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Group hopes forum hikes binge drinking awareness

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
The Daily News

"A first-time person who binges and drinks a fifth of liquor or 20 beers ... is prone to die."

"A first-time person who binges and drinks a fifth of liquor or 20 beers ... is prone to die."

“Timothy Toms couldn’t walk for six months after an intoxicated driver hit his car.

Tuesday night, he stood in front of a roomful of others who share his concern about alcohol abuse. Toms survived his 1984 traffic accident but sees first-hand the consequences of alcohol use at his job at The Medical Center’s emergency room.

"The sad part about accidents is they usually involve innocents," said Toms, one of 17 people who spoke about his experiences at a Bowling Green-Warren County Partnership for a Drug-Free Community forum.

The group’s focus was to raise awareness about binge drinking and exchange information, said Richard Bridges, executive director of the partnership.

Speakers included representatives of Western Kentucky University, the city and county school systems, the Warren County attorney’s office, the Alcohol Beverage Control commissioner and healthcare professionals.

"A first-time person who binges and drinks a fifth of liquor or 20 beers ... is prone to die," Toms said.

In 677 cases since January at The Medical Center in which blood-alcohol content was measured, 63 percent of the people were intoxicated, Toms said.

Not all of those cases involved college students, but the recent deaths of students at universities in other states have turned the spotlight on campus binge drinking.

College students across the nation spend $5.5 billion on alcohol each year, which is more than they spend on books, soda, juice and milk combined, Toms said.

Jerry Wilder, vice president for student affairs at Western, said efforts are being made to cut the number of student binge drinkers. But more strategies are needed, he said.

"Are we aware of it? Yes we are," he said.

"Can we do more? We better do more."

Richard Wilson, a Western health professor, said the meeting helped create a dialogue between different segments of the community. He said the different groups can learn from each other and may be able to offer solutions later.

"We really decided we needed to keep working," he said. "One meeting doesn’t solve anything."

The group touched on the ideas of stricter regulation of sales to minors, marketing strategies to keep students from drinking and ensuring students with problems get treatment.

A second meeting has not been planned, but more discussion is needed, Wilson said.
Campus crime: Silent vs. public justice

WKU newspaper advisor applauds court ruling on disciplinary records

By ROBERT GREENE
The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — A student who drew swastikas on dormitory walls at the University of Georgia received an open hearing last month before a student judiciary panel.

That might not seem unusual to a public used to an endless parade of courtroom trials on television. But open coverage of the shady side of campus life has been another matter until recently.

Growing public interest in campus safety and legal efforts by some campus newspapers are challenging the notion that sexual assaults and other violent crimes can be dealt with in a quiet way that protects student privacy and, critics say, institutional reputations.

Colleges and universities defend the need for the centuries-old wall between town and gown.

Justice can be swifter and occasionally more severe, they say, as when members of the St. John's University lacrosse team were expelled earlier this decade for sexually abusing a student despite an acquittal in criminal court.

The U.S. Supreme Court touched on the issue Monday when it let stand an Ohio Supreme Court ruling that Miami University could not withhold student disciplinary records from the campus newspaper, The Miami Student.

Although the ruling applies only in Ohio, Western Kentucky University student publications advisor Robert Adams expects that universities across the nation could be affected.

“Newspapers will act on this,” he said. “They will see it as a green light.”

Wanting information about disciplinary proceedings isn’t new on the Bowling Green campus. Several cases in previous years have sparked Western’s student newspaper, the College Heights Herald, to urge Western’s administration to open proceedings.

Several years ago, a student who was caught with a gun in his room was asked for his disciplinary hearing to be open, but the university refused.

Disciplinary actions that involve a crime or something important to the community should be open, Adams said.

“I think the more things done in public, the better off people are,” he said. Otherwise, “it raises the question about special treatment for ‘special’ people.”

He hopes the Ohio case makes a difference here, where he thinks the Herald’s student editors will be more likely to demand that future disciplinary hearing be open.

The decision by the Ohio Supreme Court isn’t the first battle won by university newspapers.

In Georgia, a similar legal battle was fought and won four years ago on behalf of The Red and Black, the paper at the University of Georgia at Athens.

Other campus newspapers are struggling with access as well, according to Mark Goodman, executive director of the Student Press Law Center, based in Arlington, Va.

Congress, too, may consider a change in federal laws on reporting campus crime data to require that proceedings of campus-based tribunals and their records be made public.

“What has become increasingly apparent over the last few years is that schools are channeling criminal incidents away from campus law enforcement agencies and into these campus disciplinary proceedings,” Goodman said.

It’s not just a press issue. The congressional General Accounting Office reported in March that accurate reporting of campus crime figures has been hindered because privacy rules keep campus police from verifying information given to academic officials.

The dispute stems from the 20-year-old Family Education Rights and Privacy Act which bars release of “education records” that directly or indirectly reveal a person’s identity.

Adams said that law was intended to protect academic records and shouldn’t apply to criminal acts.

Sheldon B. Steinbach, general counsel for the American Council on Education, an umbrella group for colleges, universities and other institutions, said the Ohio and Georgia rulings were exceptions to “over 20 years of consistent interpretations” of the act.

The privacy safeguard is there for a reason, he said.

“It is not, as it is often portrayed, designed to be a cover-up. It is designed to promote an academic community that functions as best as it can in light of society as a whole.”

Students generally are told they have the choice of going to a regular court if they are victims, he said. In some cases, university discipline can resolve a problem faster, he said, as when a student complains of a “sexual impropriety” by another student down the hall.

“By the time one litigated any kind of complaint under the county or state judicial system, the semester would be long gone,” Steinbach said.

– The Daily News contributed information for this story.
Downtown parking structure pushed

Despite study's findings, idea still getting attention

By DOUGLAS YOUNG
The Daily News

Despite a Western Kentucky University economic administrator's study that showed no need for a downtown parking structure that could cost $5.5 million, Bowling Green Mayor Eldon Renaud is pushing ahead with such a plan.

The mayor has spoken for several months in closed circles about a possible downtown parking structure on an existing parking lot at Main and 10th avenues. Though no detailed cost figures have been prepared, one estimate to build a three-level, 550-spot garage is about $5.5 million.

Renaud says the structure is needed because downtown parking problems are getting worse in part because of the under-construction Warren County Justice Center and a growing emphasis on events and attractions.

But Wayne Hoffman, director of Western's Center for Local Government, saw no need for a parking structure after studying the extent of the downtown parking shortage, Renaud said. The mayor asked Hoffman to do the study after meeting with Jack Eversole, Barren River Area Development District director. "I felt like it needed some study," Eversole said, "and Dr. Hoffman has the capability of doing that."

Unconvinced by Hoffman's decision, however, Renaud said he approached Indianapolis-based architectural firm HNTB Corp. about another study called a needs analysis. That study would cost the city $30,000 to $40,000 and is not a viable option, Renaud said.

Renaud said he instead will ask a Western engineering technology professor to design a class project that will assist the city's public works department in completing the needs analysis.

Public works Director Bill Hays said such projects have been done using students, and the results have been good.

The research would consist mostly of interviews with people who park downtown and would aim to find out short or long-term parking is needed and how much people would be willing to pay, Hays said. In addition, factors such as whether additional parking would help attract merchants and activities must be considered, Hays said.

Renaud, who has long advocated turning the city's Hartland Municipal Golf Course over to the Convention Center Corp., said the $400,000 the city spends each year on bond payments for the course could be used to help fund the structure.

Warren County Judge-Executive Mike Buchanan said Renaud has not approached him about funding a parking structure.

"If it was feasible and something we could derive a return from, it's possible" the county would help fund such a project, Buchanan said. "There will be a need for additional parking. There is a great deal going on, particularly revolving around the Justice Center."
The frightening world of date rape

By JASON RILEY
The Daily News

Heather Robbins has become more careful about who she dates. The 22-year-old Western Kentucky University student, like many other women in America, knows a victim of date rape.

"I have a really hard time trusting people now. I am more aware of the dangers involved in dating, even if it is someone you think you know," Robbins said.

The book "I never called it rape" says one of every four college women have been a victim of rape or an attempted rape.

Patti Collins, outreach coordinator and sexual assault officer at Western’s student life center, said the sexual assault office has received about 25 reports of rape in the past two years.

But date rape is one of the most under-reported crimes in this country, she said.

Lori Reeves, communication education at Bowling Green’s Rape Crisis and Prevention Center, said date rape is under-reported because the victims often face public scrutiny.

"People scrutinize the victim’s sexual behavior prior to the rape, the clothes she wore, and even why she was out to begin with," Reeves said. "Society tends to think you deserved what you got for drinking and being at a party. Many victims can’t deal with it."

Date rape also is more accepted by society than rape by a stranger, Reeves said.

"People are ready to go out on manhunts when someone is raped by a stranger, but if a girl is raped by an acquaintance, they blame the victim. If they don’t see evidence of horrible violence, they don’t consider it rape," she said.

Almost 75 percent of all rapes are acquaintance rapes, Reeves said.

Collins said the definition of rape under state law is: Sexual intercourse by forcible compulsion (threat or physical force expressed or implied) or with a person incapable of consenting (because of age or physical incapacity).

The last part of that definition is extremely relevant for college students and dating, Collins said.

"If you are on a date with someone who is intoxicated, it is probably not in your best interest to engage in sex, unless it was previously discussed, because that person in not able to give consent," Collins said.

It is possible for a woman to come back and claim she had been raped even if she had consented at the time, she said.

This is a fact not lost on some men, including 20-year-old Clay Ellis of Bowling Green.

"It is very scary to think that, if you are both drunk and both consent, she can come back after the fact and accuse you of rape no matter what happened at the time," Ellis said. "If she really believed she was raped, I would feel terrible, regardless of whether she consented or not."

This is why communication between the two parties is important, Collins said.

"You should discuss your feelings about sexual relations with that person ahead of time. If you talk about it, there is a clear understanding of where you both stand," she said.

About 70 percent of all rapes are alcohol-related, according to the Kentucky sexual assault program in Frankfort.

Along with discussing sex ahead of time, there are other ways women— and men— can protect themselves from date rape.

Women who drink alcohol should get their own drinks at parties, Collins said. The drug Rohypnol can be slipped into drinks and used as a sedative. Just two milligrams of the drug can sedate a normal-sized person for up to eight hours.

Reeves also stressed that people should follow their instincts.

"Pay attention to your fears, don’t put it off as you just being weird. Many of the women we have talked to who have been raped had a bad feeling at the beginning of the date but ignored it," she said.

Robbins considers that to be sound advice.

"You have to trust your instincts. If you get a gut feeling about someone, go with it. There are to many other fish in the sea to take a chance on someone you not sure about," she said.
Dollars a sign of county's status

A skywalk over dangerous University Boulevard would be the safest solution for Western Kentucky University students and others, but the Transportation Cabinet's adoption of less-expensive relief should help until such a skywalk becomes a reality.

At least five students have been struck by automobiles on University Boulevard near Creason Drive since 1992, and long before that there was widespread dismay over the hazard.

While the state says a $500,000 sky crossing is out of the question for now, worries about the intersection apparently have been taken seriously by the right people.

New safety measures would include sound strips on the road surface to warn approaching drivers of the danger to pedestrians, permanently flashing yellow lights, stricter traffic-law enforcement and a study to determine if lowering the speed limit to 25 mph would help.

Of equal concern to the absence of the skywalk from state plans for Warren County is the failure to include any funds for completion of the northern portion of an outer loop around Bowling Green, a project pushed by many government and civic leaders as essential to the relief of traffic congestion and the further development of Warren County.

Even with the state plan's shortcomings, however, Warren County could reap numerous valuable road projects under the six-year outline announced by the state.

Especially noteworthy is the advancement of the schedule for widening two-lane sections of Cemetery Road to Interstate 65 and the construction of an interchange with the interstate highway.

This will not please everyone living along Cemetery Road, one of Bowling Green's most scenic drives.

Many resident of the area remain apprehensive that commercial zones will be allowed to intrude on established residential areas despite various state and local assurances to the contrary.

The state will encounter less resistance in its intentions to reconstruct U.S. 231 from near Old Scottsville Road to the Allen County line. The highway's many curves render it perilous, especially for trucks, presenting an impediment to Bowling Green-Scottsville commerce.

Another project, the widening of I-65 to six lanes near Bowling Green, will help avert tie-ups and will relieve intra-county traffic.

In total, the state anticipates spending $125 million on Warren County road improvements over the next six years, subject to legislative review of the plan.

Not every desirable project is on the list, especially since Bowling Green and Warren County traffic has been allowed to so greatly outgrow the accommodations of existing streets and highways.

In the past, the state has not always appreciated Warren County's role as one of the dynamos powering Kentucky's economy.

We hope the Transportation Cabinet's substantial plans for roadwork here signal realization that Warren has become one of Kentucky's most important counties.
WKU crosswalk help on the way

Western Kentucky University students cross University Boulevard at the crosswalk near Creason Drive. Five students have been struck by cars at the site since 1992.

Temporary measures will be taken at site of numerous pedestrian accidents on campus

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
The Daily News

Western President Gary Ransdell said the state Transportation Cabinet will install immediately, as part of the first stage in a plan to make University Boulevard safer for pedestrians.

The rumble strips, which Western President Gary Ransdell said the state Transportation Cabinet will install immediately, are part of the first stage in a plan to make University Boulevard safer for pedestrians.

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT
The Daily News

Western President Gary Ransdell said the state Transportation Cabinet will install immediately, is part of the first stage in a plan to make University Boulevard safer for pedestrians.

Five Western students have been hit at University Boulevard crosswalks since 1992.

The plan came out of a closed-door meeting Monday that included Ransdell, Student Government Association President Keith Coffman, local leaders, state lawmakers and state Transportation Cabinet Secretary James Codell.

Ransdell said the group outlined three other steps that will be taken immediately:

• Flashing school-zone lights that warn motorists to reduce speed to 25 mph will be left on permanently.

• A study will look at whether 25 mph is the appropriate speed for that zone.

• Police will be assigned to strictly enforce the speed limit.

• A study will look at whether 25 mph is the appropriate speed for that zone.

The steps might be only temporary while long-term solutions are studied, House Speaker Jody Richards D-Bowling Green, said.

Richards favors installing an elevated skywalk, but plans for that project could take years. More studies would be needed to determine the cost and if pedestrians would use it, he said.

In the meantime, something must be done now to “save the maiming and harming of pedestrians,” Richards said.

Coffman said he’s pleased with the first steps.

“It (University Boulevard) is going to become a lot safer,” he said. “It’s a move in the right direction. It was a good first step.”

Installing a skywalk, which the SGA has campaigned for since early 1996, would eliminate all of the problems and would benefit pedestrians and motorists, Coffman said.
State Transportation Cabinet employee Bill Hagan heats asphalt on University Boulevard near Creason Drive. Hagan was preparing the crosswalk for the application of a series of strips, which cause a vibration for motorists. The vibration from the strips will alert motorists to the nearby crosswalk, where five Western Kentucky University students have been struck by vehicles since 1992.
Western decides against land buy

Worried small parcel could create bigger problems

By MELINDA J. OVERSTREET

Western Kentucky University will concentrate on repairing property it already owns rather than spending nearly $100,000 for a small parcel of land on 14th Avenue.

The university bid on property at 330-340 E. 14th Ave. that was up for auction last month, but it held the bid until a meeting Friday of the university's board of regents.

Regents voted unanimously not to buy the property.

Barbara Burch, who was interim president at the time, said she decided an offer should be made on the property after consulting with some of the board members. One of two buildings on the land was deemed in good structural condition, but a recommendation was made that the other would be demolished for parking or other uses.

Regent Burns Mercer said Burch made a good decision to make a bid and then let the board make a final decision later. He said he originally thought the land might help address a critical need in parking space, but later determined that not enough parking spaces would fit to make it a good purchase.

Western President Gary Ransdell said he thought it would be too expensive to tear the buildings down to put in a small number of parking spaces and that there could be hidden costs if the buildings were found to contain asbestos or have other problems.

He said the university has properties now that are deteriorating and it would be better to focus on a strategy to improve them.

Crosswalk worries pushed to forefront

By the Daily News

Western Kentucky University's governing body has approved a resolution to work to find a solution to safety worries about crosswalks on University Boulevard.

Six students have been injured at the crosswalks since 1992, including one who was struck last month.

The university's board of regents approved a resolution that gives President Gary Ransdell the authority to work with state highway department representatives to find an answer to the problem.

The state must be involved because the crosswalks are on a state road.

One of the measures that has been discussed has been construction of a pedestrian skywalk across the road.
Schools may get warning sirens

County, city boards will vote on issue tonight

By CAMERON HUDDLESTON
The Daily News

Outdoor warning sirens will be placed on two schools if the city and county school boards agree to the plan tonight.

Warren County Disaster and Emergency Services wants the Bowling Green school board to contribute $500 toward the purchase of a siren that would be placed at Bowling Green High School, city schools spokesman Joe Tinius said.

Warren County’s school board has been asked to approve the installation of a siren at Cumberland Trace Elementary School but has not been asked to pay for it, Superintendent Leonard McCoy said.

The sirens would be part of a countywide system that would warn people about severe weather, hazardous chemical spills and other disasters.

“Certainly we like the idea it’s going to give us a very quick warning,” Tinius said.

But he does not know whether the school board will contribute to the purchase of a $14,000 siren or even approve the installation of one. The matter will be discussed at today’s 7 p.m. meeting at the city schools central office on Center Street.

McCoy also will not know whether the county schools will approve a siren until the board meets at 7 p.m. today at Lost River Elementary School.

Western Kentucky University currently has the only outdoor siren in Bowling Green, but 10 more could go up within the next few weeks, DES Assistant Coordinator Mae Burch said.

Hill’s Pet Nutrition, General Motors Corvette Plant, The Medical Center and Columbia Greenview Regional Hospital have made commitments to purchase some of the 10 sirens that have been ordered. Burch said the DES is working to collect the money for the purchases.

The city of Bowling Green and Bowling Green Municipal Utilities also have agreed to purchase a siren. Warren County Fiscal Court will pay for maintenance of the siren system.

The sites for the sirens have not been finalized, Burch said.

The DES and the county’s hazardous mitigation team originally planned to raise enough money for the purchase of 21 sirens to be placed throughout the county, but Burch said it will take more than that to cover the growing population in the county.

“We’re asking for help from a lot of people because it is a community effort,” she said.
Public Hearing On DUI Set For May 14th At WKU

The Kentucky Task Force on Driving Under the Influence will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, May 14, at 6:30 p.m. at Western Kentucky University, Garrett Hall, Bowling Green. Paula Freeman, co-chair of the task force and Kentucky State Executive Director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), will conduct the meeting along with representatives from the Attorney General's office.

Edmonson County Sheriff James Holder said he plans to attend the public hearing and offer some thoughts and insights. "I think it should be a felony on the first offense, not fourth. The way the law is now, the person driving under the influence is given four chances to kill some innocent person," Holder said.

Attorney General Ben Chandler and Freeman have joined forces to examine current DUI laws and how to reform these laws to protect Kentucky's citizens. The Kentucky Task Force on Driving Under the Influence is charged with the duty of keeping the issue of impaired driving in the public eye.

Campaigns such as National Drunk Driving Prevention Month and MADD's Tie One On For Safety during the holidays have drawn increasing support. Also, use of local law enforcement efforts such as "sting" operations and "Cops in the Shops" have added awareness to educate Kentuckians about underage drinking.

"The death of a loved one due to drunk driving is not an accident, and we must do all we can to prevent another loss of life because of these senseless--and preventable--tragedies," said Chandler as he pointed to a display of photographs of people killed as a result of drunk driving.

"We must make DUI prevention, enforcement, conviction and punishment a top priority in Kentucky. Our goal is to make Kentucky's streets and highways free of drunk drivers. That's why in cooperation with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, we've created this task force. The task force has been charged with studying seven specific areas that need to be addressed in the fight against drunk driving," said Chandler.

The seven areas are: under age drinking; prevention and education; statute change from .10 to .08 per se; color coded license for drivers under 21; inconsistencies of current Kentucky laws; interstate credit of DUI convictions; testing of deceased drivers; and creation of a specific offense of child endangerment.

As a result of this effort, the Kentucky Task Force on Driving Under the Influence (DUI) will be in your area. We are making an effort to hear local concerns, questions on this issue and to provide you with information we have gathered, possible changes to the law, and new procedures to attack the serious problem of Driving Under the Influence.

We will be in Bowling Green on May 14 at Western Kentucky University. The public hearing will start at 6:30 p.m. local time in the Garrett Ballroom, Garrett Conference Hall. I strongly encourage you to attend and provide us with your thoughts and insights.

If you need any further information, please contact Benny R. Bailey II at (502) 564-7600 or via fax number (502) 564-8310. He is primarily responsible for coordinating the activities of the Task Force.

We look forward to seeing you at the hearing.

Sincerely,
A.B. Chandler III
Attorney General
Paula Freeman
Executive Director
Kentucky MADD
In limbo

South Shore owes it to acting chief to clarify his position with the city

The South Shore City Commission owes it to “acting” police chief Jerry Cassidy to clarify his position with the city. More than three years is a long time to be “acting” in any position.

Cassidy, who at times has not only been police chief but the entire police force for the small town, has done what the city’s elected leaders asked of him when they named him acting chief in January 1994. He has earned his high school equivalency degree and even completed 10-week law enforcement training courses at Eastern Kentucky University and at Western Kentucky University. That makes him better trained than many law enforcement officers in small towns throughout the state.

But Cassidy still is acting chief — at least in the mind of Mayor Clyde Callihan. Members of the city commission disagree. The commission wants to name Cassidy chief and claims it has the power to do so. Callihan disagrees. At issue is whether South Shore is a fifth- or sixth-class city. In a fifth-class city with a city commission form of government, the commissioners share administrative and legislative duties with the mayor. In a sixth-class city, the mayor has more power to make appointments.

However, at issue here is more than just a power struggle between the mayor and commissioners, for it involves the leadership of the city’s three-person police force. Callihan said he is not entirely satisfied with Cassidy’s handling of police paperwork, but he needs to be more specific than that to make a case for replacing the chief.

If the mayor believes someone else is better suited for the job, he needs to propose that person as chief. Cassidy has been in limbo long enough. The city should either give him clear authority to operate the small department by naming him chief — or replace him.
License tags raise money for universities

Associated Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Eight public universities are picking up scholarship money from the sale of personalized auto license tags bearing their names.

Last year, they received $6,275 from the state, with the University of Kentucky collecting $3,780 on the sale of 756 plates. The University of Louisville was second with $1,225 for 245 tags.

Other schools: Western Kentucky University 109 tags, $545; Eastern Kentucky University 58, $290; Morehead State 29, $145; Murray State 24, $120; Northern Kentucky University 20, $100; and Kentucky State 14, $70.

Bernie Vonderheide, UK director of public relations, originated the idea and approached then-state Rep. Bob Jones, who introduced legislation in the General Assembly.

"I've always had the idea that Kentucky ought to have a university license program like other states have," Vonderheide said Wednesday.

Some of the best publicity comes from the plates themselves as they travel throughout the state on the back of automobiles, said John D. Trager, assistant director of the Department of Vehicle Regulation.

County clerks sell the plates for $30, plus the normal registration fee. A total of $5 goes to the university's scholarship fund, and $25 to the Transportation Cabinet for the maintenance of roads."

Personalized plates mean scholarship money for schools

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The university plates are eight of about 30 specialty plates sold in Kentucky and are by far the most popular, Trager said.
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Fire destroys WKU fraternity house

BOWLING GREEN — Fifteen students at Western Kentucky University will be offered free housing in the school's residence halls following a fire early Tuesday that destroyed their fraternity house near campus. Provisions were also being made for the students to receive help with meals, textbooks, clothing and counseling, said Jerry Wilder, vice president for student affairs.

The fire broke out shortly before 2:30 a.m. CST and gutted the 2½-story Kappa Alpha fraternity house. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed. The cause of the fire remained under investigation, said Greg Turner, assistant fire chief. He said there were no signs of arson.

One student dashed back into the burning house to rescue another fraternity member as he slept on the top floor, Hallard said.

Student faces arson charges following fraternity house blaze

All 15 occupants escaped the fire without injury

Associated Press

BOWLING GREEN — A Western Kentucky University student was arrested and charged Wednesday with arson in connection with a fire that destroyed a fraternity house near the school.

Charles Wick II, 19, was being held at the Warren County Regional Jail with bond set at $100,000, said Deputy Fire Chief Oscar Cherry.

Wick was arrested at 12:30 p.m. following a joint investigation by the fire department and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

ATF Agent Don York, a public information officer in the bureau's Louisville office, said Wick was pledged to Kappa Alpha and lived near the fraternity's 2½-story house, which burned down early Tuesday.

York said Wick woke up the house's sleeping residents after the fire was started. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

The university issued a statement saying it would not comment on the arrest.

The displaced students were offered housing in the school's residence halls. Provisions were also being made for them to receive help with meals, textbooks, clothing and counseling.

Campus groups had raised about $1,500 for the displaced students by late Wednesday afternoon.

End alcohol policy on campus, Baptists urge WKU

BOWLING GREEN (AP) — More than 18,000 Warren County Baptists have signed off on a resolution urging Western Kentucky University officials not to consider any policy that would allow alcoholic beverages on campus.

"We're trying to make a statement to help not only the university, but the community," said the Rev. Joe Causey, who serves on the Warren Association of Baptists Resolutions Committee that wrote the resolution.

Causey, the pastor at Providence Knob Baptist Church, said the association of Southern Baptist churches wrote the resolution "based on what we feel the Lord (is) leading us to do."

Copies of the resolution were sent to Western President Gary Ransdell and regents.

Western's student handbook forbids underage drinking and that will continue, but a university-wide policy does not exist, he said.
College students will foot bills for upgrading safety at dorms

By CHARLES WOLFE
Associated Press Writer

FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) — Students living on campus at Kentucky’s public universities will shoulder most of the cost for bringing their residence halls up to modern fire-safety standards.

Housing fees likely will increase an average of $100 a semester per resident, presidents of the universities told the Council on Postsecondary Education on Monday.

The fees currently range from about $600 to $1,100 per semester for a double-occupancy room, according to council figures.

The bulk of the work, expected to cost $14.8 million, is to be financed by bond sales. Student housing and dining fees would be used to pay the bonds.

The modernization, including installation of sprinklers in upper floors not easily evacuated, was prompted by a student’s death in a fire at a Murray State University dorm in September.

The dorm, Hester Hall, was among dozens of university buildings constructed before 1972. Sprinklers have been required since then.

“These fire codes have caught up with us, and now we have to adjust,” Todd Earwood, president of the Murray State student body, said in an interview.

Murray State and Western Kentucky University plan to entirely finance the work on their buildings. Estimates of the cost are $3.8 million at Murray State and $3.4 million at Western Kentucky. The other institutions have cash reserves with which to absorb part of the cost.

Students at the meeting said safety in public buildings is the government’s responsibility. “Seems like these students are being asked to pay for their own safety,” said John Cary, the council’s student representative.

Earwood, a graduate student whose hometown is Murray, said the institutions were being given an unfunded mandate.

“Is the university going to have to pick and choose? Do they want fire safety or do they want ... maintenance of a building. Something’s going to be neglected,” Earwood said.

Murray State President Kern Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety. “Help from the legislature will, of course, be welcome,” Alexander said. But the General Assembly is not scheduled to meet until January 2000.
Fire destroys WKU fraternity house

Officials say no signs of arson

BOWLING GREEN (AP) — Fifteen students at Western Kentucky University will be offered free housing in the school's residence halls following a fire early Tuesday that destroyed their fraternity house near campus.

Provisions were also being made for the students to receive help with meals, textbooks, clothing and counseling, said Jerry Wilder, vice president for student affairs.

The fire broke out shortly before 2:30 a.m. CST and gutted the 2½-story Kappa Alpha fraternity house.

All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

The cause of the fire remained under investigation, said Greg Turner, assistant fire chief.

He said there were no signs of arson, as in the case of a dormitory fire at Murray State University on Sept. 18 that killed student Michael Minger, 19, of Niceville, Fla. Seven people were arrested in connection with that fire.

"It was pretty chaotic," said Josh Ballard, 21, a Kappa Alpha member awakened by the fraternity house's smoke alarms and the smell of smoke.

"A lot of guys weren't aware of what was going on," Ballard said.

One student dashed back into the burning house to rescue another fraternity member asleep on the top floor, Ballard said.

Once firefighters arrived, the back of the house was engulfed in flames.

The roof later collapsed as firefighters worked to contain the fire.

"There's nothing left to really save," said Greg Turner, assistant fire chief.

Ballard, a junior, stood alongside other fraternity members to stare at the smoldering remains of their house.

"We're devastated by it," he said.

"You have 15 guys who live there and now we don't have a place to live. Everything is gone."

A couple of students were still awake when the fire broke out, Ballard said.

The students rushed out but at least one slept through the sounding alarms.

Jody Wick, a freshman, ran back into the building and woke up junior Beau Frick and rushed him out of the house, Ballard said.

"The fire was well on its way to surrounding the house," he said.

"He took a large risk to go up there and save this guy's life."

City fire investigators were continuing to look for a cause, Turner said.

The fraternity house was an older structure two blocks from the Western Kentucky campus.
WKU student pleads innocent in fire

Hillview teen accused of arson at his fraternity

By CHRIS POYNTER
The Courier-Journal

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — Charles Wick shuffled into a Warren County courtroom yesterday, his eyes red, his hands and ankles shackled, and pleaded innocent to setting a fire that destroyed his Kappa Alpha fraternity house.

The 19-year-old Western Kentucky University freshman glanced around the courtroom packed with fraternity brothers, friends and his parents.

Wick sat hunched in a chair as he buried his face in his hands and wept. Then he looked toward the ceiling, closing his eyes in apparent anguish.

If convicted of first-degree arson, Wick, of Hillview in Bullitt County, faces 20 years to life in prison for the fire at his fraternity house, located about two blocks from campus. All 15 people in the house escaped unharmed, and Wick initially was congratulated for helping wake students. The fire began around 2:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Yesterday, Wick’s attorney, Alan Simpson, asked Warren Circuit Judge John Minton Jr. to reduce Wick’s $100,000 cash bond. Commonwealth’s Attorney Steve Wilson said he opposed the reduction because of the seriousness of the crime.

Minton refused to reduce the bond, and he ordered Wick — known to his friends as Jody — to undergo a psychiatric evaluation to determine if he has an alcohol problem. Wick’s attorney requested the exam.

Wick has been convicted twice of alcohol-related offenses.

In July, he was arrested in Taylor County for driving under the influence. His blood-alcohol level was 0.197 percent. In Kentucky, a driver is presumed drunk at 0.10 or higher.

Last December, Wick was arrested in Bowling Green for public intoxication after an officer saw him fall on the sidewalk.

“He was unable to get up on his own due to being very intoxicated,” according to the police report. Wick paid a $77.50 fine.

Investigators won’t say if alcohol was a factor in the blaze being set at the 100-year-old fraternity house.

The fire is the second arson in two months at a Kentucky university. On Sept. 18, a fire at Murray State killed one student and seriously injured another. Seven people, six of them current or former Murray students, are charged in the case — one with murder and the rest with lesser charges.

After the WKU fire, Wick’s fraternity brothers called him a hero for rushing inside to awaken his friends. He lived in a small house just behind the fraternity.

Yesterday, about 50 fraternity members and friends were in the courtroom when he arrived in his bright orange jail jumpsuit. Some wiped away tears. After court, they didn’t comment.

John Deeb, an alumni advisor, said the group supports Wick.

“The brothers do stand behind Mr. Wick, and they believe in the criminal justice system,” Deeb said. “They are still in shock and disbelief and quite surprised.”

By Jim Roshan, Special to the C-J

Charles Wick, shown with his attorney, Alan Simpson, broke down at his arraignment yesterday.
Student arraigned in fraternity house fire

BOWLING GREEN (AP) — A Western Kentucky University student was arraigned Friday on arson charges in connection with a fire at a fraternity house.

The fire early Tuesday destroyed the Kappa Alpha fraternity house near the Western Kentucky campus. Charles Wick II, 19, a Western Kentucky freshman and Kappa Alpha pledge, was arrested the next day.

Don York, a public information officer in the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms’ Louisville office, said Wick woke up the house’s sleeping residents after the fire was started. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

Wick’s attorney, Alan Simpson, asked Friday that Wick’s bond be reduced. However, Warren Circuit Judge John Minton kept Wick’s bond at $100,000, noting the severity of the alleged offense and an alcohol conviction in Warren County and a DUI in Taylor County.

Fire guts fraternity house at WKU; residents escape

By CHRIS POYNTER
The Courier-Journal

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. — Steve Thomas was watching television at the Kappa Alpha fraternity house at Western Kentucky University early yesterday morning when he noticed smoke rising from the heat register in the floor.

Minutes after the 15 students inside escaped, the three-story brick building was engulfed in flames that illuminated the night sky. No one was injured in the blaze, although one student leaped from a second-story window and had his fall broken by an awning.

The building was destroyed.

Thomas said he jumped from the couch after smelling the smoke and opened the living-room door. “I couldn’t see two feet in front of me,” he said. Thomas, a junior from Nicholasville, Ky., beat on bedroom doors to wake his fraternity brothers.

Fire alarms and smoke detectors in the building went off just as Thomas noticed smoke coming through the register. The building didn’t have sprinklers.

The blaze started around 2:30 a.m. as most students were sleeping. It apparently began in the basement or on the first floor. It appears to have been accidental, although the cause hasn’t been determined, said Greg Turner, Bowling Green’s assistant fire chief.

It is the second serious fire in two months at a Kentucky college. On Sept. 18, a student was killed and another seriously injured in arson at a Murray State University dorm. Seven people, six of them current or former Murray students, have been charged in that case, one with murder and arson. The others face charges of conspiracy or complicity. They have pleaded innocent.

Eighteen firefighters extinguished yesterday’s blaze but didn’t enter the fraternity house because flames were so intense, said Richard Storey, the city’s fire marshal. He and other officials began investigating yes...
Student charged in frat fire

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (AP) — A Western Kentucky University student was arrested and charged with arson in connection with a fire that destroyed a fraternity house near the school.

Charles Wick II, 19, was being held at the Warren County Regional Jail with bond set at $100,000, said Deputy Fire Chief Oscar Cherry.

Wick was arrested at 12:30 p.m. CST Wednesday following a joint investigation by the fire department and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

ATF Agent Don York, a public information officer in the bureau's Louisville office, said Wick was pledged to Kappa Alpha and lived near the fraternity's 2½-story house, which burned down early Tuesday.

York said Wick woke up the house's sleeping residents after the fire was started. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

The university issued a statement saying it would not comment on the arrest.

The displaced students were offered housing in the school's residence halls. Provisions were also being made for them to receive help with meals, textbooks, clothing and counseling.

Campus groups had raised about $1,500 for the students by late Wednesday afternoon, the school said.

Fire safety to hike fees for students

BY CHARLES WOLFE
ASSOCIATE PRESS

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Students living on campus at Kentucky's public universities will shoulder most of the cost for bringing their residence halls up to modern fire-safety standards.

Housing fees probably will increase an average of $100 a semester per resident, presidents of the universities told the Council on Postsecondary Education on Monday.

The fees currently range from about $600 to $1,100 per semester for a double-occupancy room, according to council figures.

Murray State and Western Kentucky University plan to entirely finance the work on their buildings. Estimates of the cost are $3.3 million at Murray State and $3.4 million at Western Kentucky. The other institutions have cash reserves with which to absorb part of the cost.

Students at the meeting said safety in public buildings is the government's responsibility. "Seems like these students are being asked to pay for their own safety," said John Cary, the council's student representative.

Todd Earwood, president of the Murray State student body and a graduate student from Murray, said the institutions were being given an unfunded mandate.

"Is the university going to have to pick and choose? Do they want fire, or do they want ... maintenance of a building? Something's going to be neglected," he said.

Murray State President Kern Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety. "Help from the legislature will, of course, be welcome," Alexander said. But the General Assembly is not scheduled to meet until January 2000.

The bulk of the work, expected to cost $14.8 million, is to be financed by bond sales. Student housing and dining fees would be used to pay the bonds.

The modernization, including installation of sprinklers in upper floors not easily evacuated, was prompted by a student's death in a fire at Hester Hall, a Murray State University dorm, in September.

Hester Hall was among dozens of university buildings constructed before 1972. Sprinklers have been required since then.

"These fire codes have caught up with us, and now we have to adjust," Earwood said.

Bowling Green

ARRAIGNMENT: A Western Kentucky University student was arraigned Friday on arson charges in connection with a fire early Tuesday that destroyed Kappa Alpha fraternity house. Charles Wick II, 19, a freshman and Kappa Alpha pledge, was arrested the next day.
15 students helped after frat house burns

The Associated Press

BOWLING GREEN — Fifteen students at Western Kentucky University will be offered free housing in the school's residence halls following a fire early Tuesday that destroyed their fraternity house near campus.

Provisions were also being made for the students to receive help with meals, textbooks, clothing and counseling, said Jerry Wilder, vice president for student affairs.

The fire broke out shortly before 2:30 a.m. and gutted the 2½-story Kappa Alpha fraternity house. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

The cause of the fire remained under investigation, said Greg Turner, assistant fire chief. He said there were no signs of arson, as in the case of a dormitory fire at Murray State University on Sept. 18 that killed student Michael Minger, 19, of Niceville, Fla. Seven people were arrested in connection with that fire.

Our view

Where we stand on the issues making news in our world today:

Alcohol stances are hard to blend

Warren County Baptists are expressing their convictions in opposing any Western Kentucky University policy that would permit alcohol on campus.

A resolution representing more than 18,000 Southern Baptists and opposing consumption on campus was delivered to Western President Gary Ransdell and Western regents.

The Rev. Joe Causey explained that the resolution was "based on what we feel the Lord (is) leading us to do." Causey serves on the resolutions committee that wrote the protest.

Opposition to any Western policy officially approving alcohol consumption on campus also could be based on the growing prevalence of binge drinking by college students, a relatively new phenomena in which the sole purpose is intoxication.

The specific policy Western is mulling obviously is not intended to encourage more drinking on the part of students. Instead, it's intent appears nothing more ominous than tolerance of moderate, responsible drinking in social situations involving faculty, alumni and guests.

The policy would restrict alcohol to invitation-only events related to a specific activity and food would be a requirement for the function. No hard liquor would be allowed and the administrator of the hosting department would decide if alcohol could be served.

Those are tight rules and, in themselves, make it clear Western is not intentionally encouraging drunkenness among Westerners.

There is a catch, however.

It is that students of today demand the same rights as faculty members. Should Western adopt the proposed policy, sound as it appears on its face, students will insist on its equal applica

There is no "right" answer to Western's dilemma.

Many universities permit responsible social drinking of the sort Western envisions. Yet, irresponsible drinking by students is a serious problem on almost all campuses.

Ransdell said the university wants to work with the community in coming up with a balanced policy, presumably one that will satisfy all parties.

We wish we knew of such an approach.

We would suggest it.
College students will foot bills for upgrading safety at dorms

By CHARLES WOLFE
Associated Press Writer

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The dorm, Hester Hall, was among dozens of university buildings constructed before 1972. Sprinklers have been required since then.

"These fire codes have caught up with us, and now we have to adjust," Todd Earwood, president of the Murray State student body, said in an interview.

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Earwood, a graduate student whose hometown is Murray, said the institutions were being given an unfunded mandate.

"Is the university going to have to pick and choose? Do they want fire safety or do they want... maintenance of a building. Something's going to be neglected," Earwood said.

Murray State President Kern Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety. "Help from the legislature will, of course, be welcome," Alexander said. But the General Assembly is not scheduled to meet until January 2000.
Alleged ‘hero’ arrested in frat fire at WKU

Charles Joseph "Jody" Wick, a Western Kentucky University student from Hillview, Ky., walks past the smoldering Kappa Alpha Order fraternity house on Nov. 17, just hours after the 100-year old house in Bowling Green, Ky., was gutted by fire. Wick, first hailed as a hero for saving his fraternity brothers, was arrested Wednesday and charged with arson in connection with the fire. (AP Photo/Bowling Green Daily News/Joe Imel)
WKU-state traffic proposal is dead

New plan expected to be announced Monday

By JASON RILEY and JILL NOELLE CECIL
The Daily News

The state Transportation Cabinet will decide what traffic changes will be made to University Boulevard after an agreement between Western Kentucky University and the state was abandoned.

The new plans will be detailed at 8:30 a.m. Monday at Downing University Center.

Western decided a deal to swap land at Campbell Lane and Industrial Drive for the deed to University Boulevard is not necessary after working with the state Transportation Cabinet and Western's adjacent residents and businesses.

Western did not have the deed to the street and wanted control of University Boulevard to address pedestrian-safety issues. Eight students have been struck there since 1992.

The state will keep the Industrial Drive property and will compensate Western, but Vice President for Institutional Advancement Fred Hensley said no decision has been made.

That land will be used as part of an expansion of Campbell Lane.

Hensley declined to disclose any information about the new traffic plan, but he said some of the points suggested by the state are new ideas.

One resident said the state could be more impartial in making a decision. Western had angered some groups with its proposal to make University Boulevard a one-way street, which they said would increase traffic on nearby streets.

"I think they heard us," Deborah Williams said of comments from neighborhood groups. "The only comfort I can get in this I think (is) if we have closure with Western for them to say they're not going to take" University Boulevard.

Williams said she is not exactly sure why the original deal was abandoned.

Williams and other residents have filed an open records request with the Transportation Cabinet that requests any documents about the original arrangement.

Williams said she understands plans to make Normal Drive one-way have also been abandoned.

The new plan for University Boulevard, Williams said, is to move a crosswalk on Creason Drive down to the traffic light at Russellville Road and University Boulevard, and use shrubbery and fencing to keep students from crossing in places other than crosswalks.

"Our plan that we came up with and the plan the community people came up with were very similar," Hensley said. "The final plan will be a composition of suggestions from all of the groups and I think it will be a strong plan."
University says more cops caused more DUI arrests

But students cite 'party school' label

The Associated Press

BOWLING GREEN — Officials at Western Kentucky University say a large increase in drunken-driving arrests on campus during the past school year was largely because of an increased police presence and awareness.

But some students contend that the university’s reputation as a party school was the real culprit.


“Police here have made a conscious effort to (curb) drunk driving,” said Charlie Pride, student activities coordinator at Western Kentucky. “There are more officers, and they are cracking down a little harder.”

Mr. Pride said another possible reason for the increase is Kentucky’s new zero-tolerance law for drunken drivers. Under the law, anyone under the legal drinking age of 21 caught driving with a blood-alcohol level of 0.02 is considered under the influence. For those 21 and over, the DUI standard is 0.10.

“That means if someone has one beer, they will be above a .02,” said Sam Potter Jr., a Warren District Court judge.

The university also had six more officers in uniform last year, giving campus police better odds of detecting offenders, said Mike Wallace, traffic captain.

Not everyone agreed that increased police coverage or tougher state laws were responsible for the higher number of DUI arrests at Western Kentucky.

“Everybody that I talked to about going to Western when I was in high school said it was a big party school. That is just what it is known for,” said Ron Still, a freshman from Louisville. “There are a lot of people who drive drunk here. The parties are off campus, and people want to get home. They don’t even think anything about it.”

It’s unfair to paint the university as a drinking school, campus police Director Horace Johnson said. “A lot of the people we arrest for DUIS are just people passing through and are not even students,” he said.

“Western is no different than any other school (with regard to alcohol use by students),” he added. “No more or no worse than any other place.”

Student charged in frat fire

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (AP) — A Western Kentucky University student was arrested and charged Wednesday with arson in connection with a fire that destroyed a fraternity house near the school.

Charles Wick II, 19, was being held at the Warren County Regional Jail with bond set at $100,000, said Deputy Fire Chief Oscar Cherry.

Wick was arrested at 12:30 p.m. CST following a joint investigation by the fire department and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

ATF Agent Don York, a public information officer in the bureau’s Louisville office, said Wick was pledged to Kappa Alpha and lived near the fraternity’s 2 1/2-story house, which burned down early Tuesday.

York said Wick woke up the house’s sleeping residents after the fire was started. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.
BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (AP) - A fire swept through a fraternity house near the Western Kentucky University campus early today, rousing sleeping students to flee for safety in their nightclothes.

The fire broke out shortly before 2:30 a.m. CST and gutted the 2½-story Kappa Alpha fraternity house. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

"It was pretty chaotic," said fraternity member Josh Ballard, who was awakened by fire alarms and smells of smoke. "A lot of guys weren't aware of what was going on."

One student dashed back into the burning house to rescue another fraternity member asleep on the top floor,

"We're devastated by it. You have 15 guys who live there and now we don't have a place to live. Everything is gone."

—Kappa Alpha member

Ballard said.

Once firefighters arrived, the back of the house was engulfed in flames. The roof later collapsed as firefighters worked to contain the blaze.

"There's nothing left to really save," said Bowling Green assistant fire chief Greg Turner.

Ballard, a 21-year-old junior, stood alongside other fraternity members to stare at the smoldering remains of their house.

"We're devastated by it," he said. "You have 15 guys who live there and now we don't have a place to live. Everything is gone."

The university was offering assistance in finding housing and clothing for the students, Ballard said.

A couple of students were still awake when the fire broke out, he said. The students rushed out but at least one slept through the alarms.

Jody Wick, a freshman, ran back into the building and woke up Beau Frick, a junior, and rushed him out of the house, Ballard said.

"The fire was well on its way to surrounding the house," he said. "He took a large risk to go up there and save this guy's life."

Bowling Green fire investigators were starting to look for a cause, Turner said.

There were no signs of arson, he said.

The fraternity house was an older structure two blocks from the Western Kentucky campus.
Officialts at Western Kentucky University say a large increase in drunken-driving arrests on campus during the past school year was largely due to an increased police presence and awareness.

Some students, however, contend that the university's reputation as a party school was the real culprit.

From July 1, 1997, through last June 30, campus police made 108 drunken-driving arrests, compared with 78 during the 1996-97 school year.

"Police here have made a conscious effort to (curb) drunk driving," said Charlie Pride, student activities coordinator at Western Kentucky. "There are more officers and they are cracking down a little harder."

Pride said another possible reason for the increase is Kentucky's new zero-tolerance law for drunken drivers. Under the law, anyone under the legal drinking age of 21 caught driving with a blood-alcohol level of .02 percent is considered under the influence. For those 21 and over, the DUI standard is 0.10 percent.

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Students to pay bill for meeting fire codes
Housing fees likely will increase $100 a resident

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Murray State President Kern Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety. “Help from the legislature will of course be welcome,” Alexander said. But the General Assembly is not scheduled to meet until January 2000.
Police say awareness cause for increase in DUI arrests

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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North Bullitt grad charged with setting WKU blaze

By MANDY WOLF
Staff Writer

BOWLING GREEN - A Bullitt County man has been indicted and charged in the fire that destroyed a Western Kentucky University fraternity house Nov. 16.

Charles Joseph "Jody" Wick, 19, of Hillview, was charged with first-degree arson Nov. 18 after police investigators spent more than three hours questioning him in the blaze.

The fire destroyed the Kappa Alpha fraternity house where 15 men lived. Wick was pledging the fraternity.

Wick's attorney, Alan Simpson, said Wick is being held in the Warren County Jail on $100,000 cash bond.

He entered a not guilty plea during an emotional arraignment on Friday in Bowling Green.

The judge did not reduce the bond.

"He's obviously very concerned," Simpson said. "He's just as concerned about his fraternity brothers."

Please see WICK/

Wick

(Continued from page A-1)

Wick was charged with arson in the first degree and, if convicted, may face a prison term of 20 years to life.

"He's concerned because it is a class A felony," Simpson said. "At the same time, he's very thankful nobody was hurt."

Wick had been praised as a hero for helping to wake up sleeping brothers in the Kappa Alpha house before being charged the next day.

Dr. Dwight Hoskins, principal at North Bullitt High School where Wick was a student, said graduate was personable and well-liked while he attended the school.

Wick graduated in 1997.

Hoskins said he was surprised that Wick was charged in the fire.

"I was stunned upon hearing about the incident," Hoskins said. "I was more stunned that it could be by one of my students."

Hoskins said Wick had visited the school and football games since moving to the university.

"I liked him," Hoskins said. "I would say he probably wasn't any different than any other high school young man."

Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Wilson did not return reporter's telephone calls.

The fire is the second blaze at a Kentucky university this semester.

A fire Sept. 18 at Murray State University killed one student and sent several others to the hospital.

A former Bullitt County resident, Brian Levine, and six others have been indicted on charges related to the fire.
Group is urging
Western to limit
booze on campus

Binge drinking seen
as one of top problems

By REBECCA LENZ
and JASON RILEY
The Daily News

An anti-drug group and Western
Kentucky University leaders opened
the doors of communication and
joined forces Wednesday to combat
the problem of alcohol on campus.
The anti-drug Bowling Green-
Warren County Partnership for a
Drug-Free Community is concerned
about Western's proposed alcohol
policy and the public's perception of
it, according to the Rev. Richard
Bridges, the partnership's executive
director.

The university hasn't released its
official policy proposal yet, so
Bridges declined to comment on it
specifically.

But both Bridges and Western
officials were pleased with the meet-
ing as a starting point, they said.

"This opened a dialogue to see
what resources are available to com-
bate the problem of alcohol on campus
and in the community," said Charlie
Pride, Western's student activities
coordinator. "The big word here is
'partnership.' We want to find out
what we can do together to educate
people about the use of alcohol."

The partnership has some recom-
mendations for ways the university
can refocus on alcohol problems,
including:

- changing student ID cards so that
  underage student cards would be
clearly recognizable.
- encouraging the campus newspa-
paper, College Heights Herald, to
change its advertising policy and
refuse ads that encourage excessive
alcohol consumption.
- encouraging faculty members to
  be vocal in leading students to avoid
alcohol abuse.

Most of all, the partnership wants
Western to change its alcohol cul-
ture.

Bridges said he wants a renewed
emphasis against binge drinking
because it's a large problem on col-
lege campuses and for people ages
18 to 24.

Binge drinking will be the tough-
est problem to combat, he said. A
survey done a year ago by a Western
professor found that about 36 percent
of Western students binge drink —
five drinks in a row for men, four for
women.

"All college campuses have an
alcohol culture," Bridges said. "An
overuse of alcohol is an acceptable
part of college activity ... socially."

That is what needs to change, he
said.
will shoulder costs of modern fire codes

ern fire-safety standards.

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The fees currently range from about $600 to $1,100 per semester for a double-occupancy room, according to council figures.

The bulk of the work, expected to cost $14.8 million, is to be financed by bond sales. Student housing and dining fees would be used to pay the bonds.

The modernization, including installation of sprinklers in upper floors not easily evacuated, was prompted by a student's death in a fire at a Murray State University dorm in September.

The dorm, Hester Hall, was among dozens of university buildings constructed before 1972. Sprinklers have been required since then.

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tenance of a building. Something's going to be neglected," Earwood said.

Murray State President Kern Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety. "Help from the legislature will, of course, be welcome," Alexander said. But the General Assembly is not scheduled to meet until January 2000.

Road changes starting at WKU

Removal of median first step in proposal

By JASON RILEY
The Daily News

A plan designed to increase student safety on University Boulevard while limiting major changes for motorists began with the removal of a Russellville Road median.

The state highway department took out the median near University Boulevard last week and plans to resurface the area this week, according to Lanie Meredith, an engineer for the department.

"We had to do this before the weather got too cold," Meredith said. "There will not be a great deal of impact over it, but it is a good first step."

The plan, which Western, the state Department of Transportation and neighborhood groups devised, will require traffic entering University Boulevard from Russellville Road to turn right on a green light only. The plan also calls for adding crosswalks and pedestrian-activated signals at University Boulevard, Russellville Road and Big Red Way, and using landscaping to minimize pedestrian access to non-crosswalk areas.

"With removal of the median, we will ... change the lane assignments to one lane for left turns and two lanes for right turns," Meredith said.

"Our traffic counts indicate 61 percent of the movement at the intersection is a right turn."

Western wants to find a solution to traffic dangers along busy University Boulevard. Eight students have been struck there since 1992.

The state now will begin working with Western to implement other parts of the plan, Meredith said.

Western still is trying to get an agreement on the source of funds, said John Osborne, Western's vice president for finance and administration.

The university also is identifying all utility rights of way and finding out where it can place installations such as fences, sidewalks and landscaping, Osborne said.

The entire project will cost $150,000 to $300,000, depending on the type of features included.
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Murray State President Kern Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety.
Students to get bill for meeting dorm fire codes

By CHARLES WOLFE
The Associated Press

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Fire safety plan to boost college fees

Student leaders call $25 million bond issue unfair

By HOLLY E. STEPP
HERALD-LEADER EDUCATION WRITER

FRANKFORT — The state's public universities got the go-ahead yesterday to spend $25 million over the next four years to install sprinklers in dorms, despite students' complaints that they will bear the brunt of the cost.

To fund the project, the Council on Postsecondary Education approved a bond issue, which will be paid off through an increase in student housing fees at some schools.

The plan, released to legislators last week, calls for spending $14.8 million during the next two years. That would account for about 60 percent of the improvements.

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council decides to determine
scholarships for high school students on last year's grade scales.

The council estimated that it will take an additional $10 million in coming budget years to cover the entire project.

Housing fees are expected to rise as much as 17 percent for students at regional universities.

That will mean an average increase of $100 a semester per resident, university presidents told the council. The fees currently range from $600 to $1,100 per semester for a double-occupancy room, according to council figures.

Student body presidents attending yesterday's meeting in Frankfort said the state bore responsibility for safe dorms and should put up the money.

"We are basically asking students to pay for their own safety," student body president Todd Earwood, Murray State student government president, said at the meeting.

Housing a service provided for the students — they are the ones who use it — and also admitted that the state's dorms have a fire safety problem.

A dorm is a dorm is a dorm, said John Cary, a Murray State student and member of the council. Every university has dorms.
Workers level the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity house Tuesday near Western Kentucky University. The house burned Tuesday. The structure was 100 years old. No one was hurt in the blaze.

**Fire-ravaged WKU structure is razed**

- Investigators still searching for cause of blaze

By STEPHANIE BROADBENT

It took less than an hour to demolish a house with a 100-year history.

Dozens of students and neighbors stood Tuesday behind yellow police tape on College Street as a crew razed the Kappa Alpha Order fraternity house, nine hours after flames swept through the three-story structure.

"It's not safe for our investigators to go in" with the fire-damaged walls and roof still standing, Assistant Fire Chief Richard Storey said as a track hoe battered the house. "If we're lucky, we'll know what caused the fire in a couple of hours. More likely it'll be a couple of days."

The cause of the early Tuesday morning fire near Western Kentucky University's campus is still undetermined today, although firefighters believe it began in the rear of the home, he said.

Investigators will dig through the rubble today, searching for clues about the fire's origin.

Most of the 15 fraternity members who lived at 1349 College St. were asleep when the fire started about 2:30 a.m. but all escaped unharmed. Smoke detectors sounded, but many didn't wake up until others pounded on their doors.

Flames rapidly spread through the house, and it might have burned so quickly because of its age. Older homes don't have features used in modern homes to slow fires down, Storey said.

"The inside of the house could act..."
A Western Kentucky University student was arrested and charged Wednesday with arson in connection with a fire that destroyed his fraternity house near the school.

Charles Wick II, 19, was being held at the Warren County Regional Jail with bond set at $100,000, said Deputy Fire Chief Oscar Cherry.

Wick was arrested at 12:30 p.m. CST Wednesday following a joint investigation by the fire department and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

ATF Agent Don York, a public information officer in the bureau's Louisville office, said Wick is pledged to and lived near the fraternity house. He woke up the sleeping residents after the fire started.

Kappa Alpha was the fraternity that lost the 2 1/2-story house in the fire early Tuesday. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

The university issued a statement saying it would not comment on the arrest.

An arson fire at a Murray State University dormitory on Sept. 18 killed student Michael Minger, 19, of Niceville, Fla. Seven people have been charged in connection with that fire.
Grant will help health departments educate and test for hazardous gas

FRANKFORT — The Department for Public Health has awarded $183,988 in grants to health departments in 37 counties for radon testing and education.

The '16 local and district health departments will use the money, provided on a matching grant basis, to fund public awareness efforts, education, and provide some free test kits to homeowners.

Douglas Jackson with Environmental Management in the Department for Public Health says about 300-700 Kentuckians die each year from lung cancer caused by exposure to radon, a radioactive gas occurring naturally from the breakdown of underground uranium.

"Even though radon is a naturally occurring gas, it can be deadly to people who are exposed to it over time when the gas is trapped inside a building. In outdoor air, it is diluted and usually harmless. Since you can't see, smell or feel radon, people do not realize it is present without testing for it in their homes, schools and workplaces," said Jackson.

"Testing is a simple, inexpensive process that only takes a short amount of time. Winter is the best time of the year to check for radon because doors and windows are closed and the readings are more accurate."

Homeowners can easily test their homes with a radon detector that can be bought at discount and hardware stores.

Jackson said that nearly 16 percent of the homes tested in Kentucky have shown levels of radon gas that pose a health threat.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set 4.0 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) as the measurement at which homeowners should become concerned about radon infiltration.

If a homeowner finds elevated levels, the next step is to remove the radon by using a qualified contractor.

Jackson suggests that homeowners ask companies for proof that they have taken EPA approved training courses. He also said homeowners should ask their health department for a copy of the EPA’s Citizens Guide to Radon for general information about radon.

Home builders also need to be aware of the dangers of radon and know ways to eliminate and prevent radon in homes.

“There are things that home builders can do during the building process to reduce indoor radon levels and there are adjustments that can be made after a home is built to reduce radon," he said.

The following counties will receive money from the grants to educate the public and building professionals about radon: (some counties are listed in groups as a regional health department)

- Allen, Anderson, Barren River District (including Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Simpson and Warren), Bowling Green, Boyle, Buffalo Trace District (Bracken, Mason and Robertson), Garrard, Jefferson, Jessamine, Lexington, Lincoln Trail District (Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson and Washington), Madison, Mercer, Monroe, Northern Kentucky District (Boone, Campbell, Grant and Kenton), WEICO District (Harrison, Nicholas and Scott).

Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green and the University of Kentucky in Lexington also received radon grants for on campus testing and mitigation.

Kentuckians in other counties can get radon information from their local health departments or by contacting Jackson at the state radon program at (502) 564-4856 or writing him at Department for Public Health, 25 East Main St., Frankfort, Ky. 40621.
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ATF Agent Don York, a public information officer in the bureau's Louisville office, said Wick was pledged to Kappa Alpha and lived near the fraternity's 2 1/2-story house, which burned down early Tuesday.

York said Wick woke up the house's sleeping residents after the fire was started. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

The university issued a statement saying it would not comment on the arrest.

The displaced students were offered housing in the school's residence halls. Provisions were also being made for them to receive help with meals, textbooks, clothing and counseling.

Campus groups had raised about $1,500 for the students by late Wednesday afternoon, the school said.

An arson fire at a Murray State University dormitory on Sept. 18 killed student Michael Minger, 19, of Niceville, Fla. Seven people have been charged in connection with that fire.
Fire destroys fraternity house at Western Kentucky University

Residents escaped unhurt in early morning blaze

BOWLING GREEN (AP) — Fifteen students at Western Kentucky University will be offered free housing in the school's residence halls following a fire early Tuesday that destroyed their fraternity house near campus.

Provisions were also being made for the students to receive help with meals, textbooks, clothing and counseling, said Jerry Wilder, vice president for student affairs.

The fire broke out shortly before 2:30 a.m. CST and gutted the 2½-story Kappa Alpha fraternity house. All 15 occupants escaped unharmed.

The cause of the fire remained under investigation, said Greg Turner, assistant fire chief. He said there were no signs of arson, as in the case of a dormitory fire at Murray State University on Sept. 18 that killed student Michael Minger, 19, of Niceville, Fla. Seven people were arrested in connection with that fire.

"It was pretty chaotic," said Josh Ballard, 21, a Kappa Alpha member awakened by the fraternity house's smoke alarms and the smell of smoke. "A lot of guys weren't aware of what was going on."

One student dashed back into the burning house to rescue another fraternity member asleep on the top floor, Ballard said.

Once firefighters arrived, the back of the house was engulfed in flames. The roof later collapsed as firefighters worked to contain the fire.

"There's nothing left to really save," said Greg Turner, assistant fire chief.
Fire isn’t out

It comes as no surprise to WKU’s president; will go ahead with proposal

By REBECCA LENZ

Gov. Paul Patton told a group of journalists Friday that he is not inclined to help universities with funding to install sprinklers and other fire prevention measures in dormitories.

Patton, speaking during the annual meeting of the Kentucky Associated Press Editors Association in Louisville, said that state policy has almost always been to make housing and food service operations the responsibility of the individual institution.

“It would be a significant shift in state policy if we began to support room and board,” Patton said.

Gary Ransdell, Western Kentucky University president, said he didn’t expect any help.

“I thought we had determined that the institutions were going to handle it themselves,” he said.

Ransdell has proposed an increase in student-housing fees to cover costs of fire prevention measures.

“That’s our only course,” he said. “We’re looking into all kinds of ways to minimize (fees). Once all those avenues are fully exhausted ... then there will be an increase in student fees.”

Ransdell has said the university is dedicated to installing sprinkler systems and other fire alarm upgrades in Central, Bemis Lawrence, Barnes-Campbell, McCormick, Rodes-Hardin, Douglas, Keen and Hugh Poland halls at a cost of $3.375 million. He also said a previous high-end figure of a $100 as a student fee was still being discussed.

The issue of fire safety at Kentucky’s colleges and public universities was brought to light after a Sept. 18 fire in a Murray State dorm with no sprinklers. The fire killed one student and left another in critical condition.

Ransdell said he hopes to have a prepared recommendation for Western’s Board of Regents by January.

“We’re going to try to address this as best we can,” he said. “It’s going to be a difficult situation.”

—The Associated Press contributed information for this story.
Quit looking for loopholes; start obeying the law

It appears that some higher education officials learned nothing from the death of 19-year-old Michael Minger in a 1998 dormitory fire at Murray State University.

In 2000 the legislature honored the memory of Minger by approving a bill that was supposed to help prevent the loss of more young lives on the state's college campuses.

Minger's mother, Gail, campaigned tirelessly for the legislation...

The Minger Act requires university officials to immediately report fires that occur on campus to the state fire marshal.

This provision of the law stemmed from Mrs. Minger's contention that her son's death could have been prevented if Murray State officials had asked the fire marshal's office to investigate a suspicious fire reported in Michael's high-rise dorm five days before the fatal blaze. Authorities believe arson caused the fire that killed Minger.

Mrs. Minger learned recently the new law, while well-intended, is not self-enforcing.

Murray State officials waited 12 hours before reporting a Feb. 4 fire in another dorm. The fire resulted in the activation of the sprinkler system and the evacuation of the building.

President King Alexander said the fire wasn't reported earlier because it occurred after normal business hours and didn't cause serious damage or injuries.

The same description could have been applied to the Hester Hall fire that preceded the fire that killed Michael Minger.

Assistant State Fire Marshal Carvon Hudson told The Sun campus safety officers are supposed to call a toll-free number in

Another view

Frankfort to report fires. A fire marshal is sent to the scene to investigate any time during the day or night.

Hudson said most schools have reported fires within 30 minutes. However, Western Kentucky University officials did not report two recent fires in dormitory trash bins until a third fire occurred, he said.

If universities violate the Minger Act by failing to report fires, they can be fined up to $2,000.

The law says campus authorities “shall immediately report each fire.” This part is unclear to Steve Homer, attorney for the “misnamed” Public Protection Cabinet. “The law needs to be tightened up to include a precise definition of immediate,” he said.

“Immediately” is clear enough for Gail Minger, who noted the dictionary definition says “without delay, instantly, at once.” In all likelihood, the meaning of immediately is clear to the parents of students who live in university dorms in Kentucky, too.

It's worth wondering whether the lawyers for the Public Protection Cabinet and the Council on Postsecondary Education would be parsing words if their children were living in dormitories where fires were belatedly reported.

The assistant state fire marshal says time is critical in determining whether a fire was accidental or deliberately set.

Delays in reporting fires can result in the destruction of valuable evidence.

It's shameful that state officials are trying to find loopholes in a law intended to make university campuses safer...
Center for School Safety goes to EKU

ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRANKFORT, Ky. - A board has chosen Eastern Kentucky University as the home of the state's $15 million Center for School Safety, even though independent experts preferred a proposal from another school.

The new center's board of directors voted 6-5 Tuesday to choose EKU over the University of Louisville. The center is envisioned as a statewide clearinghouse for information and training on school safety. It also will create a statewide database to detail school violence in Kentucky.

Board members denied that political pressure sent the center to EKU, which is the employer of Rep. Harry Moberly, D-Richmond, a sponsor of the legislation that created it.

"I'm not aware of any pressure on anyone," said board Chairman Blake Haselton, superintendent of Oldham County Schools, who did not vote for EKU.

Moberly, chairman of the House budget committee, said he was pleased the center would be at EKU, but said he designed the law so the selection wouldn't be political.

"I think we set it up to be a fair and impartial process and that's what I would expect from that board," said Moberly, who oversees student judicial affairs at EKU.

But politics was a concern for parent representative Sherron Jackson.

"Sometimes there are political pressures that come to bear on each of us," Jackson said before the vote. "We should set aside those political constituencies and their desires for the benefit of the children."

Five board members voted for a competing proposal from UofL.

That school would have worked with Western Kentucky University, Northern Kentucky University and Morehead State University.

The law enacted by the 1998 General Assembly called for universities to submit proposals to run the center. Gov. Paul Patton added $15 million to the two-year budget to pay for the center.

The two joint proposals were evaluated by four anonymous readers, three from Kentucky and one from out of state. Each of the four was an expert in juvenile justice, education or counseling.

The lowest overall score that the UofL's proposal received was one point higher than EKU's best overall rating.

The three experts who reviewed the EKU proposal gave it scores of 36, 77 and 77 on a 100-point scale. The fourth reader did not judge EKU's proposal because he or she recognized the college. But the experts gave UofL scores of 93, 78, 90 and 98.

Two of the readers praised the UofL plan because it would create six regional centers that would directly help schools with their safety plans. They said the EKU plan didn't collaborate well enough with schools or the Kentucky Department of Education.

Several board members said the board should pay close attention to the experts' ratings.

"These are people who are trained to distinguish who's giving you the best proposal," said Kevin Garvey, the Jefferson County District chief judge, who voted for UofL. "When you look at the scoring, there's no contest. I think the board has to give that a substantial amount of weight."

But Education Commissioner Wilmer S. Cody, who voted for EKU, said he was troubled by the readers' comments, which made him think the proposals hadn't been read thoroughly enough.
Man hits deer, dies in later accident

WKU student stops, is struck by another car

By BEN Z. HERSHBERG
The Courier-Journal

A Western Kentucky University student who had stopped
after hitting a deer on Interstate 64 in Shelby County was
killed by another vehicle Saturday night, Kentucky State
Police said.

The victim was 19-year-old Jason Dwayne Wilder, a sopho-
more from Shelbyville.

His friends and family remembered him yesterday as a
powerful athlete, a talented painter of watercolors and an
Eagle Scout, and as a smiling young man who was always
ready to help.

"He was the kind of guy that was naturally everything a
good man should be," said Anthony McConnell, president of
the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity at Western Kentucky Univer-
sity, of which Wilder was an officer.

Wilder was killed on I-64, after a visit with his parents, as
he headed to Louisville to see his brother. He stopped be-
cause he had hit a deer a mile west of the Simpsonville exit.
As he inspected the damage to his vehicle about 9:50 p.m., an-
other vehicle swerved to avoid the dead deer, ran off the road,
overturned and rolled several times, hitting Wilder, police
said. Wilder died at the scene.

The second driver, Mark Nickel, 24, of Louisville, was
treated for cuts at a hospital and released.

No charges have been filed.

Shelbyville Scoutmaster Richard Walker was especially
proud that Wilder was working with a Cub Scout den in Bowling
Green, keeping the Eagle Scout pledge to serve the com-
munity. Wilder's Shelbyville troop, No. 164, will hold a
counseling session tomorrow for any Scouts or adults who
want to take part, Walker said. It will be in Centenary United
Methodist Church on Washington Street from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Even as a freshman, Wilder was a leader, McConnell said,
explaining that he had become vice president for programming
in his freshman year.

"This guy did nothing wrong, ever," said Bryan Carrico, an-
other fraternity brother. "He exemplified every type of person
you would want to be."

In addition to Scouting, he loved the outdoors and art, winning several competitions for his watercolors, his parents
said last night.

At 6-2 and 230 pounds, he also was a powerful athlete,
playing center on Shelby County High School's football team,
said his father, Billy Wilder.

He had hoped to make Western's football team as a walk-
on, but a hip badly dislocated in a skiing accident during his
senior year in high school ended his football aspirations, said
his mother, Mary Ann Wilder.

He had been active with Junior Achievement, winning an
entrepreneur award, his mother said. He had decided to pursue
a career in industrial design, she said.

He had gone home Saturday after attending the football
game between Western and the University of Louisville that
afternoon. He had supper and showed his parents a lamp he
was making in a class.

"He was in the best mood you could imagine," his father
said.

In addition to his parents, Wilder is survived by his broth-
er, Anthony Wilder; a half sister, Teresa Jackson; and two
grandparents, Vernon Wilder and Sara Jamison.

His funeral will be at 10:30 a.m. tomorrow at Shannon Fu-
nal Home in Shelbyville, with burial in Bagdad Cemetery.
Visitation will be from 4 to 9 p.m. today.

The Associated Press
contributed to this story.
Kentucky students will pay more to upgrade fire safety at dorms

By Charles Wolfe
Associated Press

FRANKFORT — Students living on campus at Kentucky's public universities will shoulder most of the cost for bringing their residence halls up to modern fire-safety standards.

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The bulk of the work, expected to cost $14.8 million, is to be financed by bond sales. Student housing and dining fees would be used to pay the bonds.

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The dorm, Hester Hall, was among dozens of university buildings built before 1972. Sprinklers have been required since then.

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Earwood, a graduate student whose hometown is Murray, said the institutions were being given an unfunded mandate.

"Is the university going to have to pick and choose? Do they want fire safety, or do they want ... maintenance of a building? Something's going to be neglected," Earwood said.

Murray State President Kern Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety. "Help from the legislature will, of course, be welcome," Alexander said. But the General Assembly is not scheduled to meet until January 2000.
Students paying for safety

By CHARLES WOLFE
Associated Press Writer

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Earwood, a graduate student whose hometown is Murray, said the institutions were being given an unfunded mandate.

"Is the university going to have to pick and choose? Do they want fire safety or do they want ... maintenance of a building. Something's going to be neglected," Earwood said.

Murray State President Kem Alexander said student fees were the only source of funding for student housing fire safety. "Help from the legislature will, of course, be welcome," Alexander said. But the General Assembly is not scheduled to meet until January 2000.
In the aftermath of last month's fatal fire at Murray State University, Gov. Paul Patton and officials at Murray and other state universities have agreed to work together to improve safety in residence halls. The hope is that sprinkler systems and other safety devices soon will be installed in all dormitories.

However, there is one step only students can take to improve the protection of residence halls from fires: Reducing the number of false alarms.

False alarms set off in Murray State dormitories had become so commonplace that the city of Murray's fire department had a policy of not responding to the alarms until after campus security police had confirmed that there was an actual fire.

At Western Kentucky University, campus officials do not notify the Bowling Green Fire Department of an alarm until after determining that an emergency exists. WKU officials are reviewing that policy in light of the Murray tragedy.

False alarms at Morehead State University dormitories were being set off so often that responding to them was straining the Morehead Volunteer Fire Department's budget. The city of Morehead was seeking a payment from the university to cover the cost of providing fire protection to the campus. An agreement was eventually reached between the city and school.

The Murray fire department's policy of not immediately responding to alarms from campus dorms probably had no impact on the Hester Hall fire where the student died. However, the few minutes required to check out the validity of an alarm could easily turn a minor blaze into a serious one.

The problem, however, is not so much the policy as the number of false alarms that led to it. According to university officials, more than 1,200 false alarms were sounded at Murray State last year. Western Kentucky had more than 240.

When false alarms are so frequent, who can blame the fire department for being reluctant to make yet another needless run to a campus dorm? Just like the classic tale of the little boy who cried wolf, each false alarm makes them less ready for the real thing.

The false alarms also affect the response of dorm residents. Instead of quickly exiting their rooms whenever an alarm is sounded, the students probably think it is just some foolish student who has pulled the alarm as a childish prank.

Our point is this: False alarms are no laughing matter. They are crimes that can slow the response times of both fire departments and residents to real emergencies.

Just days after the deadly fire, a Murray student was charged for allegedly sounding a false alarm in a dorm. He should be vigorously prosecuted in an effort to discourage others from doing the same.
Safety, satisfaction for all

Skywalk over University Boulevard good idea for both sides

"Go ahead and walk. If they hit you, your education is paid for."

If you've never heard that line, chances are you haven't been a Western Kentucky University student.

At least you weren't a student there in the late 1980s and early '90s.

I was. And that line was tossed out just about every time a student hesitated at a crosswalk because of heavy traffic flow.

Someone, usually a friend - don't we pick 'em well? - would offer up those words of wisdom as incentive to ignore the stream of traffic and plunge into the fray.

The theory - best I could tell, it was only a theory - was that a pedestrian usually would make it across the street safely. Those who didn't could simply sue the driver of the vehicle that hit them and coast through college without financial worries.

Please. Instead of getting a free ride out of a car-pedestrian encounter, a student is more likely to suffer injuries that may prevent him from continuing his education - or at least from finishing it in the time originally allotted.

If the physical injuries don't do it, the rising cost of medical care could. After all, there's no guarantee that the driver has insurance or any other money worth suing for, and the cash for those hospital bills could end coming out of your college savings fund.

Now, Western President Gary Ransdell is seeking answers to a pedestrian safety problem plaguing University Boulevard.

Instead of reviving anything similar to the rightly dead proposal to shut off University Boulevard to much of its traffic flow, let's revisit the previously thrown-out notion of a covered skywalk.

A skywalk across University Boulevard would not prevent traffic from traveling its familiar route, nor would it prevent students from safely crossing the street - and neither would have to wait for the other.

Those pedestrians who choose not to use the skywalk could cross with the light at either the Normal Drive intersection or the Big Red Way-Russellville Road corner.

Increased police patrols - with great attention to actually writing tickets instead of simply hoping a patrol car's mere presence will suffice - also could reduce the speeds of those who drive the stretch. That would increase both driver and pedestrian safety.

See, it doesn't have to be an us-or-them thing. It can be an all-of-us thing.

Ransdell has criticized some in the community for questioning his students' intelligence by questioning their ability to cross the street.

Similarly, many Western students have criticized the community for putting "convenience" before student safety.

But a skywalk would answer both of those criticisms.

The community, many of whose members are worried about their own family's safety and the financial well-being of businesses that help feed, clothe and house those families, could maintain its familiar route.

The theory - best I could tell, it was only a theory - was that a rising cost of medical care could. After all, there's no guarantee that the driver has insurance or any other money worth suing for, and the cash for those hospital bills could end coming out of your college savings fund.

Unless that's too inconvenient.

-- Angela Bauer is a copy editor for the Daily News.
Most WKU fire inspection problems fixed

State had cited 60 deficiencies in the 18 Western dormitories

By JASON RILEY
The Daily News

Inadequate funds and communication snags were responsible for a two-year delay in fixing a wide range of fire hazards in Western Kentucky University dorms, administrators say.

A 1997 state fire marshal's inspection report cited 60 fire safety deficiencies in the 18 Western dorms. Nearly 70 percent of those deficiencies were the same infractions cited after a 1996 inspection.

A combination of not knowing exactly what the inspector meant in his correction listings, which department was responsible for making the corrections and where certain funds would come from caused a delay in fixing these deficiencies, said Kit Tolbert, Western's housing director.

However, a great deal of work this summer brought Western up to par on fire safety, she said.

"To my knowledge, the sprinkler systems are the only thing on that list that haven't been addressed," she said. "It was not really a problem with our fire systems, but with wear-and-tear maintenance. Contractors did a ton of work this summer."

A Sept. 18 fire at an eight-story dormitory without sprinklers at Murray State University killed one student and critically injured another.

The fire has brought renewed attention to fire safety on Kentucky university campuses.

The infractions on Western's latest two inspection reports range from inadequate emergency lighting, doors not having self-closing devices and some dorm stairways not having the minimum one-hour fire resistance rating.

"That kind of thing is a serious situation," Carvon Hudson, assistant state fire marshal, said about the dorm stairways. "When kids leave the quarters of any building they should step in a stairwell that is difficult for smoke to get into.

"As for the self-closing doors, their purpose is to keep a fire either pinned inside a room or outside it for at least an hour. They are also very important, as is everything we put in those reports. Otherwise, we wouldn't put them in there."

Bowling Green firefighters leave Western Kentucky University dorm Pearce-Ford Tower following a Friday trash chute fire. The university has fixed most fire safety problems brought to its attention by the state.
Schools seek money for dorm sprinklers

By LONNIE HARP
The Courier-Journal

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Sprinklers will start appearing in many dormitories if state universities gain the money they want for safety improvements, officials said yesterday.

The schools will make their request Monday to the Council on Postsecondary Education, less than two months after a fire at Murray State University killed one student and badly injured another.

College presidents and council President Gordon Davies will show a united front on the issue, outlining plans to spend housing and dining proceeds on some improvements, and asking the council to kick in $10 million in bonds, officials said.

The bonds would help pay for smoke detectors, fire alarms, sprinklers and other safety equipment, installed over two years.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction, but I'm sorry it took our son's death to get this started," said Gail Minger, of Niceville, Fla., whose son, Michael Minger, perished in the Sept. 18 fire at Murray State's Hester Hall.

"It is sad that it takes somebody's death to put sprinklers or other safety measures at the top of somebody's list after millions have been spent on restoring old buildings or beautification projects," she added. "It's a sad commentary on what we prioritize."

Ken Walker, the council's deputy executive director for finance, said colleges will need more than a two-year blitz to See SCHOOLS
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Kentucky
Frankfort — Presidents of the state's public universities have agreed to fit more dorms with sprinklers and other fire safety equipment, an official said. The project will take at least four years and may cost $25 million.
Universities plan to add sprinklers to more dorms

By Charles Wolfe
Associated Press

FRANKFORT — Prompted by a student's death at Murray State University, presidents of the state's public universities have agreed to fit more dormitories with fire sprinklers, an official said Thursday.

Details remain to be worked out, and the number of dormitories affected is not known yet, said Gordon K. Davies, president of the state Council on Postsecondary Education.

But in general, the plan is to bring dorms up to modern standards. That will mean sprinklers and other fire-safety equipment in residential space that cannot be evacuated easily, Davies said in an interview and in testimony to legislators.

The project will take at least four years and may cost $25 million, Davies said. Presidents of the institutions agreed Wednesday to finance the work from housing and dining funds or issue bonds, Davies said.

One student was killed and another seriously burned in a fire on the Murray State campus in September. Police said the fire was arson. Seven people, including five students, were indicted last week.

The fire occurred on the fourth floor of eight-story Hester Hall, built in the mid-1960s. The state did not require high-rise buildings to have sprinkler systems until 1972.

Older dorms present several problems, Davies told the General Assembly's interim Education Committee. Many have asbestos above their ceilings. "Once you find asbestos, you don't have a sprinkler problem. You've got an asbestos problem," he said.

One community college dorm is to be included in the project — a building at the former Lees College in Jackson, now a branch of Hazard Community College.

Northern Kentucky University will not be affected because all its dorms were built after 1972, Davies said.
Schools seek money for dorm sprinklers

Continued from Page One

comply with all fire-safety specifications. But he described the new money as a strong start.

The council also will seek advice from state agencies, like the fire marshal's office, to help colleges decide which safety work should come first.

The state has a lot of work to do.

Two-thirds of the 103 dormitories and apartment buildings on state campuses are without automatic sprinklers. Some are high-rise buildings much larger than Hester Hall, the eight-story dorm at Murray that had the fatal fire.

All the dorms at Northern Kentucky University are up to code, but many dorms on other campuses were built well before state law began requiring sprinklers in 1972.

Morehead State University, for example, has estimated it would cost $2.5 million to equip 12 dorms with sprinklers. Eastern, Western, Murray and Kentucky State also lack sprinklers in much of their student housing.

The University of Kentucky has two dorms without sprinklers. At the University of Louisville, six dorms in the fraternity quadrangle lack sprinklers.

Council officials were not sure when the new money, if it is approved, would start paying for work in dorms. Since the Murray fire, many colleges have given new emphasis to fire-safety plans and efforts to find more money for sprinklers.

State lawmakers gave the council $35 million in bond authority over the next two years, mostly for capital construction projects between legislative sessions. The council plans to consider projects on Monday that would exhaust that money, known as agency bonds. Walker said the fire-safety plan is for $10 million of the total.

The council’s finance committee is scheduled to take up the bond issue and hear the university presidents’ plan at 8:30 a.m. Monday. The full council is expected to consider the fire-safety plan later Monday morning.

Leonard Hardin, the chairman of the council, applauded the plan when Davies described it Wednesday at a meeting of the Strategic Committee on Postsecondary Education.

Lawmakers who heard an outline of the plan also signaled their approval yesterday. The plan would not require legislative approval to take effect, council officials said.

In the Murray fire, state police arrested seven people last week on various charges. Fred McGrath, 23, a former Murray student, was charged with arson and capital murder. He has pleaded innocent. The other four men and two women face lesser charges; all have pleaded innocent.

All seven were linked to the college rugby club. Their families said they were at an off-campus party on Sept. 17, the night of the fire, where they made several prank phone calls, including at least one to a Murray freshman living in Hester Hall who had joined the rugby club. He was asked whether smoke was coming from his room.

Police said that evidence in the case includes telephone records showing the phone numbers from which the calls were placed. A prosecutor called it “a form of haz ing that went bad.”

“It is sad that it takes somebody's death to put sprinklers or other safety measures at the top of somebody's list.”

Gail Minger, mother of fire victim Michael Minger
Murray fire suspect recalls night of pranks

By CHRIS POYNTER
The Courier-Journal

BENTON, Ky. — Lana Phelps said she knew the police would come for her. She didn't know when or where. But she figured it was only a matter of time before she and her friends would be arrested in the Sept. 18 dormitory fire at Murray State University that killed one student and severely burned another.

At 11 p.m. Oct. 28, Phelps, a freshman at Murray State, had just left her job at a Halloween haunted house in Paducah. She was still in costume, she said — her hair colored bright yellow and streaked with purple and green. As she drove up to the home of her friend Melissa Mounce, a state police car pulled up and blocked her off. Her stomach knotted.

She recalled the trooper's telling her, "You need to come with us, young lady."

Mounce was already sitting in the back of the police car. They sobbed and held each other's hands for the 40-minute ride to Murray, where they were booked, fingerprinted, shackled and given bright orange jail suits.

Phelps spoke with The Courier-Journal yesterday afternoon at her lawyer's office in Benton. Out on bond, she is the first of the accused to publicly tell her story; the others have declined to be interviewed. All have pleaded innocent.

Phelps insisted she had nothing to do with the fire, and she doesn't think her friends did.

**THE NIGHT** of the arrest, as she was being booked, Phelps noticed a bulletin board with the names of her friends written in marker: Fred McGrath, John "J.J." Haney, Jeremy Baker, Michael McDonough, Brian Levine. Her name and Mounce's were added.

McGrath was charged with capital murder and arson; the others, with lesser charges of complicity.

All seven defendants have ties to the Murray State Rugby Club, and five of them are members. Commonwealth's Attorney Michael Ward said the rugby players were at a party, making a freshman member of the team — "a rookie" — by making prank calls to his room on the fourth floor of the Hester Hall dormitory.

The defendants say that's all that happened. But Ward thinks someone took the prank further, poured gasoline on the carpet in the dorm hallway and started a fire. One student, Michael Minger, 19, died in the acid smoke. Another, Michael Priddy of Paducah, was burned and is still recovering.

Neither was connected with the rugby club.

Yesterday, with her lawyer, Roger Perry, sitting on one side of her, and her mother, Laura Phelps, on the other, Lana Phelps offered the following account of the night of the fire.

She was a criminal-justice major who had wanted to work with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and now, she said, her life is destroyed. "This is going to follow us for the rest of our lives."

**IT BEGAN** much like another other Thursday night. Around 9 p.m., she and some friends went to the field on campus to watch the rugby team practice. Phelps had been hanging out with the rugby team for two years, and they nicknamed her "Big Bird" because of her height, which is 6-3.

She had planned to go to a fraternity party after practice, but instead rode with two friends to Tennessee to buy a case of beer, because Calloway County is dry. Phelps, agreeing to be the designated driver rather than drinking, drove back. By 11 p.m. she and the two friends were back in town, at a party at a small brick house rented by three rugby players: Levine, Haney and Baker.

Fifteen or 20 people came and went during the night, Phelps said.

Some stood outside drinking and smoking; some watched TV inside.

McGrath suggested that they make prank calls to freshmen on the rugby team.

They made 11 calls, taping them on an answering machine, Phelps said. During one of them, someone posed as a dorm official telling a freshman player that the smell of marijuana was coming from his room. They told him to come to the front lobby.

Everyone thought it was "really funny," and they kept replaying the tapes and laughing, she said, smiling as she recalled their merriment.

Then, they called Ryan Leader, a freshman who lived on the fourth
SPRINKLERS: Two-thirds of dorms on Kentucky campuses lack sprinklers

From Page One

The fire. Frederick F. McGrath II, 23, of Murray faced the most serious charges of capital murder, first-degree arson and assault.

The incident illuminated the widespread problem of fire safety at state schools. A survey by the Herald-Leader found that two-thirds of the dormitories at state schools lack proper sprinkler systems.

The survey also found that fire safety appears to have been a low priority at many schools, partly because of the high costs.

Now the schools will have to find the money. If they don't have enough in reserve, they will have to issue bonds.

The Council on Postsecondary Education can grant state schools the authority to issue bonds, which would then be paid back from schools' housing and dining funds.

That, in turn, might raise student fees.

For example, the University of Kentucky won't raise any fees to pay for roughly $3 million in fire safety costs, said Edward Carter, vice president for management and budget.

That's because $1 million will be paid by fraternities and sororities, and the rest will come out of reserve maintenance and renovation funds. The school will have to sell only about $300,000 in bonds, and that can be paid back without raising fees.

Morehead State and Eastern Kentucky students won't be so lucky.

Eastern Kentucky University room rates will go up about $25 a semester to pay for the $4.5 million price tag on outfitting 12 dorms with sprinklers.

"We're trying to be sensitive to the cost issue, but the important thing is to get the sprinklers in," said Jim Clark, vice president for government relations and planning.

Morehead students could see a $100 increase next fall to pay for a $3.5 million fire safety plan, said Porter Dailey, vice president for administration and fiscal services.

At Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, the $3.4 million cost of outfitting seven residence halls will cost students, although it's not clear how much.

"Ultimately, student fees will be impacted to some extent," said John Osborne, vice president for finance and administration.

Plans for other schools will be discussed at the council's meeting on Monday in Frankfort.

Davies said there were three other problems facing universities in addition to high costs:

- In older dorms, sprinkler installation could cause asbestos problems.
- Kentucky may not have enough specialized contractors in the state for such major installations.
- Fire safety installation requires moving students around.

Davies said that the schools would look at more creative solutions to fire safety, such as housing students only up to the fifth floor, where they could be reached by fire ladders. The upper floors could then become offices.

Davies also praised the university presidents for ignoring their infamous turf wars to work together on fire safety.

"We're trying to demonstrate that higher education is a coherent body," he said.

The council will start its Monday meeting at 8:30 a.m. at its Frankfort office.
A WKU tragedy in waiting?

Most Western dorms don’t have sprinkler systems — and the university does not have money to install them

BY JASON RILEY
The Daily News

It has been 26 years since Kentucky's first sprinkler law went into effect, and 14 of Western Kentucky University’s 18 dorms — including seven high-rise buildings — still don’t have sprinkler systems.

The problem has gained heightened importance in Kentucky since a Sept. 18 fire at an eight-story dormitory without sprinklers at Murray State University killed one student.

Most Western dorms were built before state law required sprinklers, Western Director of Housing Operations Kit Tolbert said.

Because of that, Western is under no legal obligation to install them. Dorms built since 1972 that have at least four stories must have sprinklers.

“These dorms were built in the 1950s and '60s when it wasn’t a code requirement to have sprinklers,” Tolbert said. “The two new ones built in the early '90s — Zacharias Hall and New Sorority Hall — have them and the size of Pearce-Ford Tower required additional fire safety (sprinklers) when it was built.”

McLean Hall is the other dorm that has a sprinkler system.

The state doesn’t have the authority to mandate sprinklers in dorms built before 1972, according to Susan Klimchak, director of communications for the state Public Protection and Regulation Cabinet.

“They can suggest and encourage a university, but they do not have the authority to make them be installed (in older dorms). The state fire marshal has suggested it to all universities for the last two years,” Klimchak said.

Western has listened but has little resources to implement such a costly program.

It would cost more than $4.5 million to install sprinklers in all of Western’s dorms, said Bob Skipper, director of media relations for Western.

“That is a quite a lot of money and that has been a problem for us in the past,” Skipper said. “That money would have to come from auxiliary enterprises like the residence hall and campus dining because we do not get money from the state for dorms. We would have to raise cost to students to cover it and we don’t want to make it so expensive that students can’t afford to live in residence halls.”

After the Murray fire, Gov. Paul Patton’s administration started working with state universities to try to have sprinklers installed in every building where students sleep.

“The Council of Postsecondary Education has begun discussion with the leadership of public higher education and the governor and political leadership of the state to develop a plan to improve fire protection in residence halls,” said Debbie McGuffey, the council’s director.

See SPRINKLERS, 2A
Western student killed in traffic accident

By the Daily News
and The Associated Press

SHELBYVILLE — A 19-year-old Western Kentucky University student who had gotten out of his vehicle after hitting a deer was struck and killed by another vehicle along Interstate 64, Kentucky State Police said.

Jason Wilder of Shelbyville was inspecting the damage when Mark Nickel swerved to avoid the deer, police said. Nickel, 24, of Louisville lost control of his vehicle and ran off the north side of the road about 9:50 p.m. EST Saturday. The vehicle overturned and rolled several times, hitting Wilder, police said.

Wilder was pronounced dead at the scene by the Shelby County coroner.

Wilder was a Western freshman majoring in industrial technology.

"He was a good student who had a firm sense of responsibility and genuine promise as a manager of technical activities," said Norman Tomazic, head of Western's Industrial Technology Department.

"Everybody is greatly saddened, and all of our classes are going to take a moment to offer silent prayer for Jason and his family today.

Nickel suffered cuts and was treated at a local hospital and then released.

No charges have been filed in the case.

"He was a good student who had a firm sense of responsibility and genuine promise as a manager of technical activities."

— Norman Tomazic
Western department head