implemented. After the program was implemented, the average number of drinks consumed on a student's 21st birthday decreased to 7.4 drinks. The table below provides a comparison of behaviors among students who turned 21 before and after the program was implemented.

Comparison of Drinking Behaviors

Students Who Turned 21 Before and After the Birthday Card Program was Implemented

	Turned 21 Before Program (N = 51)	Turned 21 After Program (N = 332)
Did NOT drink on 21 st birthday	17.65%	14.16%
Did NOT attempt the Corner Crawl	88.24%	88.75%
Average number of drinks consumed among all students who turned 21	9.2	7.4
Average number of drinks consumed among those who drank anything on their 21 st birthday	11.22	8.58
Median number of drinks consumed among all students who turned 21	8	5
Normative distribution	45.10% drank 0-7	59.63% drank 0-7
Perception of how much the average UVA student consumes on their 21 st birthday (average)	10.79	10.48

Budget Summary

A summary of the original and revised budget is below:

- Printing BAC/alcohol poisoning cards (\$1,102.67)
- Website development for program evaluation and web design tools/programs (\$1,700 if university resources cannot cover for free)
- Printing 3,000 birthday cards and envelopes and purchasing 970 stamps (\$1,896.30)

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Students also indicate a high level of satisfaction with the card and insert. They also believe the program should be continued.

	Percent who answered "Yes"
Appreciated receiving the card	82.4%
Saved the insert	60.4%
Learned new information about alcohol poisoning	44.7%
Discussed the card with friends or relatives	73.5%
Believe program should be continued	67.1%

Be a Part of the Solution

Student Writing Competition On Alcohol Abuse Issues

TOPIC: *How would you define high risk drinking in your campus community and what approaches would you recommend to best address this issue?*

AWARDS: The awards are made to individual students, not the college or university. Each prize will be awarded to the writers who best express their viewpoints on the topic of high risk drinking.

One First Prize - \$2,000

Four Second Prizes - \$1,000 each

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Go to www.iatf.org to obtain the student entry form that must accompany your application.

