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Written for and about the teen population of Athens, Georgia

Teen Sexting Raises Eyebrows in Clarke County

X-rated text messaging among students a serious offense

by **Lindsey Horan**

Vanessa Hudgens. Miley Cyrus. Two teen pop culture icons that have gained both a vast teen audience as well as the skepticism of parents after sexual pictures of the two beloved stars leaked onto the internet. Hudgens and Cyrus were guilty of "sexting," or sending sexually explicit or nude photographs through a text message.

The phenomenon of sending sexual photographs over the phone has recently increased in popularity among young teenagers.

"I think more people do it than we even know of. I probably know around five people that have sexted, but I'm sure more people do it," said Clarke Central High School senior Will Hager. "Sexting" has become a new

form of communication among teenage students, and though buzz on the issue is being generated by adolescents, the subject has been slow to surface among the Athens-area adult community. From school faculty to law officials, action to combat this new-age interaction has not been thoroughly pursued.

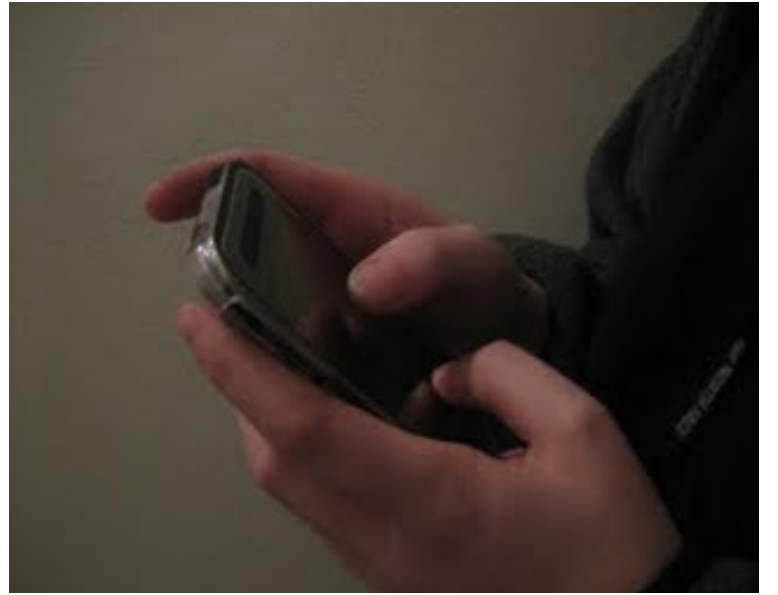
According to a source at the Athens-Clarke County Police Department, there have been no criminal investigation reports on "sexting." Corporal Kandy Marchman, the Crime Prevention Officer and Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Member at the Oconee County Sheriff's Office, said that there have been only two "sexting" cases reported, both dealing with boys and girls

sending nude photographs among classmates. One of the cases occurred between middle school students, and the other case dealt with high school students.

Although the issue has not been prevalent in the Athens police and sheriff's departments, school staff members are still aware of the issue. Lenore Katz, a school counselor at Clarke Central High School said they realize the situation, but the counselors have yet to receive referrals from teachers or students regarding these offenses.

"It hasn't been a hot button issue. The problem isn't being brought to our attention. We know students are doing it, but we are not hearing from the students," said Katz.

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Students casually send "sext" messages back and forth without knowing how serious the consequences can be.

Teens losing touch with reality

Social networking sites may become a threat to face-to-face interaction

by **Kelundra Smith and Stacie Luke**

Morgan Riddle uses it to find parties. Dustin Tores advertises his parkour team. Rachele Giles checks up on friends. For Caroline McArthur, logging on is a daily ritual. These Athens teenagers are not alone in their use of social networking sites. Social networking sites have become integrated in the lives of teenagers nationwide. According to a study by the Pew Internet & American Life Project social networking sites draw 55 percent of online teens.

For years when high school students wanted the latest gossip or school information they went to the football game or the school dance. Not anymore. In this new digital age everything from Friday night's party to who is dating who can be found on the Internet. Social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook have replaced the classroom ritual of passing notes, and talking on the phone as a way to stay in the know.

"I spend a lot of time on Facebook. I check it in the morning at 7 a.m. before school, I check it when I get home, and I'm on it as I do homework for the rest of the day," said Caroline McArthur, a 15-year-old sophomore on student council at Oconee High School.

According to MySpace's fact page, the site was launched in January 2004 and now has 125 million monthly users around the globe. Just a month later, Facebook was launched and now maintains more than 300 million active users according to the site's statistics page. When these two sites launched, no one knew that they would become a way of life and change the art of communication.

"I use [Facebook] to see what everyone else is doing and keep up with my friends who are in college," said Rachele Giles, 17, a cheerleader at

see **FACEBOOK** page 3

"THE GLEE EFFECT"



Students in chrous at Oconee County High School know that excellence takes practice, and all are more than willing to put in the time for a successful concert. Photo by Sara Caldwell

Popular TV show sets choral stereotype

by **Sara Caldwell & Marlyncia Pierce**

Down the halls of William McKinley high school in Lima, Ohio, the fictional students from the hit TV show Glee spark major chords with the stereotypical drama of students - all the while, bringing a new wave of singing and entertainment to its choral group and audience. Every Wednesday night at 9 p.m. - eastern time - on the FOX Broadcasting network, many viewers tune in to watch the teen sagas as they put their musical spins on popular and classic hits like Kanye West's "Golddigger" and Tina Turner's "Proud Mary." Choral students in the Athens area relate to the show's dramatic portrayal of high school daze and are excited about the future of Fine Arts programs.

"The Glee show will open up more opportunities for Choral groups to expand, and [it] will cause more students to try their local chorus groups out," said Le-

Troy Billups, Clarke Central high school student of Athens, Ga. While some students are optimistic about Glee's influence in their choral programs, a few miles across town at Cedar Shoals High School, the optimism is viewed on a different scale.

"I think the show will set standards high," said Senior Emily Cochran, 19, of Athens, Ga. Cochran, who has been singing for as long as she can remember, enjoys Glee but recognizes that it is only a television show. Fellow classmate Senior John Swilley, 17, feels that the show gives unrealistic expectations of high school chorus.

With the intense drama surrounding characters Rachel Berry, one of the most talented musical hopes of teacher Will Schuester's glee club, along with the clueless, but charming, voice of football player Finn Hudson, the choral atmosphere ignites in stereotypical chaos. On the show, the jock hides his voice talents from his

perfect cheerleader girlfriend, and the controversy between these high school groups carries on from episode to episode--keeping its audience from week to week. The overall message behind the show is focused in entertainment. "I think people see the show and expect that that's what chorus is like - but it's not," said Swilley. "On the show, they pick up the music and just know everything."

Fine Art instructors at CSHS disagree with the excess glamour that the show registers to the viewers.

"That show is taking it to the extreme," said Linda Moon, the choral instructor at Cedar Shoals High. "You're always going to find the attitudes [in chorus] that you see in Glee, but I think they have glamorized it a little too much - it almost makes a joke out of it."

Glee does not only showcase the lives of its choral characters. It also includes comedic and dramatic plots within the teaching staff of McKinley High School. Stories unfurl between the show

see **GLEE** page 2

The new face of drugs

Prescription pills more available as they gain popularity among high school students

by **Angel Jackson and Mamie Cargile**

Xanax. Lortab. Vicodin. Adderall. You have heard them all before. You may not know, however, how many of these prescription drugs are changing hands in Athens area high schools. On an average school day, there are students selling and taking these drugs on school grounds.

"I've never been offered any, but I could probably get it," said Trey Spires, a senior at Oconee County High School. Spires, from Bishop, Ga., refers to a number of prescription drugs that he is aware of being sold at his school. He does not know where students get their hands on these drugs. What he does know is that it is not uncommon for students to make money by selling pills. "A lot of them get it prescribed to themselves. Then they take them to school to sell," said Sydney Jessup, also a senior at Oconee County High School from Watkinsville, Ga.

According to the Georgia Student Health Survey from 2008-2009, which obtains information from a random sample of public middle and high school students about various health risk behaviors, 44 percent of students agreed that it is easy to obtain prescription drugs not prescribed to them. Prescription drugs are reportedly easier to obtain than "street drugs" such as marijuana, cocaine, or methamphetamines. Barbara Emmanuel, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a private practice in Decatur, GA, explained that ease of access is one of the main factors for teens taking prescription drugs by saying, "unfortunately, with teenagers and prescription medication, the access can be far too easy, with parents, siblings, and grandparents who may have meds in

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GLEE: Students and teachers at odds with television

theshowregisterstotheviewers. "That show is taking it to the extreme," said Linda Moon, the choral instructor at Cedar Shoals High. "You're always going to find the attitudes [in chorus] that you see in Glee, but I think they have glamorized it a little too much - it almost makes a joke out of it." Glee does not only showcase the lives of its choral characters. It also includes comedic and dramatic plots within the teaching staff of McKinley High School. Stories unfurl between the show choir's teacher, Will Schuester, and abrasive cheerleading coach, Sue Sylvester. With the ongoing rivalry between the McKinley show choir and award winning cheerleading squad, the show centralizes on typical personality of the high school characters. "It makes me angry, because we are trying to fight those types of stereotypes and attitudes - and not just with students," said Moon. "There are teachers who have those attitudes, [but] I haven't found any one as extreme as the coach or cheerleading coach [from the show]." Moon, a teacher of 36 years - four years of the 36 dedicated to Cedar Shoals, strives to teach the students a different range of genres in her classes. From classical to pop musicals, Moon's philosophy is to give students a "well-rounded perspective of the choral music," according to Moon. After hardwork, dedication, and

outreach to the Athens community to generate more awareness about the Cedar Shoals choral program, Moon and her concert choir were invited to sing on Easter Sunday - April 15, at Carnegie Hall. Across Route 10 on Hog Mountain Road, The "Glee effect" has taken its toll on the Oconee

County students in Katie Williams' class. Adjacent to the band room in OCHS, a lively space opens up to the choral sanctuary. Williams, the choral instructor teaches a range of music, and recently taught "Let Me Fly, a spiritual with messages of freedom interlaced between the sharps,

flats, and arpeggios. Even though chorus somewhat bridges the gap between the art of writing with lyrical arts, this particular program offers strength in another way. By providing an expressive outlet, students find a sense of belonging, according to Williams. "[Chorus] is their bright mo-

ment of the day," said Williams. "Some don't have a 'home' in High School or feel like they belong. I will take them all." Along with the welcoming atmosphere of her class, Williams incorporates current themes in her classroom. "Katie Williams has a kickin' show choir, like Glee, over at OCHS," said University of Georgia Senior, Paige Tillotson. Tillotson is a Music Education major and is a student teacher with Williams. "But [Glee] as an example of what high school voices can realistically do, it's completely far-fetched," said Tillotson. "Even though it is completely musically unrealistic, I do think it will get a lot more kids interested and involved in choir in High Schools, which is super important! Even if these kids aren't on the same musical level as the performers on Glee, music isn't about being the best, it's about the experience!" Despite the dramatic appeal and sensational story lines of Glee, students across Athens, particularly choral students, follow the angst and drama of the show waiting for the next melodic vocal moment. No longer the losers from the club prior to Mr. Schuester's appearance on the Fox show, McKinley students and local high school Athenians alike can celebrate the glee found in their music.



UGA Senior Paige Tillotson the Oconee Co. High School Choral Director's student teacher. She warms up the class, as they prepare to work on their new music, by getting them to stretch out their mouths before they learn their new song. Students Alex Rawlins, Nevada Alewine, McCall Faulkner, and Laura Porter gather close to the piano while she plays. Photo by Sara Caldwell.

TEXT: Students unaware of sexting consequences

Central High School said they realize the situation, but the counselors have yet to receive referrals from teachers or students regarding these offenses. "It hasn't been a hot button issue. The problem isn't being brought to our attention. We know students are doing it, but we are not hearing from the students," said Katz. What the participating students are failing to realize are the legal ramifications that are associated with "sexting." According to Cpl. Marchman, ownership of nude photographs can lead to child pornography possession charges. Furthermore, if the teen in possession of the "sext" forwards it to a peer, that teenager may be accused of distributing child pornography. If the adolescent is then convicted and charged as an adult, they may be placed on the sex offenders list, where they could remain for life. This phenomenon received national attention in September 2009 when CBSNews.com did a story on Vermont's first "sexting" case, in which an 18-year-old was charged with committing the act. In this case, the teenage boy was suspected of guiding two teenage girls to photograph or videotape themselves in a sexual manner and send him the end result. Ultimately, the 18-year-old pleaded guilty to reduced charges, but he will serve a 90-day sentence in prison. In an attempt to raise awareness on the serious legal repercussions of "sexting," Cpl. Marchman has met with several school counselors wishing to be educated on the laws. However,

more aggressive, preventative action such as speaking to students has not been taken thus far. "I don't think people are aware of the legal issues. People don't think that they will get caught in the first place, so they don't think about the consequences," said Hager. Dr. Kip Matthews, licensed psychologist and Vice-President and Co-Founder of AK Counseling & Consulting, Inc., an Athens community counseling and psychological treatment organization, believes the best way to approach the issue of "sexting" is early in the home between the parents and the children. He suggests that parents talk to their children about making good decisions as well as set boundaries so that teens will not succumb to peer pressure. "I really want to stress that punishing someone for having possession of a picture is not appropriate. It's like attacking the outcome without really trying to fix the source," said Matthews. Matthews also stated that, in addition, parents need to have an active role in their child's online behavior through monitoring activity on social media websites. Although there is an issue of the child's right to privacy, Matthews argues that as long as they are minors, they're sacrificing the right of private interaction. He believes it is both the responsibility and right of the parents to have full access their child's online activity. This monitoring, he said, should include the parents' ability to obtain the student's Facebook password.

Madi Linck, a 17-year-old senior at Athens Academy said she believes Dr. Matthews's opinion on parents gaining access to their child's Facebook is too extreme. "I think that's overkill. I obviously wouldn't want my mom to have my password. It's just a trust issue with your parent," said Linck. Though there are not specific statistics for the prevalence of "sexting" in the Athens community, according to Matthews, there has "anecdotally" been a rise in the issue. The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing pregnancy in single, young adults, in collaboration with Cosmogirl.com, did a study nationwide on this topic. Their findings showed that 20 percent of teens (ages 13-19) admitted that they had sent or posted nude or semi-nude photos of themselves. Despite the rise of sexual messaging among adolescents and its significant legal implications, teens are doubtful that any action taken will prevent "sexting" from occurring. "No matter what, people are going to do this kind of stuff. Kids are going to be kids," said Hager. Regardless of whether the legal side of "sexting" becomes a motivating factor for teen action, there is no doubt that there is a growing interest in sexual communication. Although the trend is taking place across the nation and among celebrities, this contact between peers is also occurring at a local level, even in small towns such as Athens, Ga.

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DRUGS: high school students using and abusing prescription pills

explained that ease of access is one of the main factors for teens taking prescription drugs by saying, "unfortunately, with teenagers and prescription medication, the access can be far too easy, with parents, siblings, and grandparents who may have meds in the medicine cabinet that they do not think of as 'abusable.'" Those not selling the drugs are simply taking them. "They'll do it anywhere," said Spire. Students often do not know the drawbacks to taking such drugs when there is no medicinal need for them. There are numerous health effects that can be linked to taking unnecessary prescription drugs.

According to WebMD, Adderall is used for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). ADHD affects 8-12 percent of children and four percent of adults worldwide. The drug helps those affected to stay focused and pay attention. For those who are not in need of Adderall, taking it can increase heart and energy rates, as well as suppress appetite. It can be addictive and cause withdrawal symptoms upon ceasing to take the medication. Xanax produces the opposite effect. It is used to treat anxiety and panic disorders. Those who take Xanax usually feel calmer. It is very addictive

as well, and will also cause withdrawal symptoms upon discontinuation of use. Vicodin and Lortab are prescribed to reduce pain. They are addictive when not used properly, and even sometimes when they are prescribed. Emmanuel said, "a factor that is discussed when looking at the time it takes for recreational or social use to develop into addiction is age of first use, and age regular use began. Unfortunately for teens, this can lead to early and serious problems with addiction." Heidi Nibelink, a counselor at Clarke Central High School, said, "age of onset of prescription drug use often occurs

around age 11, when prescription drugs are easier to access for younger children than other types of drugs." The early onset of use coupled with easy access provides a prime breeding ground for addiction among teens. Recreational use of these drugs can be extremely detrimental and have severe or even fatal side effects if mixed. This, however, is not the only downfall. Anyone caught in possession of prescription drugs (controlled substances) not prescribed to the person is subject to jail time and/or steep fines. So who exactly is distributing and taking these drugs? "A lot more guys than girls," said Hailey

McCommons, a senior at Oconee County High School from Watkinsville, Ga., "Mostly the older guys, but I'm sure the younger ones do it, too." Spire concurs, "I would lean more towards the upperclassmen guys, but people are starting in ninth grade." Even though high school students in the Clarke County School District take a health class that includes curriculum about illegal prescription drug use, the trend of prescription drug use still seems to be highly popular among Athens area teens.

FACEBOOK: Social Media has become the new black, not only for teens

Internet socialization positive for networking, but are teens relying on it too heavily?

cheerleader at North Oconee High School.

Facebook statistics show that its fastest growing demographic is adults 35 years and older, however, it seems for teenagers in Athens-Clarke County and its surrounding areas that Facebook, more than MySpace, is the medium of choice for keeping up with friends and local happenings.

"Most people use their statuses to advertise parties and tell people to message them for the address," said Morgan Riddle, a sophomore at Oconee High School.

Social networking sites also provide an array of applications that allow users to play games, fill out surveys and quizzes and more. Philip Lewin, a professor in the sociology department at The University of Georgia, believes social networking sites can offer teens control over their identity by allowing them to list their likes and dislikes, favorite quotes, or upload pictures. Though these sites can be used to promote a specific self-image, they can also offer insight into the lives of friends and family members, with a lot of teens mentioning that their parents and siblings have Facebook profiles as well. A Pew Internet & American Life Project study shows 91 percent of teens are using the networks to stay in touch with people they already know.

But some teens are not using social networking for the sole purpose of keeping up with friends. Some teenagers use them to advertise events and find other teens in their areas with similar interests. For 16-year-old, East Jackson High School student Dustin Tores and his friends, Facebook is used to advertise their parkour free running team, an extreme sport from France that uses urban landscapes as an obstacle course.

"It works because we include a link to our Web site and we have had three people send in videos," Tores said about advertising on Facebook.

For many teens the Facebook chat feature is another common use of the popular site. Alex Smith, a 17-year-old North Oconee wrestler believes it takes away the formality that comes with a face-to-face, or even a telephone conversation. Face-

book chat makes it easier to talk to friends, and say what they want without awkward pauses or ambiguity in conversation. It is especially useful for keeping up with friends that they rarely see in person, which according to Pew is the reason 82 percent of teens use social networking sites.

Some concerns that rise from teens' use of social networking pertain to whether teenagers are losing the ability to hold a face-to-face conversation. According to 15-year-old McArthur, "It's just kinda what it has come to in our social lives. MySpace, Facebook, texting is the only way people talk now. When you talk to [them] on the computer and when you talk to them in person you don't know what you're supposed to say."

The diminishing use of face-to-face conversation can particularly blur the lines in dating and relationships. Facebook offers users "single," "it's complicated," "in an open relationship," and an array of other options as relationship statuses; or users can leave their statuses off their profiles altogether. According to Giles and McArthur a relationship is not official until it is on the Internet, and most people list themselves as single unless they are really serious about a person. "Say you've broken up with someone, you can constantly monitor their dating behavior. There are also people who don't want to apply labels to relationships but you're expected to say 'In a Relationship' on Facebook, and before Facebook you could delay that conversation indefinitely," Lewin stated.

But there is no delay in cyberspace, everything is designed with a sense of immediacy and alteration. Social networking sites have become more mobile, and are not going away in the near future. Much like their users, social networking sites are constantly changing, and the ways teens use social networking sites cannot be placed in a single category. Whether it is to see the latest status updates, or see pictures from an old friend's sweet sixteen party, these sites allow teens to stay connected and express themselves in unprecedented ways.

Public schools make the switch to a healthier menu



This school's cafeteria is modeled to look like a mall food court. Photo courtesy of Alexis Economy.

Cafeterias eliminate junk food in hopes to decrease adolescent obesity

By Brooke Cochran and Marah Lidey

Sally Jabbie goes through the line at the Glad Shack, the picks up a bag of Doritos and a coke, kicks up her feet in the cafeteria and relaxes with her friends. That was last year. This year Jabbie goes through the cafeteria line and reluctantly grabs a single cup of unsalted green beans, a small portion of chicken and rice casserole, a side salad of greens and light ranch, and carrots, she sits with her friends and stares at her untouched food.

The Clarke Central junior has mixed feelings about the new healthy menu the school is serving. "We can't have drinks or snacks or vending machines. We can only have vending machines that have water and diet drinks. I want Gatorade sometimes and all we get is diet," said Jabbie.

According to a 2006 report by the Centers for Disease Control, the percent of overweight and obese teens has increased from 10 percent in 1994 to 17.6 percent in 2006. Obesity in adolescents causes significant health risks such as cardiovascular disease, asthma, and type 2 diabetes. In Ga., 18 percent of high schoolers are overweight and another 14 percent are considered obese. With obesity at it's highest among teens and young adults, schools are striving to provide healthy foods for

their students. The high school's pizza is even made with whole wheat bread and low fat cheese.

"Obesity is certainly a national trend," said Clarke County Nutrition Coordinator Angela Garcia. "In teens, obesity leads to major health problems and schools are trying to prevent obesity from continuing in the direction it is going."

A new "Wellness Policy", created in May 2006 by the Clarke County Board of Education, sets high standards for the type and variation of food that the students are allowed to have in school. School nutritionists say they are no longer able to use salt and sugar in the making of foods, and the school only provides dessert one time a week.

"I think initially the fact that there was change made the students uncomfortable but once they had information about the change and that it was to help them, they accepted it," said Garcia.

"Give us salt!" cried Jabbie over the loss of this seasoning due to the new Wellness menu.

Despite not being able to use salt in the foods, the school employs other ingredients to replace the inexpensive additive:

"Butter is the main ingredient we use," said Carolyn Adams, a food assistant at Clarke Central High. "We don't use any salt or sugar but we use lots of butter, and tomato sauce too."

The new restrictions on food are not limited to Clarke Cen-

tral, schools across the country are striving to provide healthier menus to limit the amount of sugar and fats that students have access to. A 2008 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report stated that the average number of schools that sold candy or salty snacks not low in fat dropped from 54 percent in 2006 to 36 percent in 2008. Also, the percentage of schools that took soda and sports drinks out of school vending machines increased from 37.8 percent to 62.9 percent.

Clarke Central has gone far beyond many schools in the country in their attempts to limit unhealthy foods and even has a nutritionist to create each menu plan.

"We have a nutritionist that analyzes every meal every week," said Katja Stookey, the Clarke Central School Nutrition Manager. "We make sure the kids have the right nutritional mix of protein, carbs, fat, and things like that, each week." Stookey is in charge of the kitchen and all the food the students eat. "We do not give them candy and the biggest complaint we hear is that the portions are too small," said Stookey.

Many teens however are frustrated that they are being told what to eat and are not able to make their own decisions.

"It's just always the same thing. The least they could do is let us leave for lunch sometimes," professed Kelly Lissimore, a junior at Clarke Central.

Underage drinking: Is it preventable?

Students from various high schools in Atlanta and Athens speak out about where and when it's a problem

By Brittany Guthrie and Lacey Outten

At 16 years old, teenagers can drive. At 18 years old, teenagers are able to purchase lottery tickets and cigarettes at their own discretion. At 21 years old, the teenage years are officially left behind, and alcohol can be legally purchased and consumed. In reality though, these age restrictions fail to stop some teens from engaging in underage drinking. Nickolas Adams, a senior at Athens Academy, explains "Even though it is not very common at my school, underage drinking is definitely prevalent in certain social groups." In contrast, Sydney Rosenberg, a junior at Riverwood High School in Atlanta, explains, "Underage drinking is extremely common at my school. Pretty much everyone I know at my school does [drink]." It seems as if the number of teens who drink vary across schools of Georgia. How and why does this generation of teenagers partake in underage drinking and what effects

is underage drinking causing for this group of soon-to-be adults?

If the 21-years-old age restriction doesn't prevent teenagers from getting their hands on alcohol, then how and where do they get it? According to Athens teens, there are many ways for minors to obtain alcohol. Some use a fake ID at gas stations to buy beer, while others steal liquor from their parents or have older siblings buy the alcohol. Sometimes older friends will also buy alcohol for the underage drinkers. Due to the legal consequences associated with providing alcohol to a minor, most parents follow the age restriction and rarely provide alcohol to their children and to their teen friends. However, many parents today grew up in a time when the legal age to consume alcohol was 18 years old, and some of these adults still believe that this should be the legal age to drink.

A trend taking effect earlier in age is securing a fake ID. These are becoming easier to find because of the teenage demand and the price teenagers are willing to pay. Most teenagers know

of someone at their high school who can create a fake ID or older siblings or friends who will pass down a copy of their license. Some teens go so far as to ask strangers if they will purchase alcohol for them, taking the risk of approaching an undercover cop. Clearly alcohol is readily available for teenagers despite their age.

Underage alcohol consumption is most common at house parties. These parties are usually held at teenagers' houses when parents go out of town or when older siblings are there to supervise. However, these siblings sometimes assist in providing alcohol to their guests and engage in drinking with minors as well. Teenagers rarely go to bars or pubs to drink.

Even though there is wide prevalence of underage drinking, there will always be some teens that choose not to drink in high school and some that do. According to Brooks Gallagher, a family counselor from Greenville, S.C., "In almost all cases, the two main factors that cause teens to consume alcohol are peer pressure and parental influence." Some

teens agree and say peer pressure is the sole reason they drink. Two teens at the same high school have different opinions as to why their peers drink. Riverwood student Sydney Rosenberg explains, "There usually is peer pressure, but the kids being pressured into it aren't upset about it. Usually everyone wants to get drunk unless they're driving. If a teen doesn't want a drink, they're usually not afraid to say no thanks." In contrast, Carly Aronin, a freshman at Riverwood High School, gives her take on underage drinking, "People think they look cool if they drink a lot and get drunk. To avoid peer pressure, you just need to say no and go to a new group of friends wherever you are in order to avoid peer pressure."

Even though certain social groups of teens choose to engage in the consumption of alcohol, peer pressure is not considered a problem among some of the teens at Athens Academy. "I believe there is some pressure for underage teens to drink, but it isn't like the drinking teens go up to people and tell them to," explains

Athens Academy senior Dylan Schulte. "Teens usually avoid the pressure by hanging with other teens who don't drink or just do something else, distract the fact that the teens are drinking."

Once teens are in group situations where everyone is drinking, negative consequences are more likely to happen. The obvious consequence teenagers face is drinking and driving. Most teens understand the seriousness of drinking and driving, so they try to plan a safe way to get home after a night of drinking. Carly Aronin, a freshman at Riverwood High School, clarifies, "More teens are getting killed these days in car crashes because of drinking and driving. After parties, the teens usually go home with a friend who has not been drinking that night or call their parents to pick them up." Other negative consequences include sexual situations with unfamiliar partners or dabbling in various drugs. Unfortunately teens will oftentimes find themselves in an unfavorable situation due to heavy consumption of alcohol.

are you a victim of stereotyping?

decoding the zip code: 5 little numbers may say more about you than you think

	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">30606</div> <p>Elitist</p> <p>Most don't have to work</p> <p>Private Schools</p> <p>Rich</p> <p>Stick to their own</p> <p>Spoiled</p> <p>Lack diversity</p>	<p>"There are no opportunites to meet other students [from other schools], no chance to get to know them"</p> <p>-- Dusty Shroeder, 18, senior at Oconee County High School</p> <p>"You will find diversity--not only racially and economically, but also diverse beliefs and opinions"</p> <p>-- Anisa Sullivan Jimenez, Director of Public Relations and Communications for ACC School District</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">30605</div> <p>Dangerous</p> <p>Many have to work</p> <p>Public Schools</p> <p>Diverse</p> <p>Poor</p> <p>Have more "real world" experience</p>	
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There's no minimum age for living on the streets

With over 1 million homeless youth in the United States, overcoming the stereotype is just another daily struggle

by Sarah Colgrove & Isabela Rzeznik

For most teenagers, this season is the time for football games, homecoming dances and making out a Christmas list. High school students are worrying about their final grades and who to go to the movies with on Friday night. However, this time last year, the only things Michael Mario Thompson worried about were food and shelter.

There are an estimated 1,682,900 homeless and runaway youth in the nation, according to the most recent study of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the US Department of Justice. The majority of those youth are between the ages of 15 and 17. Homeless youth is a problem across the country, even here, and there are many reasons for teen homelessness according to Kerri Steele, the case manager for the Athens Area Homeless Shelter.

"All of the teenagers we have served here have come because their parent became homeless. This is for a variety of reasons: divorce or breaking up with the child's father, loss of job in current economic climate, inability to make living wage due to lack of skill or education, etc.," said Steele.

For Thompson, a 19-year-old teenager living in Athens, being homeless did not involve a shelter, but living on the street. After getting into a fight with his mother's boyfriend, Thomp-

son's mother told him he had to leave. "She basically chose her boyfriend over me," he said. Thompson was forced to turn to friends in order to survive.

Thompson had a troubled childhood, with two different sets of families. When his biological mother was unable to take care of him, he was adopted by a different family. After he graduated from high school, Thompson went on to Piedmont College in order to become a registered nurse, but left soon after his girlfriend became pregnant. During this time, he became homeless and along with his girlfriend's brother, he was able to panhandle, or play music for money.

"It humbles you," said Thompson of living on the street. In order to eat, he visited soup kitchens, a church, Daily Bread and the Food not Bombs organization, which serves food for anyone at 7 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays in front of the Grill, a local restaurant in downtown Athens. He slept under the Oconee Bridge, behind Athens Hardware, and even on the University of Georgia campus. Thompson dislikes the stereotype of the addicted, deadbeat homeless person, and while he admits that he has dabbled in certain drugs, such as marijuana and pills, he asserts the fact that he did not live on the streets due to an alcohol or drug problem.

After being homeless from Sept. 2008 to June 2009, Thompson moved back in with his biological mother. Despite his

changed situation, Thompson still makes time to go and see friends he made while homeless, including taking advantage of Food not Bombs' services along with them. "I associate with them because they're more down to earth people," says Thompson. "The streets are my sanctuary."

There are 130 persons in homeless families with children and 88 total homeless children under the age of 18, according to the Athens 2009 Annual Point-in-Time Homeless Count Summary Data. There is only one teen that has recently lived at the Athens Area homeless Shelter, and along with being a teenager, she is also a mother. Due to the sensitivity of her situation, her identity is kept confidential. She is currently working on her GED as well as keeping a job. For teenagers who have homes, simply living with siblings may be a cause for conflict while trying to study, use the computer, or talk with parents. In a homeless shelter, teenagers must be able to study in a high stress environment with other families around.

"It may seem like living the high life to have someone else help pay for shelter, utilities, meals, etc. but it's hard to live with 6 other adults, 20 other children, have a curfew, a bedtime, when to wake up, when to eat, when to leave, etc.," said Steele.

The teenagers the shelter has seen in the last year have continued to attend local schools, with the exception of the recent young

mother pursuing her GED. The rule for the shelter is that you have to be in school if you are of school age, no excuses. Most homeless teens want to further their education, even beyond high school by attending a technical school after graduation.

The shelter is not the only service for homeless individuals. There is a program called Interfaith Hospitality that uses local churches and congregations to provide shelter for temporarily homeless families. The Athens Clarke County Human and Economic Development helps low-income families and neighborhoods, including the homeless, with grants and attempts to place homeless into stable housing. There is also the Homeless Day Service Center, which provides a place for the homeless to go during the day.

"Our agency, the Homeless Day Service Center, operates Monday through Friday from 10 am to 4:30 pm. We do not provide shelter space or beds, but we do provide showers and laundry and phones and a place to have mail sent for our clients. Our clients are pretty exclusively adults," said Ed Moore, the head of the center.

Being able to call a place home is an important part of growing up, and for teenagers without a home, it can be embarrassing. The majority do not have other friends who are homeless, and choose to hide that part of their lives.

"Most teenagers who live here are too embarrassed to

tell their friends," said Steele.

Despite the stigma of homelessness, teenagers who have a home are eager to help those who do not. For 18-year-old Anya Javadi, volunteering with homeless youth and adults began in high school. As a member of the St. Vincent du Paul society, Javadi went to downtown Atlanta once or twice a month to an organization called Stand Up for Kids and served dinner. She also attended a conference set up by Georgia Coalition to End Homelessness and heard doctors, politicians, and homeless youth speak.

"I haven't really gotten a chance to do anything like with an organization in Athens yet, but I really want to," said Javadi.

For teenagers who are homeless, it is often not by choice. Circumstances beyond their control brought them to a shelter where they have stayed with their family or to the streets to make it on their own. Teenagers living in shelters go to school and seek to find a better life for themselves, pushing through all of the obstacles of day to day life in order to set higher goals. It is likely that they will only be homeless once in their lives, however, some may be in and out of shelters for the rest of their lives.

"I think the most important part is to be respectful of people's situation and not treat anyone differently because of their housing status," said Paul Lazarri of the Northeast Georgia Homeless Coalition.