Students learn about the dangers of cannabis

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

With the prevalence of college students smoking, it is important for students to be aware of the risks that come with taking a puff.

Students were able to gain insight on the highs and lows of cannabis during an informative session held in Neff Hall.

Hosted by resident advisers Nicholas Lastrina, Kisha Francois and Nicholas Bulat, the session featured discussions on the risks of consuming or smoking marijuana, coping strategies and available campus resources.

"I hope that they gained a toolbox full of resources from my event," biology major Nicholas Lastrina, a senior, said, "so that with the decision to hit a pen or to inhale something, they are fully informed and aware of what they are doing and its consequences."

Lastrina organized and led the event using a slideshow to raise awareness about the effects of cannabis and promote healthy lifestyle choices.

According to Statista, between 2021 and 2023, approximately 25.5% of college and university students who utilized mental health services reported using marijuana within the past two weeks.

While one of the thrills of marijuana includes a short-term feeling of euphoria, it comes with a long list of downsides.

The negative effects include an increased risk of mental health disorders, cognitive impairments, poor respiratory quality, addiction and a decline in academic performance.



PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Sociology major Amayia Roach, a junior, sitting with healthcare studies major Kisha Francois, a senior in Neff Hall's lobby.



Nursing mjaor Chelsey Capasso, a sophomore, sitting in Neff Hall's lobby on Nov. 5.

As an RA, Lastrina has experienced many cases firsthand with residents being involved with cannabis. For this reason, Lastrina said that he knows that a simple "no" is not effective.

"It gives students the resources to make informed decisions without telling them not to do it," Lastrina said.

Through open dialogue and interactive trivia games, students were able to soak up information about the impact of cannabis on health, mental well-being and academic performance. Subsquently, attendees were equipped with the knowledge to make well-informed decisions.

After winning the trivia game, nursing major Chelsey Capasso, a sophomore, said that she attended the event for educational purposes.

"I learned about the effects of marijuana and different ways to quit," Capasso said.

Cannabis comes in multiple forms, including edibles, dabbing, vaping and cannabis cigarettes, known as joints.

"Vaping and smoking cannabis are very common on campus, so we felt it was useful info to give to the residents," healthcare studies major Kisha Francois, a senior, said.

Not only did the informative session allow attendees to gain in-depth information about cannabis, but it also helped to foster a stronger campus community committed to combating drug misuse.

Earth science major Nicholas Bulat, a senior, said that the event helped bring residents and RAs together.

"It is a good opportunity to inform the residents to make better decisions and overall have us engage as a community," Bulat said.

Capasso also said he encourages more students to attend similar informative events.

"It's a good way to get involved with people from your building and learn new things," Capasso said.

Lastrina said that he hopes that attendees take into account the information that the session provided.

"My hope is for the next generation to be more informed about cannabis to help prevent drug misuse," Lastrina said.

Seasonal changes affect students' day-to-day schedules

By RoselynMartin S. Ilo.
Contributer

As winter approaches and mornings turn colder, students at the university are finding it tougher than ever to crawl out of bed.

Between balancing classes, sports and social lives, sleep quality is a growing concern on campus, and students are feeling the impact.

"It's brutal getting out of bed when you know it's freezing outside," sport management major Delaney Haines, a senior, said, "but basketball is my passion, so I push through. When that alarm goes off, I don't even think twice—I just go."

Psychology major Lastrianna Haynes, a senior, also battles sleep issues, but hers stem more from late-night studying and the pressures of her course load.

"I'll be up until midnight sometimes, just studying or thinking about all the assignments due," Haynes said. "Then when I finally get to bed, I'm wide awake. I've tried everything from chamomile tea to meditation, but sometimes the stress just wins."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's publication on sleep habits, creating a consistent bedtime routine can help manage seasonal sleep disturbances.



PHOTO | INSTAGRAM

Fall foliage in the West Campus Quad on Nov. 8.

The CDC suggests that strategies like avoiding caffeine late in the day and limiting screen time before bed can aid in establishing a sleep-friendly environment.

Others on campus are trying different strategies to improve their sleep quality and achieve a restful night.

Psychology major Tariq Hollingsworth, a senior, said he sees some students turning to melatonin, but he takes a more natural approach.

"I've noticed people relying on melatonin, but I prefer to stay away from it," Hollingsworth said. "I just switch off my screens and let my mind settle. It's a gamble every night, but I'd rather fall asleep naturally than depend on something."

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine's report on melatonin use warns that while melatonin can be useful in adjusting sleep cycles, it is not meant for long-term use.

Frequent reliance on melatonin can lead to dependency, which may affect natural sleep cycles if overused.

Haines noted that prioritizing sleep is just as important as training.

"On the court, you need energy to stay competitive, and without proper sleep, you're setting yourself up to fail," Haines said. "Sometimes, you just have to remind yourself that sleep is part of the grind."

Haynes also said that individuals should not jeopardize a good night's rest.

Haynes said: "If sleep isn't a priority, everything else suffers. You can push through for a while, but eventually, it catches up with you."