

Drugs

high school also has some drug awareness programs.

"We offer services through the counseling center, and also have a group called Natural Helpers who try to listen to problems students may have, including substance abuse," she says. "We also have the drug dogs, on a random basis."

Sandra Parker director of secondary education for the College Station Independent School District, says sniffer dogs have helped at A&M Consolidated.

"Based on my personal observation, the number of alerts by sniffer dogs has declined," she says. "The dogs are not finding as many drugs now. That may not mean the kids aren't doing drugs as much, but it does mean they are keeping them off campus, which is a start."

Parker says the school hasn't done a comprehensive study as to the number of drug users on campus, or of the sale of drugs on campus.

"Kids are usually smarter than that," she says. "Since no one has gotten caught, we have no way of proving that it happens."

At Bryan High School, officials refused to comment about any drug problems in the school.

All educational and knowledge-imparting programs aside, drug use is a big business. BIG BUSINESS. A lot of people use drugs, whether they know the chemical formulas or not.

One A&M student who prefers to remain anonymous says she occasionally will smoke marijuana or do some cocaine, but it's really no big deal.

"I went to a high school where a lot of the students had a lot of money, and drugs was just something to blow it on," she says. "First it was marijuana, and then cocaine. But it wasn't like it was a big deal. Everybody did it, cheerleaders and football players, all kind of people. And it was more like an occasion thing. Like we would do it on trips, or at dances, but everybody didn't do it every day."

"Since I've been in college, I really don't do it all that much. Sometimes it's around, but once I do it, I'm really not much fun. After one hit, all I can think about is doing it all night. That's all I want to do, and all I can talk about is taking another hit. So I have to keep it under control."

Another student who also requested anonymity has worked at several clubs in the area and says he thinks a lot of students go out high on drugs.

"I would always see a number of people who would get high on drugs at home before they went out, so they wouldn't have to spend a lot of money on drinks," he says. "They would drink water or juice, but you could tell they were high on something."

However, the world of drugs is an illegal one. If you didn't know

television goes, there is a different cop every night fighting crime, which often includes drug dealers. And in Bryan-College Station, law enforcement officers are working just as hard.

"Drug dealing is not something to be taken lightly," says Sergeant Rick Stewart, an officer in the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Possession of drugs in the penalty group one, like cocaine, is a second degree felony. For possession of less than 28 grams, or 1 ounce, you can be confined for two to 20 years and can receive a maximum fine of \$10,000. For 28 grams to less than 100 grams, the sentence is five to 99 years, or life confinement, and a maximum fine of \$50,000. For possession of over 400 grams, the penalty is 10-99 years and a maximum fine of \$100,000.

But if you not only possess the drug, but also deliver it to someone else, the penalties are a bit stiffer, especially in the area of fines.

"Delivery of a drug is a first degree felony," Stewart says. "For delivery of up to 28 grams of coke you could get five to 99 years in confinement and a maximum fine of \$20,000. For 28 to 200 grams the confinement sentence is the same, but the maximum fine is upped to \$50,000."

And as the amount of the drug increases, so do the penalties. Stewart says delivery of 200 to 400 grams gets you 10 to 99 years in confinement and a maximum fine of \$100,000 and

to 99 years and a maximum fine of \$250,000. Whew.

And the penalties are the same for adults and minors.

"There is no difference between minors or adults," Stewart says. "If you are 16 or 17 years old there is a good possibility that you will be tried as an adult. Sometimes the courts will lower the age to 15. Oftentimes however, younger offenders are probated."

Stewart says the law doesn't state you can't probate offenders, but that maybe it should.

"What needs to be written into the law is that there is no probation," Stewart says. "That is how the law was set up to begin with."

So what about drugs in the Bryan-College Station area? Is there a problem? Stewart says yes, there is.

"Every six months we compile physical statistics for the Bryan area," he says. "In the last six-month period we had 337 reports of drug-related incidents. Sixty-one persons were arrested, and there were 94 charges, which means there were multiple charges."

And if you thought drugs weren't big business, consider the figures for the Bryan-College Station area.

"We seized 1,623 kilograms of marijuana during this period, with a street value of \$2,435,565," Stewart says. "We seized 274 grams of

value of \$27,435, \$233 grams of cocaine with a street value of \$23,300, and 110 dosages of ecstasy with a street value of \$2,750 and 105 dosages of depressants, with a street value of \$2,100. All totalled, we seized \$2,491,286 worth of drugs."

Unfortunately, Stewart says the numbers aren't going down.

"The numbers are always increasing," Stewart says. "The number of arrests are down this time, but there seems to be more and more drugs to seize. For that reason, the department is starting a new approach. We are concentrating on the organizational structure rather than the dealers in the street."

Stewart says this approach requires infiltration of the organizations, which takes a lot of time.

"Some of our operations take as long as three to five years," he says.

Stewart also says the violence and destruction seen on television police shows isn't very realistic.

"We don't allow an officer to kill somebody or damage a lot of property like you might see on television," he says. "Television characters don't have to worry about the feds on their backs if they break a law getting evidence. We don't allow our people to break any laws, and this makes it difficult. "Sometimes that policy stops our investigations all together. There is a fine line as to how involved in an organization you can get, and not break any laws."

Center encourages responsible partying

By Kristin Czarnik

The concept of responsible drinking and alcohol awareness is being promoted across the country to address the issue of alcohol abuse.

Ann Coombes, assistant coordinator of the Center for Drug Prevention and Education, says responsible party planning, which starts with the host, is a matter of putting common sense to good use.

Alcohol should not be the focus of the party, Coombes says.

"Many times alcohol is used as an inducement for people to come to a party," Coombes says. "You will have more control over the party if you have a theme or get people involved in an activity that does not focus on drinking."

"Even though every activity could be turned into a drinking game, start out with the idea that it is not. Maybe your influence and ideas will be passed on to another person."

"It is real hard to come up with alternative activities because society has become engrossed in sociable drinking. A kid growing up today does not know much else to do."

Coombes says it is also important for the host to recognize an individual's right to drink or not to drink.

"You should provide alternative beverages to people who are under 21 or do not want to drink," Coombes says. "However, it is important that you serve the alcoholic beverages and the non-alcoholic beverages in generic glasses."

"You do not want to make someone feel bad because they are not drinking alcohol."

"A lot of times peer pressure is so great, it helps to provide an escape. If you at least provide it, maybe someone who might have had that drink because people were pressuring them, they can get away with carrying around a Sprite instead of a gin and tonic."

Coombes says non-alcoholic beverages should be displayed as attractively as the alcoholic beverages.

"People do not want to see a dusty case of Coke shoved under the sink while the beer and Bacardi are displayed in an open-bar setting," Coombes says. "If you provide the setting so that they are equally represented, you might have a chance of someone taking a non-alcoholic drink."

Coombes says a reasonable portion of the budget for the party, at least one-fourth or one-half of the amount spent on alcohol, should be allocated for the purchase of food items.

"High-protein foods like light sandwiches, dips, meats, cheeses, pizza and other solid foods help slow the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream," Coombes says. "Salty foods like popcorn, nuts and chips only enhance people's thirst."

"It is expensive, but it helps your guests enjoy what they drink and reduces the less attractive effects of alcohol."

Coombes says it is important to display food in an open accessible area and make it pleasing to the eye.

"People do not like to hang around the food table at parties," Coombes says. "Place the table where people can just walk by and grab something to eat."

Coombes says college students should be aware of what their alcohol intake is and realize their limits.

"If you monitor your intake and take one drink an hour, you will probably be okay because it takes the body one hour to absorb the alcohol from a 12-ounce drink," Coombes says. "However, people should stay away from pitchers of beer and mass quantities of drinks because you can not monitor your intake."

"Drinking from a keg is also hard to monitor because people might refill their cups when it is not completely empty."

When planning a party, Coombes says, the host should be aware that only about one-third of Texas A&M students are of the legal drinking age.

"Plan on checking I.D.'s and stamping people who are 21 years of age," Coombes says. "When planning your budget, you will not have to spend as much money on alcohol because most A&M students can not legally drink."

Coombes says the host should also pick designated drivers in advance and have a specific beginning and ending for the party.

Likewise, additional kegs should not be tapped and the bar should be closed at least one hour before the party ends, Coombes says.

"Whenever possible, advertising for the party should not mention alcohol or the amount of alcohol that will be available," Coombes says. "However, if you do mention alcohol in the advertisement, you should state the availability of non-alcoholic beverages and that I.D.'s will be checked."