

# The Annual UPEI Health Fair Draws A Large Crowd

By Laura FANNING

On Wednesday February 26 the Student Centre packed its hallways with smiling enthusiastic people promoting various forms of health information. There were booths that focused on nutrition, exercise, and women's health; some were overflowing with information about sexually transmitted diseases (and yes there were condoms!) and others provided information about how to control stress. Although each booth supported the general theme of the Health Fair, promoting active living, body awareness and psychological health, there were some obvious voids in the show.

Although some information was provided by the nursing faculty regarding men's sexual health, and the Center for Cancer Research gave out handouts on how to do a testicle self-examination, they were among the few who even touched on the subject of men's health. In comparison, there were three booths that focused specifically on women's health (including pregnancy related information, women's nutrition, and the Women's Network).

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Another subject that would have been both interesting and relevant to students (possibly more relevant that nutrition for pregnancy) was some information on interpersonal relationships. As students, we are learning how to research, focus, and compile our ideas into logical arguments. What many of us struggle with is how to apply our newfound knowledge in the real world. It is important that we not only develop our ideas, but that we are able to articulate them in a manner that doesn't threaten or offend others; this is a skill that takes time and practice.

What this means is people have to make an effort to learn how to communicate well. What it doesn't mean is we should compromise our own integrity in exchange for being nice. I think how we express ourselves is the key to successful communication, but I also think that it is important to remember that we do not need to devalue the opinions of others in order to be successful. Lecture aside, I feel that the Health Fair could have included some more information on some things and been



safe providing less information on others.

Although there were some things that could have been improved upon I did find many of the booths informative and even helpful. One of the things I discovered was several interesting facts on sleep deprivation. Did you know that staying awake for 17-19 hours has a similar effect on your body as having a blood alcohol level of .05% and 20-24 hours is similar to having a level of .10%? That's over the legal limit! Did you also know that sleeping less than 6 hours and more than 9 hours may result in twice the total risk of death? Mmmmmm makes you start to appreciate the purpose of those z's!

Some other interesting booths focused on the effects of illicit drugs on the brain and body. One booth described the effects of "E" (short for the drug ecstasy). Although I have never experienced the effects of this drug personally, the pictures of the "fried brains" were enough to turn me off considering it!

*Did you know that staying awake for 17-19 hours has a similar effect on your body as having a blood alcohol level of .05% and 20-24 hours is similar to having a level of .10%?*

The RCMP also had a booth that addressed the issue of drug use, focusing primarily on marijuana. Again, although I have never personally had the pleasure of experiencing the effects of this drug, I do believe that considering all the supporting evidence surrounding its medicinal value that there is a purpose for it. I thought it was quite bold of the RCMP to include in

their list of "Myths" that "Marijuana is smoked to help people who are sick."

Among the entourage of serious information though, there was also a table set aside obviously for the purpose of pure fun. At this table people could colour pictures from a children's colouring book in order to discover there "inner child."

Participation in this activity was rewarded by having the results of your discovery proudly displayed on the wall outside the booth. Maybe I'm just cynical, or maybe it's the fact that this is one of the regular activities that I do with my children, but the thought of sitting in the hallway at a little table using crayons to glorify my need for attention (all in front of hundreds of other people) seemed a bit silly.

Personal reservations aside, the Health Fair did put on a well-organized and informative presentation. Everyone that worked a booth was pleasant and helpful, and the food they provided was fresh and tasty. People who attended the fair were given the opportunity to provide feedback on a questionnaire handed out at the entrance to the fair and submitted anonymously at the end.

Overall I would classify this years Health Fair as a success, and have to admit that it is the busiest I have ever seen the Student Centre. Hopefully my feedback and that of others who participated in the questionnaire will make next year's even better!

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