

Students speak out against local drinking and driving

Drunken mistake No. 41 is going home with a Seminole—but at least you didn't drive.

Posters around Gainesville listing similar drunken mistakes, including buying shots for the whole bar, are part of a local anti-drinking and driving campaign to remind students that although people do stupid things while drinking, nothing is worse than choosing to drive drunk.

University of Florida students lined up on April 2 to confess their own drunken mistakes on poster boards, as well as eat pizza and collect free key chains and drink Koozies from Student Government's new anti-drinking and driving program, Nightlife Navigators.

All the while, a wrecked car loomed in the background, reminding students of Nightlife Navigator's purpose: to change the drinking and driving culture that is all too prominent.

The event, held on the north lawn of the Reitz Student Union, drew more than 200 people over the course of the day and signaled the kickoff of the new Nightlife Navigators Web site, <http://www.nightlife-navigators.com>. The site compiles informa-



Kelly Jeck

tion that can help students plan their night out in advance, including phone numbers for cab companies, Regional Transit System Later Gator bus routes and more.

Gainesville Police Lt. Anthony Ferrera said that this is the first time he's seen UF students make a true effort to curb drinking and driving on their own initiative.

"The best thing about this is that any information students get is going to help," said Ferrera. "Even if they only get the number for a cab company, the site has worked."

More than 60 people gathered around the

demolished car when Student Body President-Elect Kevin Reilly stood to explain the program's future.

"We plan to make Nightlife Navigators into a resource that goes far beyond a Web site, ensuring that drinking and driving is never the most convenient choice for students who need transportation," said Reilly.

Reilly went on to say that one year earlier, GPD Lt. Corey Dahlem was struck and killed by a non-student drunken driver celebrating UF's national basketball championship.

Nightlife Navigators is a student-led response intended to honor Dahlem's memory by preventing similar tragedies in the future.

Dahlem's widow, Sally Dahlem, attended the event and spoke to those assembled. She told students, administrators and police officers that while she understands what college students are exposed to, drinking and driving is never an option.

"We don't want any families to go through what we have gone through," she said.

By Kimberly Cruts

UF Voices

Let's celebrate Earth Day

The first Earth Day celebration took place on March 21, 1970. It was the brainchild of Sen. Gaylord Nelson, who proposed the idea at a conference in 1969. He said that we needed "a nationwide grassroots demonstration on behalf of the environment." His call to action was heard, and it was reported that environmental grassroots actions at college campuses across the country began to eclipse protests over the Vietnam War.



Anna Prizzia

As I reflect on Earth Day, I realize that similar spirit and dedication keep Earth Day alive today at UF and other universities throughout the United States. I think about the many student organizations and individuals who have worked so hard to further sustainability at UF, and how these people reflect the true spirit of Earth Day.

Earth Day has now grown to be Earth Week and Earth Month. I can only hope that in time, we will celebrate the Earth all year long. There are tons of ways to get involved with Earth Day here at UF and in the Gainesville Community. Here are just a few of the many activities planned:

- **Sustainable Products Trade Show** - Tuesday, April 15, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Reitz Student Union Grand Ballroom.
- **Cultural Plaza Earth Day Festival and Natural Area Teaching Lab Trail Opening**- April 19, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., UF Cultural Plaza.

- **5th Avenue Arts Festival and Earth Day Celebration**- April 19-20, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
- **UF Earth Day Celebration and Hazardous Waste Roundup** - April 22, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Reitz Student Union north lawn.
- **Earth Day Dining Hall Party**, April 22, 5-8 p.m., Fresh Food Company.

Anna Prizzia
Outreach Coordinator,
Office of Sustainability

Top Story

McCain's press secretary is proud UF graduate

Melissa Shuffield was done with politics. After working as Sen. Mel Martinez's press secretary for nearly three years, the University of Florida alumna was ready to try something new—that is, until Sen. John McCain's office called.

"It's only once in a lifetime that you have a chance to work for, possibly, the next president of the United States," said Shuffield.

So the 2002 Gator grad accepted the position as McCain's press secretary, ensuring that her life would never be the same.

Originally from Miami, Fla., Shuffield didn't grow up bleeding orange and blue. Her mother attended Florida State University, and Shuffield followed in her father's footsteps at the University of Tennessee. But this Florida girl couldn't stay away for long, and after studying overseas in Seville, Spain, she transferred to the University of Florida to study public relations and discover Gator pride.

"My time at UF was so great—there's nothing I can say that's bad about that school," she said. "Go Gators!"

Shuffield's public relations degree serves her in good stead to this day, she said, providing practical knowledge that helps her organize her thoughts and create public relations plans for any occasion.

"I think it's really interesting to learn and observe every day how people communicate, and the best way for me to communicate with others," she said. "The PR and journalism education that I got at UF prepared me in so many ways for what I'm doing today."

As McCain's presidential campaign continues to gather steam, Shuffield is aware that she's under almost constant surveillance from members of the public and the press, who assign a myriad of meanings to McCain's every move.

"I've noticed more and more that with



John Shinkle, The Politico

Melissa Shuffield is an integral part of Sen. John McCain's presidential campaign.

the bigger focus on my boss, there's a bigger focus on me. You start to realize that people are always watching," she said.

Even with such high stakes, Shuffield can't spend her time worrying about what might happen. There's enough work to do without imagining more, she said, and if something does go wrong she simply steps back, evaluates the situation and creates a plan.

"Execute. Implement. Go," she says. "It doesn't help to get excited."

It wasn't always so easy. "Those first two weeks with Martinez were awful, especially when they put me on TV," she recalled. "I thought I was in way over my head. I'm a better person for it now, but at the time it seemed almost impossible."

Being press secretary is second nature to her now, and while the work is getting intense, she's enjoying the time she gets to

spend with McCain as he gears up for the home stretch of his campaign—203 days, she points out.

"Working with him on a consistent basis, I feel confident about his leadership skills and his foreign policy knowledge—but the most important thing is that he relates to real people," she said. "He can also recite more books off the top of his head than I have ever read," she added.

If there's anything she's learned from a "grassroots campaign" to find post-graduate employment - two years at Porter Novelli, a major public relations firm, and years on Capitol Hill - it's that the connections made during and after college are vital.

"You've got to use your resources. Never give up an opportunity to make a contact, because at the end of the day you have to be qualified—but it's really important to have a good base of contacts," she said.

By Kimberly Cruts

Happenings

Listings in this section are a sampling of events at the University of Florida, compiled from entries listed in the full calendar that appears on the Web at calendar.ufl.edu. To submit an event online, visit <http://calendar.ufl.edu/submit/>.

April 15
The Harn Museum of Art presents the Harn Eminent Scholar Lecture. Harn Museum of Art, 6 p.m. Call 352-392-9826 for more information.

April 16
George A. Smathers Libraries presents "Edible Book Contest." Library West walkway, 11 a.m.-noon. Call 352-273-2505 for more information.

April 16
UFPA presents Spirit of Uganda. Phillips Center, 7:30 p.m. Reserved seating: \$20-30. Visit the Phillips Center Box Office or call 352-392-ARTS (2787) for tickets.



April 19
Florida Museum of Natural History presents "Earth Day." Florida Museum of Natural History, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Call 352-846-2000 for more information.

Seen & Heard

Two students earn multicultural awards



Tracy Van Holt

Multicultural Student Award. Recipients are chosen for their contributions to promoting diversity and multiculturalism within UF residence facilities.

Zuaiter is a Tolbert area desk assistant and international resident living in Riker Hall. Van Holt represents Tanglewood Village on the UF Graduate and Family Housing Mayors Council, and also serves as secretary.

Ali Zuaiter, a sophomore from Jordan, and Tracy Van Holt, a doctoral candidate from Baldwin, N.Y., were selected as the 2008 recipients of the University of Florida Department of Housing and Residence Education

Researcher receives Distinguished Scientist Award

Last week, the Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) presented Lonnie Ingram, UF Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences alternative fuels researcher, with the 2008 SURA Distinguished Scientist Award for his work developing ways to turn materials commonly considered trash into fuel that could cut the country's dependence on oil.



Lonnie Ingram

Professor wins Norway's prestigious Abel Prize

University of Florida Graduate Research Professor John Griggs Thompson and European mathematician Jacques Tits recently won the world's most prestigious mathematics award, the 2008 Abel Prize for Mathematics. The two men will split the \$1.2 million award, the Norwegian Academy of

Science and Letters announced.

Thompson and Tits were awarded the Abel Prize for their contributions to what is called group theory, a branch of mathematics that focuses on the study of symmetry, such as the symmetry of geometric figures or algebraic equations.

Thompson has been a professor at UF since 1993. He is the world's leading authority in group theory.

Tits, the other recipient of the Abel prize, is a professor at the Collège de France.



John Griggs Thompson

Associate director of Upward Bound appointed

Montia Morris has been appointed as the new associate director of the Upward Bound (UB) Program. She began working with UB in February.

Upward Bound is a federally funded college preparatory program for promising high school students from low-income households in Alachua and Bradford counties.

Forestry leader to give lecture on April 16

The John Gray Fund for Excellence Distinguished Lecture Series will feature Robert S. Simpson, senior vice president of the American Forest Foundation's Center for Family Forests. The title of the presentation is "America's Family Owned Forests: Under Valued, Under Served, Under Siege." The lecture is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on April 16 at the Grand Ballroom of Gainesville's Paramount Plaza Hotel.

Free hearing screenings offered on April 17

The UF Speech and Hearing Clinic will offer free hearing screenings from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 1405 N.W. 13th St., Suites B and C. No appointment is necessary. An annual hearing checkup is recommended for anyone of age 45 or older.

Emergency system to test on April 18

The University of Florida Police Department and the Office of Environmental Health and Safety will work with other campus entities on April 18 to test a three-pronged system that utilizes text messaging, e-mail alerts and an automated telephone notification system. This is the first time that all three systems have been tested simultaneously. The phone test alert will be sent to select buildings only. Anyone who does not receive a text or e-mail on April 18 should report the discrepancy at <http://www.it.ufl.edu/emergency-test/>.

CPR training offers shirts, prizes on April 19

The University of Florida's CPR and Safety Training Center will host Gator Saver Day, a mass CPR certification event on April 19 at Kanapaha Middle School. The event offers a training session from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 2 to 6 p.m. Participants will receive a certification card and a T-shirt, as well as chances to win prizes like movie tickets and fitness club memberships. Visit <http://ufgatorsaver.weebly.com> to preregister or for more information.