



STUDENTS who would give only their first names of Mike, left, and Andrew puff on cigars in a parking lot behind student housing along East Street during the party.



BLOOMSBURG UNIVERSITY student Autumn Miller wears a military helmet at the Block Party on Saturday. She said she was wearing it as a fashion statement, not for protection.



STUDENTS dance to music from a live band in a parking lot behind student housing along East Street during the annual Bloomsburg University Block Party on Saturday. More photos, pages 1 and 7. PHOTOS BY BILL HUGHES

The cautious steer clear

Some students avoid party for fear of trouble

By BEN TIMBERLAKE
Press Enterprise Writer

BLOOMSBURG — Some Bloomsburg University students purposely stayed away from Block Party on Saturday, saying they wanted to avoid trouble.

Lorianne Kelley and Lyndsey Letnaunchyn, both 19-year-old freshmen, said they might wander downtown for dinner and check out the parties.

But as a nursing major, Kelley, Hershey, says she can't afford to get a citation for underage drinking because it could hurt her ability to graduate.

So she was chilling out on a blanket in BU's quad, studying about a hypothetical perfect college for a philosophy course, while Letnaunchyn, Boyertown, and another friend listened to music.

Last year, police handed out 153 citations, but according to BU officials, most of those were given to non-students. BU students accounted for 36 of the citations, officials said.

The university has 8,500 students, so just 4 percent were cited at Block Party in 2007. That means that 1 in every 236 students was cited.

Across the quad, Jenna Weller, 19, and Megan Guthrie, 20, said they got their fill of Block Party last year.

It was a good time, they say, but the partying got out of hand when people started throwing beer bottles.

They also worried about being cited for underage drinking.

So they tossed a Frisbee, then planned to hit the gym.

"Something to keep us out of trouble," said Weller, who hails from Douglasville, near Pottstown.

Guthrie, Westchester, said the two sophomores would probably watch a movie at home later on, most likely the tearjerker "The Notebook."

Familiar scene

Guthrie spotted a number of families she figured were on campus for the universi-

ty's open house.

Bill and Angela Smyth, 52 and 53, were a bit concerned as they drove through town and saw people drinking on sidewalks and carrying cases of beer around.

But it didn't change their opinion of the school, nor how they feel about their son attending BU. Andrew Smyth, 16, a high school junior in Stroudsburg, has just begun visiting schools, he said.

Angela Smyth noted that she saw plenty of the same kind of partying when she attended Penn State.

"If he comes here, he's not allowed off campus," Bill Smyth joked.

The party-goers seemed peaceful, he noted, and their campus tour guide emphasized that festivities on this scale happen just once a year.

Playing it safe

Three sophomore women hit BU's recreation center for some racquetball in the afternoon.

Block party is no fun for people younger than 21 because the potential to get in trouble is so great, said Janelle Hicks, 20, Lemoine.

She and friends Megan Williams-Brinks, 20, Allentown, and Julie Meikrantz, 19, Warminster, planned to avoid the party all night.

They would see plenty of drunk people in the halls of their dorm later on, Hicks noted.

Hicks' friend Dan Sonski, 20, was visiting from Harrisburg. Though many of the Block Party revelers are reputedly from out of town, Sonski wasn't interested in hitting the shindig.

Empty library

There were 16 patrons in Andrus Library, not all of them BU students.

But that's typical of a Saturday, said circulation desk student workers.

Elizabeth Womer, 21, a junior from Bloomsburg, and Becky Keefer, 18, a freshman

from Berwick, say they didn't mind being on duty until mid-afternoon, because they wouldn't be going to Block Party anyway.

And even though it seems that most of their classmates do go, there's no stigma in avoiding it, they said.

No party animal

Lorraine Schwartz, 27, Bloomsburg, was studying how our brains interpret sounds for her psycholinguistics course. Schwartz, a non-traditional student, was preparing for a test on Monday.

A few of her friends tried to coax her to revel with them, but Schwartz resisted. "I'm too old for that," she said.

Chuck Brightbill, who turns 21 on Tuesday, said he might take a break from studying to take in the spectacle on Saturday night. But for no more than an hour. Then it would be back to his apartment to study for an anatomy test on Monday and a chemistry test on Tuesday.

Brightbill, an exercise science sophomore from Pine Grove, said he felt pressure to go to Block Party but that he is more concerned with maintaining good grades.

Besides, he said, "I'm not a big party animal."

Out of the system

Several foreign exchange students took advantage of the sunny day, which hit 88 degrees at about 4 p.m., to visit Town Park for the first time.

Drinking for the sake of drinking doesn't appeal to Louise Pedersen, 22, Denmark. In her country, people can drink legally at age 15, she explained, so teenagers get their wild partying out of their systems.

"We don't have the late-drinking culture," she said.

People appeared to be having a good time, observed Line Sinding, 25, also from Denmark. But Sinding, Pedersen and their friend Hanna Kuoppala, 27, Finland, didn't care to join in, they said.



A STUDENT who declined to give his name drinks beer from a hollow plastic bat during a game of Dizzy Bat during the annual Bloomsburg University Block Party on Saturday.

It's location, location, menu for vendors

BLOOMSBURG — Kevin Konicki didn't sell a bag of popcorn until 2 in the afternoon yesterday in his Kettle Korn booth on Lightstreet Road.

But within two hours, Argentina LaFata said she sold more than 15 slices of pizza at Original Italian Pizza's stand in the parking lot of East Street.

Sales were largely a matter of location and selection on Saturday for the vendors who signed up to feed hungry partyers.

With no party permits issued for Lightstreet Road and Fetterman Avenue, crowds there were smaller, despite the seven food vendors lined up along the road. Konicki of the Wilkes-Barre area said it didn't help that Saturday was a hot day. "Not too many people want popcorn on a day like today."

He said he might consider coming back for another Block Party to sell food, but he'd come back with a different menu.

For LaFata, she said it

SAMPLE THE SOUVENIR SHIRTS

BLOOMSBURG — Many of Saturday's party-goers wore T-shirts commemorating Block Party 2008. Here are some examples:

■ "Enjoy it because after college, it's called alcoholism."

■ A T-shirt with a picture of Mario from Super Mario Brothers carrying a case of Keystone Light, with the slogan "Getting Super Smashed since

1839." A street sign in the background points the way to Bloomsburg, Danville and "Blackout City"

■ "You can always miss a class ... You can never relive a party."

■ "Supersize me" with a picture of a beer cup and a keg.

■ A camouflage T-shirt with the slogan "Draft Beer, not People."

By Peter Kendron

seemed like a good idea to set up a stand across the street from OIP so partyers didn't have to cross the street.

Frank's Famous Food of Mount Carmel had all its bases covered. It had one stand set up on Lightstreet Road that was fairly busy,

one on Fetterman Avenue that attracted no crowd for most of the day and one in the parking lot at East Street that had a line at times.

On Lightstreet Road, Deb Worhach said she saw business pick up after lunchtime.

By Peter Kendron



POLICE move students from a Bloomsburg University Block Party area behind student housing along East Street in Bloomsburg on Saturday.

PHOTOS BY BILL HUGHES



A CROWD outside 398 East St. stands by a sign that reads "you honk we drink" during the party.