BREAKING NEWS, CAMPUS NEWS, LOCAL NEWS, NEWS

12 hospitalized for severe intoxication at campus party, area hospital forced to close ER

By: **Matt Rocheleau** | April 26, 2010 |

A dozen people were hospitalized and treated for severe intoxication after becoming ill during an on-campus dance party Saturday night into Sunday morning, according to campus officials.

Meanwhile, an influx of patients – which may have included the 12 intoxicated people treated after the campus party – forced Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton to close its emergency room to incoming patients shortly after midnight, according to staff members.

A nursing supervisor at the hospital confirmed the closure. She did not know the exact number of people who sought treatment Saturday night into Sunday or how many had an alcohol-related illness, but she said the patient total grew to an "excessive amount." The nursing supervisor said the hospital's emergency room can typically treat 20 to 25 people simultaneously. A hospital spokesperson could not be reached for comment Sunday.

UMass spokesman Edward Blaguszewski said the identity of those who became ill during the Mullins Center event was not known. He said he did not know whether they were University of Massachusetts students or which hospital treated them.

The Mullins Center does not serve alcohol, and the estimated 1,300 attendees were screened for alcohol and other prohibited items prior to entering the "Turn It Up Party," he said.

Police suspect the 12 who became sick, but are expected to recover, had drank alcohol before entering the event but did not begin to show signs of intoxication until later, said Blaguszewski.

Police reported no arrests or property damage at the event, he added.

The dance party, which was open to any college student who showed student identification, was part of the University's "Blackout Weekend," a campus tradition in which UMass students invite students from other colleges for various weekend sporting, food and music events. The name has no connection to the term "blackout," which some use to describe alcohol-induced amnesia.

UMass Amherst Police and town fire officials who responded with ambulances to aid the 12 intoxicated people were not immediately available to comment on the incident.

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