



SPORTS

THE FINAL FAREWELL

New Yorkers say goodbye to historic Yankee and Shea Stadiums.

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DANGER! SCIENCE!

New particle accelerator sparks hysteria, but should we really worry?

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THE OBSERVER

www.fordhamobserver.com

OCTOBER 2, 2008
VOLUME XXVII, ISSUE 8

Don't Know How to Vote?

Here's the 411 for Election 2008

By **ALEXA FRANK**
Contributing Writer

Voting season is upon us, and during such a heated political time, some people have forgotten about the simpler things in life—the minor details, like registering to vote. For college students, the voting process can feel like the final step to cement their stars on the Grown-up Walk of Fame. But with so many applications, deadlines and decisions, there are millions of questions running through a student's mind. Do I register to vote on campus or somewhere back home? What if I can't return home for Election Day? What is an absentee ballot, and how do I get one? So once I fill out this, apply for that, send this in and go do that...what's next?

Here's the DL: One of the qualifications for being able to vote is having an established address for at least 30 days, in which case a college student can legally register to vote at either a school dormitory or a home address. There is no law that specifies which address one must use, as long as the address one registers with is the same location that the vote is cast in and one doesn't vote twice in one election.

Once registered, those who decide to vote in their home state but cannot be there on Election Day should request the Absentee Ballot Application Form from their local county board, or use the site longdistancevoter.org for easy access to forms and deadlines (thank you 21st century). These requests can be made no earlier than 30 days before the election and are due to the registered state or location, by mail or hand-delivery, no later than Election Day.

With the lengthy, confusing registration process out of the way, which location should students choose to vote at, especially with such debate regarding the legality of voting at

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Amethyst Initiative Questions 21-Year-Old Drinking Age

University Presidents Sign Initiative to Open Dialogue on College Drinking

By **CASEY FELDMAN**
News Editor

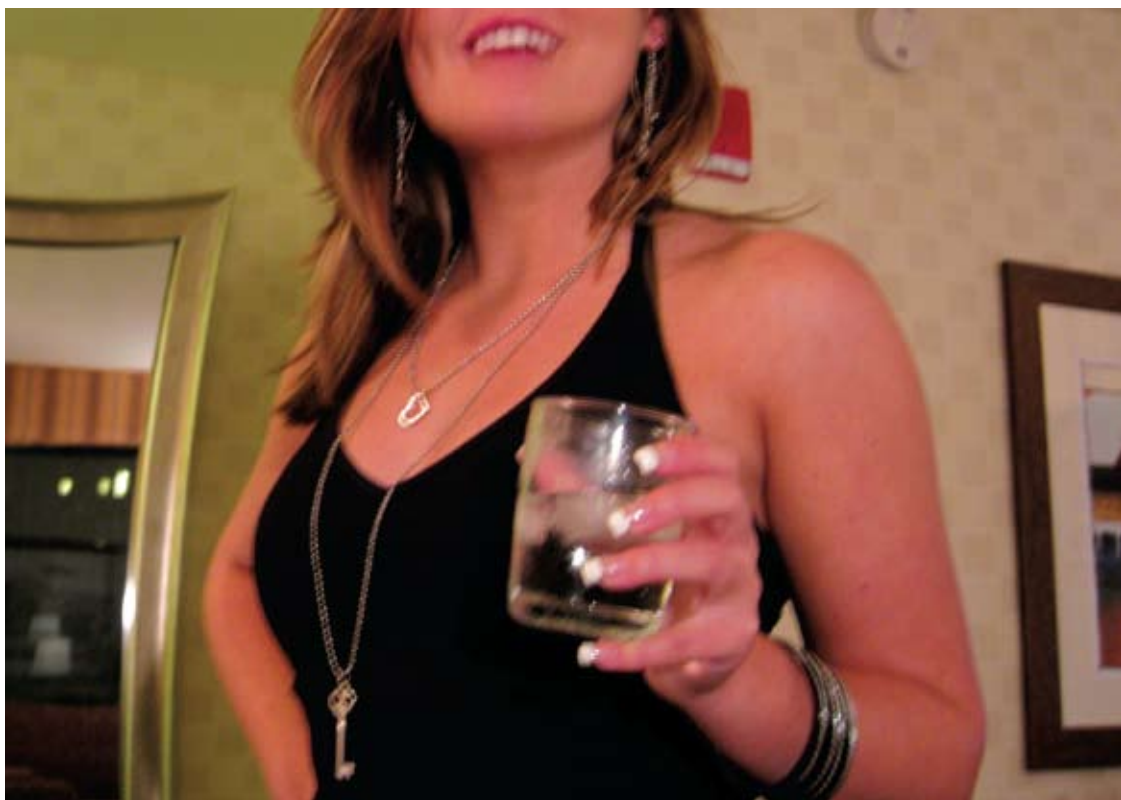
Four out of five college students drink, according to the American Psychiatric Association. Almost all university officials agree that college drinking is a problem, and some contend that the drinking age of 21 has worsened the dilemma of alcohol use by pushing underage students to engage in dangerous binge drinking and secretive pre-gaming.

One hundred and twenty-nine college presidents and chancellors have signed their name to a "public statement" which declares that "it's time to rethink the drinking age" and that "21 is not working." Dubbed the Amethyst Initiative, the movement "supports informed and unimpeded debate on the 21-year-old drinking age."

While Jesuit schools such as St. Joseph's, Fairfield and Santa Clara signed the initiative, along with non-religious schools like Duke, Dartmouth, Drew and Manhattan College, Fordham did not.

Rev. Joseph M. McShane, S.J., president of Fordham, stated that he believes that the problem of student drinking is a result of college culture, not of the 21-year-old drinking age. A press release created by Fordham's director of communications, Bob Howe, in conjunction with McShane, states that proponents of the Amethyst Initiative "are well-meaning, [but may] be abdicating their responsibility to students." According to the press release, "lowering the drinking age also sends the wrong signal about what the University considers healthy, responsible behavior" and is "contrary to the Jesuit ethic of caring for the whole person."

In contrast, Rev. Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., the former dean of Rose



CRAIG CALEFATE/THE OBSERVER

Underage college students continue to drink despite risks associated with alcohol and knowledge of the law.

Hill and the current president of Fairfield University, "[applauds] the Amethyst Initiative, [which] invites us all to re-examine how we are helping our young people learn to handle the consumption of alcohol responsibly."

According to MSNBC, the drinking age was 18 in most states up until 1984, when Congress "threatened...to withhold 10 percent of federal highway funds from states that did not prohibit selling alcohol to those under the age of 21."

If the drinking age were 18, college students "would binge drink less," said Chris Barlow, FCLC '10,

"because they wouldn't feel the need to hide it as much. If you could walk down the hallway of McMahon with a beer in your hand, you wouldn't have to chug that beer to finish it before you left your room," he stated.

Many remember the college students of the 1970s and earlier, when the drinking age was 18, drinking more responsibly than students do now. "Drinking practices have changed," said Megan Siemers, FCLC assistant director for programming, "in that students now are facing more negative consequences related to drinking." Back when the drinking age was 18, Si-

emers said, "people did not abuse alcohol as much as they do now." Keith Eldredge, FCLC dean of students, agreed, "Binge drinking now is more prevalent than it was 20 years ago."

"I think college students would drink less if the drinking age was lower," said Kim Siletti, FCLC '10. "Because students can't legally drink [or buy alcohol] when they go out, that encourages binge drinking because you don't know when the next time you're going to be able to [get alcohol] is," she said.

Some supporters of the Initia-

see **AMETHYST** pg. 2

Fordham Opens Westchester Campus; Questions About Marymount Closure Arise

By **ANDREW VACCA**
Staff Writer

Fordham University began the 2008-2009 school year by introducing its newest campus in Westchester County. The new school, located in West Harrison, NY, was officially unveiled Sept. 9, just over a year after the controversial closing of Fordham's Marymount campus, which left many professors jobless, according to a 2007 Observer article.

Fordham Westchester, a three-

see **WESTCHESTER** pg. 3



CRAIG CALEFATE/THE OBSERVER

Fordham Westchester opened on Sept. 9 in West Harrison, NY.

Inside

ARTS & CULTURE

THE STORY NEVER ENDS

Fans recall the impact of the legendary musical "Rent" as the curtain closes for the last time.

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NEWS

THE GLASS CEILING

Fordham students and faculty comment on how Sarah Palin's presence on the Republican ticket changes the election.

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Briefs

METRO

New Law Protects Child Prostitutes from Jail Time

On Sept. 26, Gov. David Patterson "signed into law a bill shielding sexually exploited girls and boys from being charged with prostitution," the New York Times reported. The Safe Harbor for Exploited Youth Act will put child prostitutes who have been arrested through counseling programs instead of sending them to jail, as long as they help authorities prosecute their pimps.

Men's Health Urbanathlon Forces Athletes to Brave City Obstacles

On Sept. 27, more than 1,000 New Yorkers competed in an eight-mile marathon, according to the New York Post. Runners traversed a path from Central Park and Battery Park. The catch? Athletes had to bypass "urban" obstacles. This included jumping over cabs, scaling an "eight-foot high, graffiti-covered wall" and climbing 52 flights of stairs.

NATIONAL

UCLA Mathematicians Discovers 13-Million-Digit Prime Number

MSNBC reports that the group found the "46th known Mersenne prime on a network of 76 computers..." The group was participating in the Great Internet Mersenne Prime Search, or GIMPS, a "cooperative system in which underused computing power is harnessed to perform the calculations needed to find and verify Mersenne primes." The numbers are named after 17th century French mathematician Marin Mersenne. The discovery of this prime makes the UCLA mathematicians eligible for a \$100,000 prize.

Oscar Winner Paul Newman Dead at 83

MCT

Newman, also remembered for his philanthropy and food empire Newman's Own, succumbed to cancer, reported MSNBC. He is survived by his wife, fellow Oscar winner Joanne Woodward, to whom he had been married for 50 years, and their five children.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. and Russia Agree on a Solution to Iran's Nuclear Program

Russia and the U.S. have reached a deal in regard to Iran's uranium enrichment program. The two nations have "agreed to seek a new U.N. resolution calling on Iran to comply with previous demands to suspend uranium enrichment but imposing no new sanctions," according to MSNBC. The resolution is said to have the support of the "six key players in negotiations on Iran's nuclear program"—the U.S., Russia, France, Britain, Germany and China.

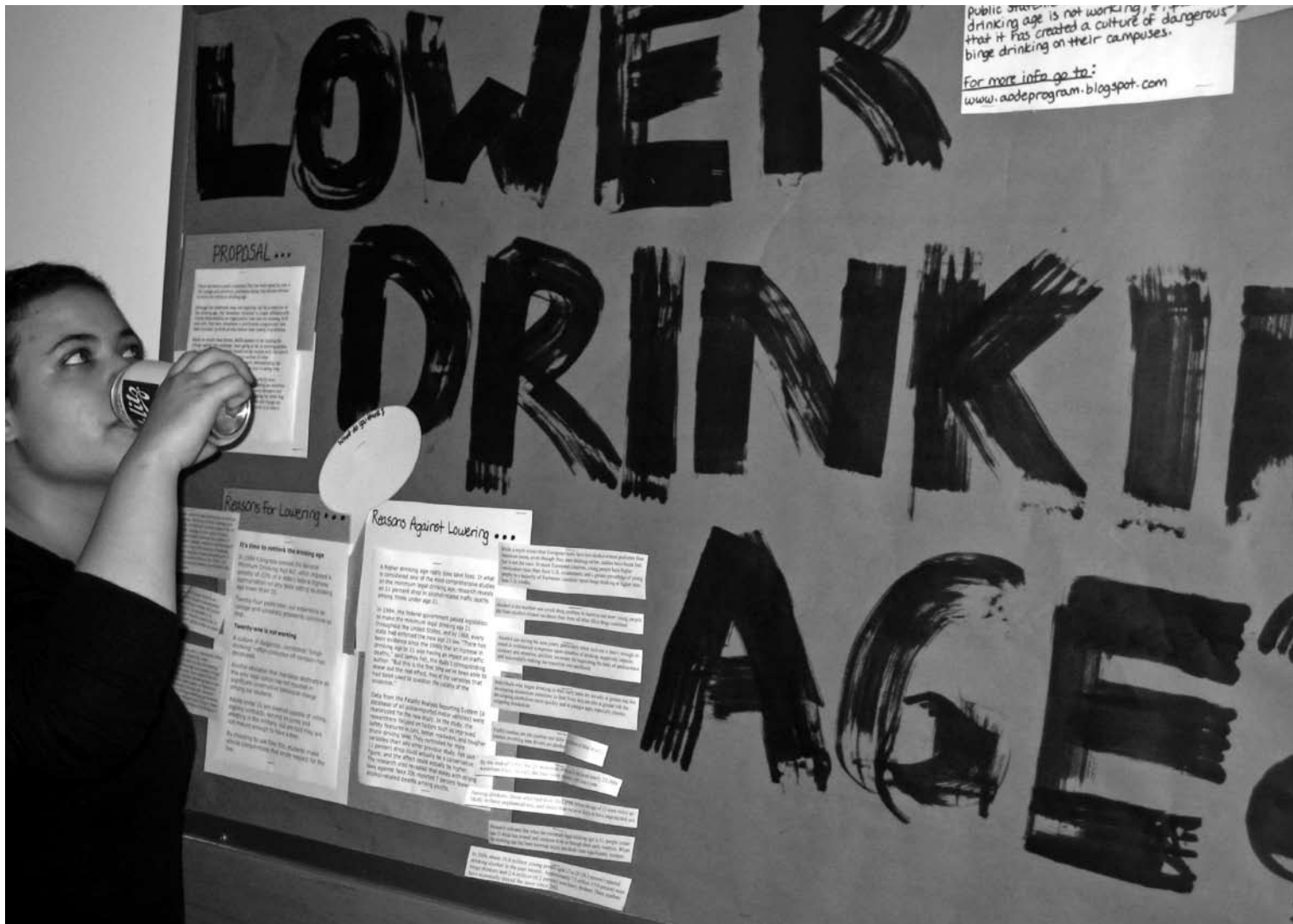
Chinese Astronaut Takes the Country's First Spacewalk

On Sept. 27, Zhai Zhigang "completed the nation's first-ever spacewalk," according to MSNBC.com. He remained outside of the "orbital module" for 13 minutes. China's space program has been called "ambitious," and some say the program will soon rival those of Russia and the U.S.

Argentinian Drought Leaves Farmers "Hopeless"

So little rain has fallen during September (the Southern Hemisphere's spring), according to CNN, that 15 percent of the 1 million cattle in one of Argentina's Northern farming provinces are dead. The drought will affect crop planting as well, and CNN calls it "Argentina's worst drought in a century."

Compiled by Casey Feldman



CASEY FELDMAN PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/THE OBSERVER

Proponents of the Amethyst Initiative argue that a lower drinking age could reduce dangerous binge drinking among college students.

University Presidents Engage in Discourse About Student Drinking

AMETHYST FROM PAGE 1

tive state that lowering the drinking age would take away some of the mystique and excitement associated with drinking underage. "I've had students say that if [the drinking age] was 18, then the hype of it would be over...students say when they turn 21, 'What's the point [of drinking]? Where's the rush?'" Siemers said.

"I think [lowering the drinking age] would take some of the excitement away from drinking for college students," said Siletti, "but it will still be there [to some extent] because you're away from your parents and you want freedom."

Rev. Robert R. Grimes, S.J., dean of FCLC, stated that he is in support of "reopening the discussion [of the drinking age]" but is not necessarily in support of lowering the drinking age. "There are real problems about the misuse of alcohol," Grimes stated. "...Now, drinking is done behind closed doors. If there is any relaxation of [drinking laws] there must be a corresponding [increase in the] severity on the laws of driving while intoxicated," he said. "It's not a religious issue as far as I see it...drunkenness has been treated as sinful, but not alcohol," Grimes said.

"As the president of a... Jesuit university, I take very seriously the responsibility to care for young adults, many of whom are away from home for the very first time," said Rev. Timothy R. Lannon, S.J., president of St. Joseph's University. "I would be remiss to not support an initiative that calls our nation's attention to what is happening on our college campuses in alarming numbers. What is best for our students, for their social and intellectual development? Will our students be safer if they drink legally? We are saying that it is time to engage in this conversation," Lannon said.

Eldredge said that he is "in support of a national conversation" but said that he is "not convinced" that lowering the drinking age to 18 would necessarily solve college drinking problems. "People say 'look at Europe, they don't have

"I've had students say that [if the drinking age] was 18, then the hype of it would be over... students say when they turn 21 'What's the point [of drinking]? Where's the rush?'"

—MEGAN SIEMERS, asst. director for programming at FCLC

a 21-year-old drinking age," he stated, "but rates of binge drinking there aren't any better."

Research from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism (NIAAA) supports this, stating that France, Italy and the United States have similar rates of binge drinking among teens.

"Part of the debate is that students [under 21] can't consume alcohol in McMahan Hall. [Because of that], students choose to drink in a more private and secretive way," said Eldredge. "Some students will take a number of shots [quickly], [if they are going] someplace where alcohol won't be served to them." If they were legally allowed to drink, Eldredge stated, "Maybe they wouldn't pre-game and they would spread out their consumption. There is an argument to make for both sides."

Eldredge pointed out the fact that moving the drinking age from 18 to 21 made "a huge impact" in the number of motor vehicle-related deaths. The National Institutes of Health's Fact Sheet for Alcohol-Related Deaths states that "in the mid-1970s, alcohol was a factor in over 60 percent of traffic fatalities." Now, "alcohol-related deaths per population have been cut in half, with the greatest proportional declines among persons 16-20 years old." Eldredge continued, "But what are the tradeoffs if a higher drinking age is causing other problems?"

Eldredge also pointed out the fact that numerous studies have shown that the younger people are when they begin drinking, the greater the likelihood that they will one day abuse alcohol. Siemers said that, in her opinion, one disadvantage to lowering the drinking age is that it

might "set the bar lower" for people to start drinking. "If the drinking age is 21 and kids are drinking at 18 and younger, if the drinking age becomes 18, are we then going to have students drinking at 10, 11, 12 years old?" she wondered.

"Personal responsibility is something that every young person needs to learn," said Chris Farhood, a psychotherapist who treats New York City college students, some with drinking problems. Farhood stated that she is in support of the Amethyst Initiative and feels that along with lowering the drinking age, support systems and better education plans should be developed. "Parents should be talking to their kids about drinking from a young age," said Farhood. "Teach them that it's okay to have a glass of wine at dinner or a beer at a barbecue, but it's not cool to be drunk and

throwing up."

"I don't think the government should be putting their nose into that business—legislating the age does not help the situation," she said. "There's a problem with how we approach [the idea] of a 'whole person' for an 18 year old—they can marry, vote, go to war, but they can't drink."

Mike Fabano, FCLC '10 said, "I don't think the problem is the drinking age. It's that people don't have any practice. We have to practice for everything else in our life," he said, citing the fact that teens must show that they can safely handle driving a car before they are given a license to do so. "I think it's a responsibility for families. If you think your child is responsible enough, introduce them to [alcohol]," he said.

Farhood said that, in her experience, students who have not experimented with drinking or attempted to learn their limits in high school "have problems" with alcohol once they "get away from home and away from parental supervision." She said, "I have had patients say 'I did all that [drinking] when I was a teenager—then I went to college and wanted to settle down and get to work,'" she said.

So how would a lower drinking age affect FCLC? As for FCLC's alcohol education programs, Eldredge said, "We would be able to focus all our efforts on harm reduction, as opposed to telling kids not to drink at all...It's hard to say now 'You're underage, but drink safely,' because we [need to enforce] the law."

If the drinking age were 18, "students would not be hiding [their drinking] as much," said Siemers. "I don't know if it would be safer, because they might just be doing the same thing."

"The great thing about the Amethyst Initiative," said Siemers, "is that it is helping students to realize what their own personal views are in regard to alcohol use. Students should challenge each other and engage in conversation." As far as drinking goes, according to Siemers, "there should be more talk, less action!"

BY THE NUMBERS

4 out of 5

Number of college students who drink

18

Drinking age in the U.S. until 1984

60%

Percentage of alcohol-related traffic fatalities in the mid 1970s

21

Drinking age in the U.S. today

40%

Percentage of alcohol-related traffic fatalities today