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IN OUR OPINION

Beer-induced revelry can certainly be safe

Spring break officially begins Monday, and like pulling the tab on a Pabst Blue Ribbon, many students are going to burst with feverish delight.

Just please burst with caution.

We don't want to run a front-page story in two weeks about a USC student that has become the next Natalee Holloway. It takes only a few minutes of forethought to ensure that you and your friends can go nuts safely.

You're going to the beach. You have a cooler full of booze and a thimbleful of scruples. Good, now stick to that cooler, and pack bottles of water, too. Don't accept drinks from strangers, and don't leave your drink unattended when you go to the bathroom. One slip and you're left with a lifetime of problems.

It takes only a few minutes to ensure that you and your friends can go nuts safely.

You want to stroll down the strip at night with a flask and a pack of Parliaments. Good, now grab a friend. Grab two. Everything's more fun in groups, and you pretty much eliminate the risk of getting kidnapped or assaulted.

You (drunkenly) want to hop in your buddy's Hummer and go to Barefoot Landing. Bad. Bring cab fare and look up bus routes before you leave home. Force yourselves to rotate being designated driver every night. We all know you can wait until you get back to the hotel to start killing brain cells.

You want to go to Ripley's Believe It or Not! museum with a handle of rum. Probably not the best idea, but seeing the local sights is something most spring breakers miss out on.

If you're in the Florida Keys, check out Ernest Hemingway's old stomping grounds. If you're in Charleston, check out the aquarium. Don't pigeonhole your trip as a purely partying affair.

Be smart and be crazy at the same time. It's more fun to have your head pulled from a toilet than to have your lifeless body pulled from a canal.

Having fun is at the top of everybody's to-do list this spring break; being safe should be on there, too.

IT'S YOUR RIGHT

Voice your opinion on message boards at *www.dailygamecock.com* or send letters to the editor at *gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu*

CORRECTIONS

If you see an error in today's paper, we want to know about it. E-mail us at gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu

ABOUT THE GAMECOCK

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News Editor
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CONTACT INFORMATION
Offices located on the third floor of the Russell House
Editor's office hours are from 2-3 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays
Editor: gamecockeditor@gwm.sc.edu
News: gamecocknews@gwm.sc.edu
Viewpoints: gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu
The Mix: gamecockfeatures@gwm.sc.edu
Sports: gamecocksports@gwm.sc.edu
Public Affairs: gamecockPR@yahoo.com
Online: www.dailygamecock.com
Newsroom: 777-7726 ; Sports: 777-7182
Editor's Office: 777-3914
Fax: 777-6482

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Courtesy KRT Campus

Spring break me off a piece of that Kit-Kat

Going home for vacay doesn't subtract from college cool points

CHASE STOUDENMIRE
Second-year history student

I think it's safe to say that anyone who teaches philosophy is slightly crazy. You have to be in order to understand what's in all those textbooks. For example, one of the most poignant questions we've had to answer this semester was "What is two-ness?" We were asked to define "two." Not the meaning of life, not the nature of God — two. What is two?

I think that was the point where my head exploded. Alas, I've taken that question and morphed it into my own philosophical inquiry. What is "coolness?"

In elementary school, it was how many video games you owned. In middle school, it was what brand of shoes you wore. In high school, it was what kind of car you drove.

A council of elders in ancient Greece selected these factors that determine coolness. But fret not, they didn't leave college students out.

It's more important than what fraternity you belong to. It's more important than how many beers you drank last night. It's even more important than how many pastel popped-collars you can wear at the same time.

What is this great factor that determines where we belong on the collegiate coolness scale? Easy. How are you spending your spring break?

You can do all sorts of things. Go to Myrtle Beach and get drunk. Go to Florida and get drunk. You can go to Cancun, get drunk, take all your clothes off then watch it on MTV a few weeks later.

Or, if you're one of the people who make the top half of the cool scale possible by being a part of the bottom, you go home, wear lots of clothes and drink large amounts of Gatorade. Maybe you'll show up on a home video in a few years.

I never went to first/senior/beach week in high school. I'm about to kiss my second spring break in a row bye-bye.

And it's been the same reason every time I've skipped out on my hard-earned right to a week of debauchery; I'm going to work at a camp or conference for high school students, the same high school kids who are totally creeping us out this week by showing up on Facebook.

But I don't think that my homeward ambitions make me a dork or any less cool than Mr. I.B. Fratty; I consider it to be a security measure.

A week at home means free food, free laundry and a much smaller chance of getting injured or arrested, or accidentally starting a nine-month countdown to fatherhood.

So to all of my comrades who are heading off for a week of fun in the sun, good luck, be safe, take pictures and e-mail them to me.

And to those heading home, make sure to be home by midnight or you'll be grounded for a week.

IN YOUR OPINION

Dees' good works aren't so venerable

I read the comments by Morris Dees in the article by Josh Rabon ("Civil rights attorney speaks about racism," Wednesday). I laughed at Dees' answer that he could take his critics to court.

Dees said he wouldn't do it because it would be a waste of time. Actually, Dees wouldn't do it because you can't sue someone for telling the truth.

This is a new tactic for Dees; usually he responds to critics with absurd statements about his budget being based on future increases in the price of stamps.

Just look at the reports from the Better Business Bureau, American Institute for Philanthropy, Charity Navigator and others. Major publications including The Washington Times, The Nation, Harper's Monthly and many others have slammed Dees. An eight-part expose printed in the Montgomery Advertiser about Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1996.

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University held a panel discussion on non-profit groups in 2000. The highly acclaimed newspaper editor, Jim Tharpe, gave a speech on Dees and the SPLC. He used the SPLC as an example of a rogue non-profit gone bad. He said most SPLC employees are ideologically motivated college graduates from out of state. Dees hires them for one- or two-year stints. Tharpe said that after a year or two they learn the SPLC is a con, and they are completely disillusioned.

Eventually most people will come to regard Dees as a con man, now that left-wing sources are denouncing him as fiercely as right-wing sources.

For more information on Morris Dees, visit the Council of Conservative Citizens Web site at www.cofcc.org.

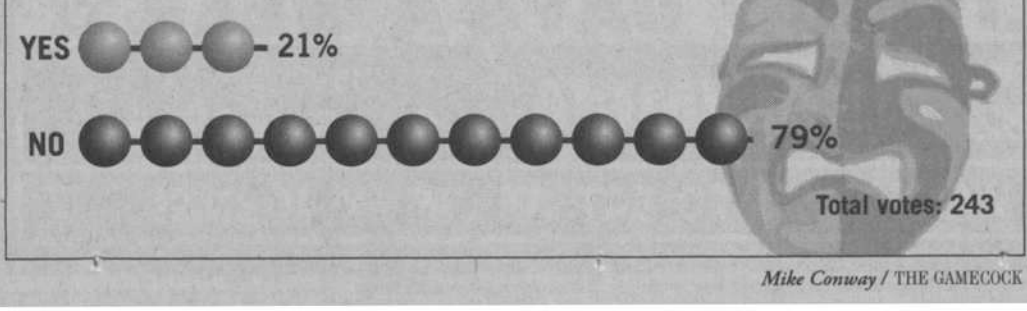
KYLE ROGERS
Council of Conservative Citizens

Submission policy

Letters to the editor should be less than 300 words and include name, phone number, professional title or year and major, if a student. E-mail letters to gamecockopinions@gwm.sc.edu. Letters will be edited. Anonymous letters will not be published. Call the newsroom at 777-7726 for more information.

Online Poll

Do you think it is too soon after Hurricane Katrina for New Orleans to celebrate Mardi Gras?



Mike Conway / THE GAMECOCK

Do not forget time-off comes only halfway to finish line

Classes, essays, exams remain after romping holiday of relaxation

As the first half of the semester draws to a close, we have a holiday to reminisce about what we've learned.

AARON BRAZIER
Fourth-year philosophy student

Our basketball team is the epitome of average. Girls are all insane. Love is like chocolate and as equally fattening.

The fount of knowledge pours on us all. Except Kansas.

So, it's Spring break. Time to pick out a bikini, stick in your favorite Butch Walker CD and get absolutely smashed on margaritas. And for the girls, they can do whatever it is they do. Freedom settles in for a week, as open-minded travelers hit the Cancun beaches to discover cultural heritage, i.e. extremely white.

It's time to relax. Put on WUSC and groove to some original, funky beats on a Friday night. You can always tell when the stress rises on campus because people actually start studying. Not to freak anybody out with this information, but we're technically supposed to do it all the time. Bloody ridiculous. If I'm at university to study, why is there so much alcohol around me all the time?

It's a conspiracy, akin to the depths of the aliens in New Mexico!

Spring break offers so much for the compassionate student. Think about it. You could single-handedly make a difference in New Orleans by volunteering ... for a race to see who can drink the most Jager in a 30-second race. You enjoy yourselves, while paying back to businesses destroyed by a hurricane. Miami University should be sued for its atrocious behavior.

Hey, you might even assist in "Girls Gone Wild." With trashy tops, drunk girls seeking emotional reassurance, and all-around whorish attitudes, never doubt the power of the video camera. There's something amazing about a lens that makes stupid girls look even dumber. What an invention. Edison, eat your heart out.

When you take your break, have fun, but don't forget that we'll all be here when you get back. Not just The Gamecock but lectures, professors, the Strom — you promised to work out but you didn't, and you've upset the spirit of Mr. Thurmond, and you're a bad person — essays, equations and GMP food. The whole college experience, which sucks up your money like an emo-band singer on a crack withdrawal, doesn't bugger off when you put your feet up. Keep your eyes on the prize.

So my halfway message of this semester is to relax this Spring break, don't get so wrapped up in fun that it takes the rest of the school year to catch up. Don't fret over every little detail either. Nobody wants to be friends with Mr. Cranky, the terminally annoying psychology student.