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TAMING THE HUSKIES

Reaching out UConn police aim to prevent rowdyism

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Editor's note: This is the second story in a two-part series on how the University of Connecticut's party scene has changed and how local residents and police are coping. By COREY SIPE
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STORRS - With more wild parties occurring off-campus at single-family homes, University of Connecticut officials admit the impact of bad behavior is reaching beyond traditional boundaries. As a result, **UConn** police this year have made prevention of rowdyism as much a priority as enforcement. When classes began this semester, police were out in full force to help educate students to make the right decisions rather than strike out with the law. "Our approach is to work with the community on educating them to what is acceptable behavior," **UConn** Police Department Chief Hans Rynhart said, adding the newest initiative is the "Bright Futures" campaign, part of the department's Community Outreach Program. Recent high school graduates participating in the university's Connecticut Center for Academic Programs (ConnCAP) this past summer gave Bright Futures positive reviews. (UC officers, Page 4) (Continued from Page 1) ConnCAP is a program intended to give high schoolers a taste of college before starting classes in the fall. Based on that success, Bright Futures was expanded to the full campus to welcome back upperclassmen and welcome freshmen who did not participate in ConnCAP. The program manifested itself on a recent sunny day on Fairfield Way across from Gampel Pavilion, where **UConn** Police Capt. Magdalena "Maggie" Silva stood next to an imitation black road with a thick yellow center line. She was asking students to put on "drunk goggles" before participating in a simulation. The drunk goggles utilize vision distorting lenses and makes the student feel intoxicated. She then had students go through exercises, like walking the yellow line, that drivers must go through if police suspect they were driving under the influence. "The students ask a lot of questions on the sobriety tests, but nobody is preaching to them," she said, adding she has enter and exit surveys for students to fill out so the department can learn what students enjoy the most. In what is known to police as the "walk-and-turn test," drivers suspected of DUI must walk a straight line, walking heel to toe, then turn around and walk heel to toe back. Silva said one student doing the simulation earlier in the day not only failed to walk in a straight line, but turned sideways and almost walked into the gate at the end of the fake road. Inside a green tent, **UConn** police officer Ketan Padalia allowed pairs of students to play a Mario Kart Wii game without the goggles, noting how the game is similar to driving a motor vehicle. Mario Kart is a go-kart-style racing video game by Nintendo where players can compete against each other. At the mid-way point, Padalia asked the students to put on the goggles, showing them how their driving skills decreased, simulating how alcohol affects individuals behind the wheel. "Judgment is the first thing to go," he said, adding those who drink and get behind the wheel often hug the yellow line, which can cause a head-on collision with oncoming traffic. Kathryn Overturf, a **UConn** graduate who now works for the Community Outreach Program, said there has been "very positive feedback" from students. "We made it as fun as we can and educate too," she said. Her part of the simulation included two unmarked liquid bottles simulated to represent alcohol. She laid two sets of Solo cups on the table and poured liquid in the cup and asked students how many shots was poured into the cup. "Two-thirds would guess wrong," she said. The program is intended to be relevant as the university's code of conduct extends beyond just the campus to off-campus areas as well. In simplest terms, if you're bad off campus, you're punished as if you were bad on campus." I had a friend who

was a victim. The other driver was drinking and she got into an accident and both of them got hurt," **UConn** senior Warisha Iqbal said after participating in the simulation exercises. Iqbal said she is hopeful the exercises will encourage students to make responsible decisions when it comes to alcohol. By the end of the day, about 30 students took part in the three simulations, which took about 15 minutes to complete, including the estimated time to take the exit survey at each of the three stations. Silva said some students stopped and asked about the event, but did not have time to spare as they rushed off to class. Despite that, students thanked the department for thinking of creative ways to get the important message across, Silva said. Based on feedback from these students, **UConn** is hoping this program can continue so Huskies can make responsible decisions, not just in college, but after they graduate as well. Ikka Tanaka, left, and Ben Paul, center, both University of Connecticut seniors, play Mario Kart with 'drunk goggles' on during an educational program set up by the **UConn** Police Department on Fairfield Way recently. **UConn** police officer Ketan Padalia, right, watches and explains what happens when you are drunk and you try to drive. Students were put through various test with the goggles to show the level of impairment versus without and noted the marked differences. Roxanne Pandolfi

Ikki Tanaka, a University of Connecticut senior, tries to walk the yellow line with 'drunk goggles' on during an educational feature set up by the **UConn** Police Department on Fairfield Way recently. **UConn** police Sgt. Jason Hyland watches and holds out a hand in case the student falls. Students were put through various tests while wearing the goggles to show the level of impairment versus without and noted the marked differences. The project is part of a police campaign aimed at educating students to prevent rowdy behavior. Roxanne Pandolfi

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