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Bid Day drinking lands Drury freshman in hospital

Students may have left quad to avoid crackdown.

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News-Leader

A Drury University freshman was hospitalized for alcohol poisoning during an off-campus party apparently organized in response to tougher enforcement of underage drinking laws during Bid Day on campus Saturday.

The party took place Saturday night in Stone County on the same day Bid Day --when students who want to join fraternities learn if they have been accepted --took place at Drury.

This year, university officials confined the campus event to the quad where the four fraternities are located and hired 17 off-duty Springfield police officers to help campus security and fraternity house directors prevent underage drinking.

Greene County chief deputy Jim Arnott --who said he'd been told by school administrators there had been underage drinking at the event in the past --said deputies were also going to be on campus in their own enforcement effort.

By the time deputies arrived at Drury, students had left the quad where fraternity houses are located for off-campus parties, Arnott said.

"We had a means to identify minors; we put in place several aggressive steps for the students to have a safe and sober event," said Tijuana Julian, Drury vice president of student affairs and dean of students. "We were very disappointed students did not stay on campus to take advantage of those."

Apparently, unhappiness with the drinking crackdown prompted the off-campus gathering.

The hospitalized student is in stable condition, Julian said. Arnott said the student's blood-alcohol level was .395. The legal limit is .08.

Stone County deputies assisted by deputies from Christian and Greene counties and a Missouri Highway Patrol trooper arrived at the off-campus party --held on private property --after Christian County deputies reported on the ill student.

Four underage students were cited for possessing alcohol, Stone County Sheriff Richard Hill said.

Other charges could be filed depending on what an investigation of the gathering on Hidden Valley Road reveals, he said.

"I would say there were probably a dozen or more individuals who were under 21 who appeared to have consumed alcohol," Hill said.

Hill said he was told members of Kappa Alpha and Sigma Nu fraternities organized the gathering.

"We talked to the landowner who had allowed these kids to have the party there," the sheriff said. "He had a signed document that there would be no underage drinking, but there was."

Julian said the university's investigation should be completed later this week, and the school's response will depend on that report.

The university also is investigating whether the hospitalized student was the victim of hazing, Julian said.

"That has also come out in our investigation, and we are trying to determine if that indeed was the case," she said.
