

# Athletic commitments push student athletes to sobriety

by Marie O'Connor

As a high schooler it's easy to believe that most students drink alcohol or do drugs, and this may be due to the hype surrounding these activities.

Stories about crazy parties over the weekend are way more interesting than stories about friends hanging out sober.

This doesn't mean drinking or smoking somehow makes someone more interesting, but the excitement surrounding these illicit activities makes them seem more prevalent than they actually are.

*"I choose to stay sober during season because I don't want to jeopardize all the hard work I put into being in the best physical shape I can be."*

According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, only 38% of high schoolers in Illinois have had alcohol in the past thirty days. Against common beliefs, the majority of New Trier students remain sober.

Some of these students are athletes who choose to remain sober all year or specifically during their sports season.

The Athletic and Extracurricular Code is clear that "the purchase, possession, delivery or distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, a controlled substance, other illegal mood-altering and/or performance enhancing drugs or chemicals, or any substance used to obtain an altered mental state or 'high,' will result in "disciplinary measures that may include the immediate revocation of my privilege to participate

in the extracurricular program."

New Trier sports can be intense and for many students getting an athletic scholarship is too important to jeopardize by breaking the NT athletic code.

This consequence is specified in the extracurricular guide, "code violations may also result in loss of privileges in celebratory functions, recognition dinners, scholarships, and/or awards."

One senior athlete who wished to remain anonymous said, "I choose to stay sober during season because I don't want to jeopardize all the hard work I put into being in the best physical shape I can."

He continued by disagreeing with the oft-held belief that alcohol has zero influence on athletic ability: "even though people think that performance will not change if they don't stay sober, I believe that our bodies at our age should not be taking in harsh things that will stunt our improvement."

This athlete expresses an issue that many high schoolers don't consider. Teenagers consider themselves to be in top physical fitness, but alcohol can significantly diminish this fitness and physical health.

According to NCAA.org, "excessive alcohol use can lead to loss of balance and coordination, reduced reaction time, and increased appetite.

The decline in cognitive function can lead to an increase in sports-related injuries. Furthermore, studies have shown that regular consumption of alcohol can depress the immune system and slow the body's ability to heal."

Another anonymous New Trier athlete said that she, "thinks alcohol restricts my performance. There's the physical aspect, since partying the night before a hard practice will

make you perform slower and drinking regularly throughout the season will take away from your potential."

She continued, "There's also a mental aspect. I think focusing on my sport and what I need to accomplish to achieve my goals during season can only happen if I stay sober."

Students can only do so much with their time and the binge drinking that occurs at party wears out both the mind and the body.

The body can only take so much, and expecting to be able to wake up the next day and thrive on the playing field just adds to the wear and tear.

The sportsmanlike environment is also mirrored in this athlete's commitment to stay sober.

"My sport and my teammates are way too important to me to risk that," she said.

Staying sober also isn't just for athletes, and "sober season" can be implemented for many different reasons.

A senior boy, has to remain sober for health reasons and said, "being sober at parties is horrible at first, but then you eventually get used to it."

He continued by saying that parties can still be enjoyed without being intoxicated: "Being sober around drunk people still makes you feel good, even if you're not [drunk]."

The anonymous female runner agreed, "Not this season, but in the past I've attended parties where there's alcohol during my season. I don't really do it often just because there is still a risk factor, but the couple of times I've done it it's actually been kind of fun. I'll usually just go with some friends of mine who are doing sober season and it's pretty easy to have a good time if you just accept that you're staying sober and roll with it."

## Non-partiers and homebodies, you're not alone in your sobriety

by Sam Blanc

"It's not a party without drinking." That's something I heard a few weeks ago, echoing behind me on the P stairwell as I traipsed down to lunch. Is it true? Is party culture at New Trier so synonymous with the use of illicit substances that there can be no sober social circle?

But it seems like there are plenty of New Trier students keeping their distance from drugs and alcohol.

"I have enough trouble with school and sports as it is. I just feel like there's so much to lose if you choose to drink, and I don't think I could forgive myself if I screwed myself over for a little bit of fun," a junior said.

Fear seems to be a major factor in convincing those who abstain from alcohol to do so.

"Drinking is okay in theory," a sophomore said. "but I don't do it because I'm afraid that if I start drinking, I'll lose my ability to tell myself to stop."

Not only is the fear of arrest a factor, but also the fear of worsening grades, parental disapproval, and self-destruction.

Sometimes, however, objections are even simpler. "I'm not a part of the party scene because I just don't want to be around drugs or my fellow students drinking," freshman Kelsey Carroll said. "It just makes me uncomfortable. I don't even really like talking about it."

Disliking drugs and alco-

hol, conceptually and in practice, were other popular deterrents.

An anonymous senior admitted, "I didn't really like it the one time I drank. I felt gross and kind of muggy. It was like walking through water where your limbs just move a little slower than you want them to."

Still substance abuse seems to be a prominent topic of conversation when it comes to discussing a party. "All I hear from my friends about these parties are drugs and alcohol," an anonymous junior said.

*"I don't think I've ever done drugs—unless you count the time our Dungeons and Dragons characters did shrooms"*

"It just seems dumb to me. If you have to numb yourself with drugs just to have fun, it probably wasn't that good a party in the first place."

"A few of my friends invited me to smoke weed in the woods one time, but that's not really my definition of a party," junior Maddy Bluman said. So what is the point of a party if not to consume excesses of drugs and alcohol in a half-lit basement?

"I do ACT prep," said Bluman only semi-sarcastically.

Similarly, an anonymous freshman said, "I don't have time to party. I've got to finish my homework."

While these may be slight

exaggerations in terms of the time commitment necessary for school work, students do tend to agree that academic achievement and time management work better when one is not intoxicated.

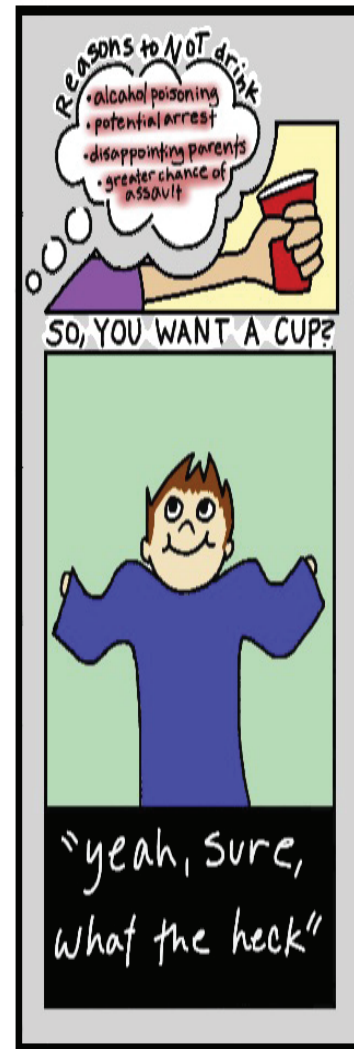
According to sophomore Rhea Mech, chilling out with friends can be just as fun as a crazy party. "My typical Friday or Saturday night consists of three important things: pizza, fuzzy socks, and whatever TV series I'm interested at the time," Mech said.

Senior Elena Fiegen had similar ideas: "I normally have dinner and hang out with a group of friends every Friday after Martial Arts Club. We have fun just being with each other and eating Chinese food and watching dumb TV."

Not wanting to get involved in drugs or alcohol, as well as being a self-declared introvert, Fiegen stays away from the party scene. "I don't think I would enjoy it, and I prefer to stay with my friends who wouldn't either," she said.

So maybe drugs and alcohol seem to hold have a pretty high place in New Trier's party culture, but that doesn't necessarily make them the end-all be-all of the high-school social life. It seems like there are plenty of people who are doing their own thing, and doing it completely sober.

"I don't think I've ever done drugs—unless you count the time our Dungeons and Dragons characters did shrooms," senior Nathan Beckman said, "but I'm still pretty happy."



by Sam Blanc



## Peer pressure a reality faced by many students

by Charlie Burton

Walking out of school on Friday you can easily hear students murmuring to each other, "Let's go get wasted" almost as it's an expectation. Not everyone at New Trier drinks, but with all the talk about getting drunk on Friday afternoon and Saturday nights there is a clear pressure for students to indulge in the Devil's nectar.

Senior James Rowland says he

feels the pressure to drink almost every weekend, "A lot of people at my lunch table just talk about finding ways they can get drunk this weekend or stories about the previous weekends."

Many students agreed that a reason they drink is because all of their friends do and they feel almost as if they are expected to.

Senior Daniel Hauser said, "Sometimes I just want to watch a movie or play a game, but all my friends want to do is get wasted."

The pressure to drink from friends is strong enough, but at a party it increases tenfold.

A student that chooses to remain anonymous claimed that, "it is nearly impossible to go to a party without being yelled at to drink. I once went to a party where all I wanted to do was talk to people, but every five minutes some drunk friend would walk up and ask me to take a shot."

And even when the student caved in, there was even more pressure to drink afterwards, "I thought it would stop after I had a few drinks but everyone just kept pestering me and telling me to get even more drunk. At one point someone even tried to force open my mouth and pour vodka down my throat."

Pressure to drink is also not restricted to upperclassmen.

Sophomore Gavin Randle says he also feels pressure to drink: "Some people started drinking freshman year that by sophomore year they are all trying to get all their friends to drink as well. They act

as if they are doing you a big favor by trying to get you to intoxicated."

A large part of the problem comes from the idea that everyone at New Trier drinks which couldn't be further from the truth.

"Everyone acts like it's okay to drink because they think everyone does it," said Hauser, "and when you're at party it does feel like everyone does because you're surrounded by it."

*"At one point someone even tried to force open my mouth and pour vodka down my throat"*

That leaves the question of why do people at New Trier feel the need to drink every weekend.

One senior who wished to remain anonymous said, "if I'm not getting drunk on weekend nights, then I view that as a bad weekend. There honestly just isn't enough to do in the suburbs so the only thing to do on the weekend nights is get drunk."

Another part of the problem is that people thinks that because they are breaking the law that drinking is cool in some way. "Everyone thinks drinking somehow makes them cool. People tell drinking stories like its the most amazing thing that's ever happened."

Despite the fact that drinking occurs at New Trier, there are many ways to avoid it. Rowland says he simply stays away from people who drink alcohol, "I know it's against the law and wrong to do so I just choose to avoid going to parties with alcohol."

Many students who go to parties say that the best way to get out of peer pressure is to simply make up excuses.

An anonymous source claims that, "whenever I go to a party and people ask me to drink I always just tell them I need to wake up early in the morning or that my parents would ground me if I got caught."